

The Environment and You

It is impossible to go anywhere these days without being constantly reminded that the environment that we live in is changing. From warmer winters to floods and ice in the middle of the British summer, we must all accept that we have a part to play in limiting our impact on the planet.

The term 'carbon footprint' has become very popular in describing how much we as individuals impact on our planet. The same can also be said for Companies all over the world as organisations have a big social responsibility to take their 'Carbon Footprint' seriously and encourage their employees to think and act responsibly. This has been reinforced by the Corporate Social Responsibility drive by the Government and the increasing focus on environmental issues in legislation such as the Companies Act 2006.

You may think that 'going green' is an expensive and time-consuming activity that adds little value to you and your organisation but there is increasing evidence that having environmental policies can make a difference to the bottom line. For example, according to the CIPD turning off computers at night and at weekends can save as much as £27 per PC per year.

Furthermore, there are more intangible benefits to being a 'green' employer. Your brand being improved can help to:

- Attract employees.
- Increase motivation and commitment by having shared sets of values.
- Reduce turnover because the Company is one that people want to work for.
- Improve the health of the workforce and therefore reduce levels of absenteeism.

Environmental policies need not just be confined to energy saving measures and often include the following:

- **Transport Policies.** When your employees are travelling on business, are they encouraged to think about the relative merits of cars, planes and trains? For example, why travel from London to Paris by plane when the train is as fast and is far less polluting? Furthermore, recent changes in taxation have been designed to discourage the use of Company cars and due to this there has been a significant decline in the number of organisations offering Company cars as part of the remuneration package.
- **Travel to work.** What does the Company do to encourage employees to ditch their gas guzzling cars and cycle or walk to work instead? Does the Company encourage employees to car share? There a number of tax benefits and exemptions in place to encourage employees to use 'green' forms of transport including loaning cycles, public transport subsidies and parking for those that cycle to work. Providing changing and shower facilities can also encourage employees to walk or cycle to work.
- **Recycling.** Have you thought about what can be recycled? Using both sides of paper to print on and having recycling bins are obvious methods for improvement.

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Therefore, whilst this list is not exhaustive it is clear that Environmental Policies will very soon be common place in many organisations. With a more environmentally aware society, pressure is put upon all organisations to take their corporate social responsibility and environmental responsibility seriously. Not only can you help save the planet but you can also save a few quid in the meantime!

If you wish to discuss this further with our HR Consultancy team please call 01332 295 544 or email Clare Johnson on clarej@cooperparry.com or Lynn Williams on lynnw@cooperparry.com .