

# Innovative ideas to create a more sustainable office

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As more customers become aware of their environmental impact, they're looking to businesses they work with to have good green credentials. For companies of all sizes, innovating to make their offices work sustainably is a significant first step to becoming more eco-friendly.



Here's how you can do it:

## What are sustainable offices?

Sustainable offices are workspaces that promote productivity while minimising their impact on the natural world. Using technologies and innovative ideas, these offices work to be energy-efficient, minimise waste, and promote green behaviours amongst the colleagues working there.

## Importance of sustainability at the office

Having greater sustainability in the office isn't just crucial for the environment. It's vital for employees and the wider business too.

Employees and customers are equally aware of their environmental impact. So businesses can increase their motivation and engagement by empowering and supporting teams to work in more eco-friendly ways.

For any business looking to grow, improving sustainability is essential. This can start with changes in the office.

In the next five years, McKinsey found that 83% of experts believe Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives will increase shareholder value. Similarly, EY's Global Institutional Investor survey found that 74% of institutional investors would divest from companies with poor sustainability performance.

With this in mind, promoting green initiatives in the office is a good starting point to future-proof performance.



### **Why should your company promote sustainability?**

Other than reducing environmental impact, there are many reasons why a company should promote sustainable work practices. Here are just a few:

**Lower operational costs:** Increasing sustainable practices in the office can make operations cheaper. This ranges from making energy savings to reducing waste disposal costs.

**Better innovation:** To become more sustainable, businesses must develop new, greener solutions. Not just in the office but in the wider company too.

**Improved resilience:** Introducing more sustainable practices into a business means reviewing to pursue better efficiency. This includes whole systems, such as office operations. This, in turn, will increase a business' resilience.

**Enhanced company culture:** Promoting sustainability in the workplace helps create a shared purpose amongst employees. Working together towards a greater, greener world boosts morale and internal culture.

**Increased employee loyalty:** Sustainable businesses with eco-friendly practices often have more engaged employees. Companies can also improve team retention by empowering individuals to drive green initiatives independently.

### **Office sustainability ideas and how to implement them in the workplace**

Everything needs to be considered when thinking of ways to be more sustainable in the office. This includes everything, from every lightbulb to each piece of paper used.

Though not all sustainable business examples look the same, there are plenty of new, innovative ideas to make workspaces greener.



## **Ways to be more eco-friendly office-wide**

What steps can you take to make your workspace more sustainable? Here are some suggestions:

### **1. Explore innovative ways to lower your carbon footprint**

The level and causes of every business's (and therefore every office's) carbon footprint will look different. Working with partners to set up carbon measurement and reporting systems will show you your workspace's exact contribution.

From this data, you can start to make decisions and think of innovations that will reduce your office's carbon footprint. This includes changing the workplace, making commutes greener or offsetting carbon through tree planting.

### **2. Invest in eco-friendly office products**

From vegetable-based inks to recycled paper and biodegradable pens, replacing your stationery with greener alternatives is a straightforward way to introduce eco-friendly office products into the workplace.

Consider switching to energy-efficient equipment, such as printers and scanners, to make even more of an impact.

### **3. Repurpose, recycle, and reuse**

This is a motto that can inspire and drive all sorts of sustainable practices, including:

Ensure you engage employees in thinking of ways to repurpose, recycle, and reuse items or materials. You never know; they may come up with your next big idea.

### **4. Join the Green Office Programme**

The Green Office Programme is a great way for employees to get involved in making the office more sustainable. With plenty of information and resources, it gives them all the advice they need to take action or raise awareness in the workspace themselves.

### **5. Encourage hybrid working**

By reducing the carbon emissions caused by commuting and sharing resources with other businesses, hybrid working is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint.

“Hybrid work styles also help employees get a better work-life balance and be more productive, meaning there’ll be benefits for your business alongside the environment,” says Joanne Bushell, MD, IWG, South Africa.

## **6. Introduce green technology initiatives**

Technology is a non-negotiable in most office spaces. Investing in green technologies allows eco-friendly companies to take their sustainability to the next level.

This ranges from choosing energy-efficient devices to investing in shared cloud storage, solar power, and eco-friendly lighting. Even incremental changes to technological infrastructure can bring substantial environmental benefits.

## **7. Educate employees on sustainability and treat it as a core business value**

If sustainable business practices are part of your core values, they’ll drive your team’s activities, including in the workspace. There are small but important actions employees may take as a result of prioritising eco-friendly behaviours. These include turning off lights, recycling paper, and buying reusable coffee cups.

## **8. Encourage green commutes**

- Making recycling bins accessible near all desk and printer spaces.
- Creating a drop-off point for unwanted furniture or items to be repurposed elsewhere in the office.
- Setting up a repair scheme or e-waste recycling programme to fix or remove broken electronics sustainably.
- Many commuters spend hours sitting in rush hour traffic, contributing to pollution. Where possible, encourage your team to use public transport, carpool, cycle, or walk to work to minimise their carbon impact.
- Choosing workspaces as close to employees’ homes as possible will also remove the need for lengthy commutes.



## **Eco-friendly business ideas for office kitchens**

Don't let your sustainable practices stop on the office floor; keep your workplace kitchen as green as possible with these



easy tips.

### **1. Switch to eco-friendly cleaning products**

Many office cleaning products can damage the environment, including aerosols and bleaches. Consider asking your cleaning company to use eco-friendly alternatives or stock up independently.

### **2. Provide compost bins and recycle**

Adding compost and recycling bins to your kitchen space is a simple but effective way of dealing with waste in an environmentally-friendly way.

### **3. Eliminate single-use cutlery and plastic**

Supplying plates, mugs, knives and forks mean employees won't need to pick up single-use styrofoam cups and plastic cutlery. This will stop these products from damaging the environment for years to come.

### **4. Opt for eco-friendly snacks**

Choosing suppliers that minimise waste, use eco-friendly packaging and practice responsible sourcing will help your team make greener and often healthier choices.

If you buy food from external suppliers, choose nearby providers to reduce your carbon footprint and benefit the local economy.



### **Make eco-friendly changes to the main workspace and power usage**

Using energy efficiently will benefit the environment and your electricity bills. Find out how you can reduce your power usage in the below advice.

#### **1. Go paperless and reduce reliance on printers**

Try to limit unnecessary printing. Notes, documents, and memos can be made digitally and sent via email or the cloud.

If you can't avoid printing, opt for biodegradable or recycled paper options, print documents double-sided, and have

recycling bins available to dispose of any waste sustainably.

## **2. Ensure all electronics are entirely switched off overnight**

It's easy to pick up bad habits over time, but leaving devices on standby can considerably impact your carbon footprint and energy bills. Remind employees to switch off all electronics as they leave at the end of the day. This includes monitors, heaters, air conditioning systems and printers.

## **3. Decrease monitor or laptop brightness when working**

If an office is well-lit, employees don't need to have their computer's brightness at 100%. Encourage your employees to turn theirs down to around 70% to extend their device's battery life and save energy.

## **4. Replace incandescent bulbs with LED**

Replacing fluorescent lighting with LED bulbs is an easy step to save energy and reduce electricity costs.

## **5. Implement sensor lights in the office**

Installing lighting sensors means lights will turn on as needed and go off when no one is in the room, reducing unnecessary energy consumption.

## **6. Limit heating and cooling**

If there are large fluctuations in the office temperature, this uses more energy and produces more carbon. Yet the optimum workplace temperature is often debated among employees.

To start, set the thermostat at 18C and get feedback on how your team feels. You can then adjust the temperature up or down by a degree until you find the ideal level.

## **Benefits of increasing sustainability in the workplace**

Sustainable companies have reported that creating a more eco-friendly office:

### **1. Leads to higher productivity**

Working in an eco-office boosts employee morale by creating a work environment that's more comfortable and pleasant to be in. From an optimum office temperature to more natural lighting, these improvements allow people to work at their best and be most productive.

### **2. Reduces business costs in the long run**

There may be some upfront costs in making office technologies or infrastructure more sustainable. However, these changes benefit the environment and businesses' long-term bottom lines.

For example, installing solar panels can bring profits from selling excess electricity back to the grid. Plus, taking steps with low upfront costs can bring significant ROI. For instance, installing recycling or compost bins can immediately reduce waste disposal bills.

### **3. Creates happier employees**

By bringing teams together to build green initiatives and encouraging environmental innovation, businesses can give their employees a greater purpose. This doesn't just drive profits; it helps positively impact the planet.

As a result, companies with sustainability as a core value have employees that report feeling more fulfilled and loyal to their job.

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Digitalisation and new technologies are transforming the world of work. People want the personal productivity benefits of living and working how and where they want. Businesses want the financial and strategic benefits. Our customers are start-ups, small and medium-sized enterprises, and large multinationals with unique business goals, people and aspirations. They want workspaces and communities to match their needs. They want a choice.

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