



## **Going Green: Creating Sustainable Industrial Processes and Eco-Friendly Factories**

To run a successful business, it's important to pay careful attention to trends within your industry and the global marketplace as a whole. For those who follow this advice, it's easy to see that one of the most important ongoing trends is a widespread effort to "go green." Sustainable practices and eco-friendly operations are quickly becoming the standard in every industry. But why are so many companies eager to join this changing landscape of global commerce? Simply put: adopting eco-friendly practices increases your bottom line, keeps customers happy, and protects the future of our planet. This is especially true when it comes to industrial processes and factories. In fact, many experts agree that if a business intends to be successful in the long-term, it can't afford to *not* go green!

Does your business have the foresight to adopt eco-friendly practices before competitors do? Don't sacrifice long-term success and stability for shorter-term profits. By adopting sustainable practices now, you allow your business to operate on the cutting edge of industry while strengthening your competitive advantage.

For a majority of businesses, there's more than enough room for improvement. Whether you are simply installing energy-efficient lighting in a manufacturing plant or re-thinking the entire flow of your supply chain, going green boosts profit, overhauls company image, and protects the health of the environment. Consider this a rare win-win opportunity that you must take advantage of to bring your business to the next level.

So what are the specific benefits you can expect from the adoption of eco-friendly industrial practices? Here are two of the most common:

- **Increased bottom line due to lower costs and access to new markets.** A more profitable operation is the number one reason why most businesses decide to go green. Whether you are saving money by cutting the costs of energy, water, and resource consumption or taking advantage of tax breaks for energy efficiency, there's plenty of ways your business can keep more cash in its coffers. Your business may also become more profitable thanks to an increased market share among consumers who desire to work with environmentally-conscious companies. This market demographic is expected to grow dramatically in the future - claim your piece of the pie early on.

- **Enhanced company image, happier employees, and other intangible benefits.** While it may be easy to observe and measure benefits like lower operating costs and increased market share, going green also provides intangible benefits that are equally important. You may notice that employee morale, health, and participation increases as you make eco-friendly improvements to factory working environments. You'll also enjoy the benefits of an enhanced reputation as a socially responsible business committed to protecting the environment and people it depends on to succeed.

Going green is simply a matter of exercising good business sense. Focusing on fundamentals like cutting costs and finding new customers is a surefire way for any business to strengthen its core, and instituting green industrial practices is one way to get the job done.

### **How to Green Any Industrial Environment**

Lots of companies never get started with their plans to go green because the scope of the process seems intimidating. For those who have done business a certain way for a number of years, it may be difficult to summon the energy to change. Just remember that making your industrial processes greener pays off tenfold in the future. If the process seems daunting, start simple. Here are some of the most effective greening practices for industrial processes and factories.

**Adopt energy efficient practices to cut costs instantly.** A good starting point is to conduct an energy audit to see where improvements can be made. Start simple and consult an expert for larger projects. Do your HVAC filters need to be replaced? Are you using outdated incandescent lighting? Replacing incandescent bulbs with CFL fixtures is an easy way to save money on energy. Depending on your yearly consumption, these savings can reach significant levels. Check window seals and use caulking and weather stripping to insulate buildings. Make use of programmable thermostats to reduce energy waste. These are the basics that are often overlooked and should be taken care of before embarking on more ambitious energy projects.

**Make use of renewable energy and green power.** Green energy is quite literally the future of business. If you can get your power from wind, solar, hydro, or biomass sources, your business will be instantly transformed into a more sustainable and eco-friendly operation. One option is to build your own source of renewable green energy on the premises. Many states offer tax breaks and incentives for businesses who choose this route, and businesses may even receive compensation for energy they generate and contribute back to the grid. A reliable, consistent source of clean on-site energy is an excellent way to achieve true sustainability. If building an on-site energy source isn't an option, you can purchase green energy from an external source at rates slightly higher than traditional fossil fuel power.

**Reduce, reuse, and recycle whenever possible.** Another way to keep cash in your pockets is to cut down on the amount of waste produced by your industrial processes. Less waste means less money spent on waste removal, lower costs on raw materials, and higher levels of efficiency overall. Expect a spike in productivity as you streamline the process and eliminate excess waste. Whenever possible, use inexpensive post-consumer recycled raw materials and participate in recycling programs when the manufacturing process is

complete. Another common area of improvement is product packaging. If necessary, re-think and redesign your current packaging to get rid of any excess or wasteful materials.

**Conserve water.** A water efficiency program is a smart way to conserve water as well as your budget. For many factories and industrial processes, water bills can escalate quickly due to high levels of consumption. But how much water are you paying for and not using? By making a commitment to conserve this invaluable resource, you'll find yourself spending less money on buying, heating, cooling, treating, and disposing of it. Have your local water department or water agency conduct an audit and make efficiency and conservation recommendations. Then purchase technology that will help to conserve water and minimize discharges to sewers and wastewater. Expect to see instant savings.

**Cut back on pollution.** The environment isn't the only thing that's hurt by pollution. Pollution costs your business money. Everything that comes out of a process or factory has to be handled, treated, and properly disposed of – so why not staunch the flow of waste at its source and eliminate the need to deal with it? Purchase high-quality technology that will last without requiring a frequent upgrade. Eliminate raw materials from the manufacturing process that aren't needed in the final product. Use in-process recycling to get the most out of the materials you buy without wasting a dime's worth of your investments. Donate or recycle used equipment instead of sending it to simmer in a landfill. These are some basic actions you can take, in addition to larger waste management programs that can be coordinated with help from special agencies like the EPA – at no cost to you.

### **Make the Commitment to Go Green**

Hopefully by now the “why” and the “how” of going green are clear. All that's left is for you to make a solid commitment to modernizing your business and getting it prepared for the future of 21<sup>st</sup> century global commerce. Once you and your employees make sustainability a part of your mission statement, eco-friendly practices will trickle down into every corner of your operation. It won't take long for the benefits to start piling up, but the real reward is the promise of a healthy planet for generations to come.

### **Sources**

<http://www.business.gov/guides/environment/>

<http://www.business.gov/guides/startup/green-business/green-guide.html>

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