



*The Sustainable Business Network of Greater Boston  
and Save That Stuff, Inc. present*

# The Busy Business Owner's Guide to Sustainable Business Practices

This guide was specifically designed to help small and mid-sized businesses assess and improve their environmental practices, implement effective waste reduction strategies, and decrease their carbon footprint.

We know that as a business owner you wear many hats, and that “Chief Sustainability Officer” may seem like an intimidating one to add. However, you can have a significant impact on the environment and on your bottom line by following some or all of the sustainable business practices outlined in this guide. The depth and breadth of that impact, to a certain extent, depends on you!

As you think about creating a more sustainable approach to your business, consider how your business performs in these six categories:

- Energy Conservation
- Water Conservation
- Pollution Prevention
- Transportation
- Waste Reduction
- Sustainability Management

According to an April 2007 Gallup survey, 47% of small business owners are taking steps to being more environmentally responsible.

# Energy Conservation



Energy conservation is a powerful way to decrease your impact on the earth, as well as improve your bottom line.

## Change those bulbs

You can start by installing compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), which are typically 75% more efficient than incandescent bulbs. Compact fluorescents do contain mercury, so they cannot be disposed of in the trash. However, the energy savings in one bulb is so high that experts consider the use of mercury to be a nominal concern (if disposed of properly). To locate disposal options in your area, check out: [www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling](http://www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling).

You can also increase lighting efficiency by replacing T-12 bulbs with T-5 or T-8 fluorescent bulbs. For answers to basic questions about CFLs, visit: [www.energystar.gov/ia/partners/promotions/change\\_light/downloads/Fact\\_Sheet\\_Mercury.pdf](http://www.energystar.gov/ia/partners/promotions/change_light/downloads/Fact_Sheet_Mercury.pdf).

## Turn it down

Thermostat location and settings can be the most important factor in determining the size of your fuel bill. During business hours, your thermostat should be set at 76 degrees or above for cooling and 68 degrees or below for heating.

When your space is unoccupied, the HVAC should be turned down... heating set to a lower temperature and cooling to a higher one. Of course, it's tough to remember to set the thermostats every night...so take that off your daily to-do list by installing a programmable thermostat. Set-back thermostats are available for most HVAC systems and they are easy to install and easy to use.

## Turn it off

Why light a room when there's no one there? That goes for exterior spaces as well. By installing occupancy sensors in common rooms and offices, and motion sensitive lighting in outside areas you can be sure that the lights are off when there's nobody at work.

You can take the "turn it off" effort even further by making sure office equipment is turned off when not in use (or that the Energy Star settings are enabled); encouraging employees to unplug cell phone and PDA chargers when not in use; enabling power management on computers, or switching to laptops; and setting the refrigerator temperature between 35°F and 38°F and freezer temperature between 0°F and -5°F.

## Don't lose your heat (or your cool)

There are some common sense practices you can employ to make sure you're only heating, cooling and lighting what you need to. Start by weather stripping (weatherizing and caulking) to seal around windows and doors to close air gaps. You can also wrap water heaters with an insulating blanket (read the label first) and wrap hot water supply pipes (first 3-6 feet) with pipe insulation. Double pane windows, while more of an investment, will prevent your energy dollars from flying out the window. And don't forget to engage in a little sustainable feng shui...arranging your workspace to take advantage of areas with natural sunlight.

*"My maintenance guy was not crazy about the idea of CFLs at first, but now he tells me he can't remember the last time he changed a lightbulb."*

# Pollution Prevention

## Water Conservation

Stop throwing precious resources down the drain...encourage water conservation.

### Keep the flow low

At the very least, place signage in the kitchen and restrooms to encourage employees to conserve water. Dual flush toilets and low flow faucet aerators also help minimize water waste.

### Kick the bottled water habit

In 2006, Americans drank about 167 bottles of water each. In 2007 we spent \$16 billion on bottled water (more than we spent on iPods or movie tickets). Just think about how many of those bottles were generated by your staff and visitors. Even worse, think about how much money your business may have spent on bottled water! Stock your kitchen area with mugs and glasses, and encourage employees to bring in reusable water bottles, or give employees, customers, vendors and partners reusable water bottles with your logo on them.

### Keep it clean

If you own your building, there are a number of ways you can avoid polluting the watershed. For instance, did you know that storm drains Don't lead to a water treatment facility? Storm drains are designed for storm water, not wash water. To keep our watersheds clean, many companies are taking a "watershed pledge". That means that they are careful about what goes down the drain, they use permeable pavement to encourage the return of rainwater to the ground, and they often place a filter on their drains as an added precaution.

Avoid using commercial pesticides in your lawn care and landscaping. Not only will it keep people healthier, it will keep the ground and runoff free from chemicals. One easy way to avoid pesticides is to plant native drought-resistant plants. They are more suitable to local weather conditions and diseases, and will be easier to care for in the long run – which also saves money!

### Give a hoot

Every day, small and mid-sized businesses have a huge impact on the earth just by cleaning and cleaning out their offices and places of business. You can minimize that impact with some thoughtful changes. For instance, make sure that your cleaning service is using non-toxic or low-toxic cleaners. Check out Green Seal's list of certified green cleaning products at [www.greenseal.org/findaproduct](http://www.greenseal.org/findaproduct) or Design for the Environment at [www.epa.gov/dfe](http://www.epa.gov/dfe). When it comes to disposing of wastes, especially hazardous wastes and electronics...consult with your Sustainable Business Leader Program (SBLP) representative to find local pollution prevention resources.

**“Going green has saved me more green than I ever could have expected!”**



*Sustainable Business Approach #4*

# Transportation

Green transportation can be healthy transportation.

As a business owner, you're probably also concerned about employee health, wellness and productivity. The great news is that many forms of alternative transportation are good for the earth and great for your employees' health and well-being.

## **Make way for bikes**

The single easiest way to encourage folks to ride their bikes is to make space for bike parking. At its most basic, that means low cost bike racks...although covered parking would provide even more of an incentive. Being able to shower at work would provide an incentive to ride, as well!

## **Go Charlie**

Charlie Card, that is. Subsidize the purchase of a monthly MBTA pass, and help employees research the most efficient and attractive way to travel to work via public transportation.

## **Share the ride**

Help your employees connect with co-workers interested in carpooling, or make it easy for them to use a service like GoLoco, Zip Car and MassRides ([www.commute.com](http://www.commute.com)). If you offer parking, work with Zip Car to designate some parking spaces as Zip Car spaces.

## **Check out alternative fuels**

While biodiesel has become the country's fastest growing alternative to diesel, there are other alternative fuels that bear checking out. For instance, compressed natural gas is being used in fleets of delivery trucks, transit and school buses. Plug-in hybrid technology, while typically used for passenger cars, can be found on some passenger vans, utility trucks and buses. Finally, entrepreneurs continue to search for sustainable alternatives to traditional fuels...for example, GreenFuel, Inc. recycles carbon dioxide from flue gases to produce biofuels and feed. Visit [www.eere.energy.gov/afdc](http://www.eere.energy.gov/afdc) to learn more about your options for alternative fuels.

## **Stay local**

Evaluate your travel policies to see if some meetings can be held via videoconference. Not only will you decrease your carbon footprint by having fewer employees on planes, you're likely to increase productivity, as well.

## **Make it worth their while**

Consider how you can help employees rethink their transportation strategies, and how to reward them for sticking with their good intentions. Some employers provide special parking for those using hybrid vehicles, some provide cash bonuses towards the purchase of a hybrid, some subsidize the cost of a T pass...you get the picture.

# Waste Reduction

## Reduce your waste. Reduce your costs.

If you take a good look around your business, you'll see many ways to reduce your waste. And not only is waste reduction good for the environment, it can be cost-effective as well.

## Get to zero

There's a lot of discussion these days about "Zero Waste" but what does that really mean for your business? It means diverting as much as you can from your waste stream (and your local landfill) by reusing and recycling. It means thinking bigger and reducing that waste stream overall. It means going the extra mile by purchasing items made from recycled materials.

Carefully examine your buying habits. Chances are, you can (or should) stop buying some of the stuff you're buying. A good rule of thumb is... if it's not re-usable or recyclable, stop buying it.

If you produce a packaged product, or are a retail business, can you reduce your packaging? And how much of your packaging is currently recyclable? How much of it could be? Recyclable smaller packaging can cut down on your costs, decrease the impact on the environment, and send a powerful message to your customers that you care about sustainable business practices. Increasingly, consumers and business customers are looking for reduced and recyclable packaging in their own purchases, so cutting back there could become a competitive advantage for your business.

Take some simple steps to reduce your waste stream. Institute the practice of double-sided copying; encourage staff to reuse paper that's been copied on one side; get yourself off junk mailing lists (and make sure your own mail list is clean and up to date); stop printing meeting agendas; stock your kitchen with permanent ware rather than disposables; work with vendors who are also committed to minimal packaging...the list goes on.

**“We recycle about 250 tons of cardboard and paper, saving us about \$25,000 a year in operating costs.”**

## Recycling...it's not just for white paper anymore

These days, your business can recycle a broad variety of items, including paper, co-mingled plastic, glass and metal cans and bottles, and organics (which are composted). Also make sure you are buying office supplies with at least some post-consumer recycled content.

## The reusable foursome

Businesses generate tons of waste by throwing away furnishings, construction debris, pallets and appliances. In fact, one-quarter of all landfill waste comes from construction. Chances are, some other business or family can use exactly what you are throwing away. Your sustainable business practices also help make you a better corporate citizen, too. Visit [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org) to learn more.

## And the toxic four

Regardless of how green you are, chances are, you will find yourself needing to dispose of compact fluorescent bulbs, batteries, cleaning products and paint. If your business uses a lot of batteries, consider rechargeable batteries. Visit [www.earth911.org/business-resources](http://www.earth911.org/business-resources) to use their re-use/recycling locator.





# Sustainability Checklist

## Energy Conservation

- Change those lightbulbs
- Turn down the thermostat
- Turn off the lights
- Keep the heat (or the cold) inside

## Water Conservation

- Keep the flow low
- Kick the bottled water habit
- Keep the watershed clean

## Pollution Prevention

- Use green cleaning products
- Ensure safe disposal of hazardous materials

## Transportation

- Make way for bikes
- Take the T
- Share the ride
- Check out alternative fuels
- Keep it local

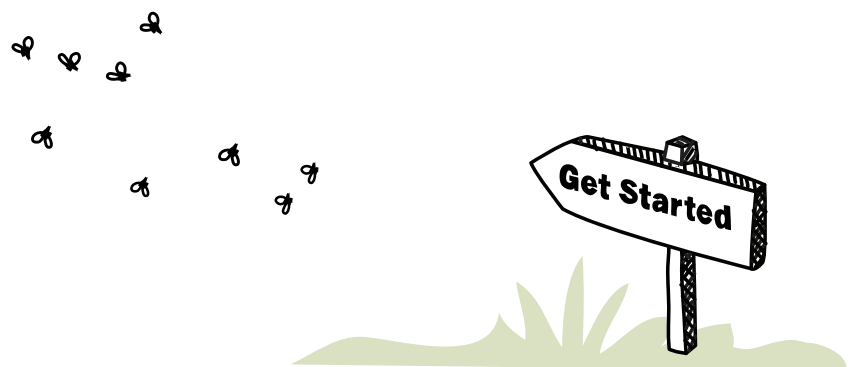
## Waste Reduction

- Get to zero
- Reduce. Reuse. Recycle. Compost.

## Sustainability Management

- Build a sustainable office community

“On Earth Day, we hosted a celebration at our restaurants to allow our team to brag about our sustainable practices, and to tell customers how they can help. We even printed up flyers with information on our sustainable practices, and practices they can put in place at home.”





## About Save That Stuff

Save That Stuff is a leading waste management company that helps over a thousand New England businesses and institutions safely and efficiently get rid of paper recyclables and other recoverable scrap materials otherwise destined for the dumpster. Founded in 1990, Save That Stuff currently collects corrugated cardboard, newspaper, mixed paper, electronics, organics, cans and bottles.

24 Bunker Hill Industrial Park  
Charlestown, MA 02129

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## About the Sustainable Business Leader Program

The Sustainable Business Leader Program is a technical assistance program to actively support small and mid-sized businesses in assessing and improving their environmental practices, implementing waste reduction strategies, and decreasing their carbon footprint.

[www.sustainablebusinessleader.org](http://www.sustainablebusinessleader.org)

## About SBN

The Sustainable Business Network of Greater Boston is an organization of business leaders committed to promoting high, ethical standards in business, a multiple-stakeholder business model, productive and fulfilling workplaces, and environmentally sustainable business practices. We share best practices both in the workplace and in the greater community.

[www.sbnboston.org](http://www.sbnboston.org)

**“We make it easy to recycle and hard to put it in the trash.”**