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Why Going Green Makes Good Business Sense

By Adam Senour

FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF ECONOMIC RESPONSIBILITY

Up until approximately 6 months ago, I was of the impression that being conscious of the environment was strictly for the benefit of the environment itself, and that I would derive nothing from it; the ultimate beneficiary of any recycling/waste reduction would be future generations, and the greater effect of my efforts would occur long after I was gone.

Thanks to Dr. Anthony Watanabe and my work as the web developer for the Toronto Regional Green Building Festival website at

<http://www.greenbuildingfest.com>

, I have come to the realization that there

are reasons beyond the ecological benefits mentioned above.

In speaking with Anthony, I noticed that he uses the word "sustainability" and the phrase "sustainable growth" quite frequently when describing his business. He even went so far as to conceive the Sustainable Business Resource Centre (

<http://www.sustainabilityincubator.com>

), a network of for-profit

and not-for-profit businesses whose collective mission is to grow while maintaining a sense of social responsibility and ensuring that they use the minimal amount of environmental resources

It was in speaking to the owners of the other members at the SBRC launch party that I discovered the direct financial benefits of sustainable growth:

Why Going Green Makes Good Business Sense

Lower energy/utility bills. By using energy-efficient appliances and renewable sources of energy (e.g. solar), consumption of energy resources decreases and, in turn, utility costs decrease.

Increased productivity. A cleaner office environment will keep employees happier and consequentially more productive.

Government rebates and incentives. Depending on where you live, there may be municipal, provincial/state-wide, or federal incentives designed to reward environmental responsibility.

For example, Natural Resources Canada offers an ongoing series of rebates and incentives for both homeowners and businesses at

<http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/corporate/incentives.cfm?attr=0>

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Another site worth checking out if you're interested in rebates and incentives is

<http://incentivesandrebates.ca>

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Lower costs on goods, both in the short and long term. Reduced use of goods and recycling provide an increased supply of goods as well as a decreased demand for said goods. Simple economic theory teaches us that this increased supply and/or decreased demand leads to lower costs for goods.

WAYS TO GO GREEN AND SAVE MONEY

Some of these ways may seem obvious, but bear repeating in order to ensure that as many of us as possible are contributing to our own sustainable growth:

Purchase energy-efficient products for use in the office. Look for consumption ratings on products that make use of hydro and gas. Another positive sign that a product is energy efficient is the Energy Star logo.

Don't print/photocopy unless absolutely necessary. I've seen many people print non-necessary documents, web pages, and even personal pictures on the office printer and distribute them to friends and colleagues.

A good rule of thumb when it pertains to paperwork is, "if you don't need a permanent record of it, don't print it."

Turn off all electrical devices and adjust the thermostat to match the outside conditions when no one is in the office. If you don't want to adjust your thermostat manually, consider investing in an electronic programmable thermostat. These thermostats can be programmed within 10–15 minutes of installation

Why Going Green Makes Good Business Sense

and very rarely need to be adjusted.

Choose environmentally responsible companies for your commercial needs. Companies such as Diamond + Schmitt Architects Inc. (

<http://www.dsai.ca>

) that show a commitment toward sustainable

growth will help ensure that your needs are met while making minimal use of natural resources.

Transmit mass-consumption documents electronically where and when possible. Besides being far less expensive to do so than to mail out said documents, paper use is also minimized.

Consider features for your fax line such as Call Screen and Privacy Guard. Companies such as Primus (

<http://www.primus.ca>

) offer features for any phone line that will allow the owner of the line to filter out

and eliminate needless and unnecessary calls.

In the case of a fax line, activating filtering features will allow you to block known mass fax senders from tying up your fax line, shortening the lifespan of your fax, and wasting ink and paper on unsolicited commercial faxing. These features are typically minimal in cost (usually no more than \$5.00 per feature per month) and can be considered a wise investment on the basis of avoiding unsolicited commercial materials alone.

These are just a few examples. If you examine your own business environment, you will likely find many other ways to contribute in a positive manner to both the environment and your company's bottom line.

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<http://www.adamwebdesign.ca>

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Gardening Your Personality: The Greens Of Growth

By Kirsten Hawkins

Many gardeners are the nurturing type: just like Mother Nature. People say they have "green thumbs"

Why Going Green Makes Good Business Sense

because they can make anything grow. Is your personality the growth type? Are you the kind of person who wants to see others grow and develop? If so, you probably love to be around children and, though you are exhausted at the end of the day, you feel like it is all worth it if you have helped other people. So is there green in your garden?

It seems to be a silly question: is there green in the garden? Most people think that green automatically appears in the garden. Leaves and stems are almost always green. But green can also be used as an accent color itself, though it's often overlooked - just like the nurturing individual - a teacher, a preacher, a farmer. These nurturers are vital to the world, but often go overlooked.

Why does the color of a garden even matter? Many psychologists have studied the effects of colors on the human psyche for years. Colors both reflect our current emotions and elicit certain emotions from us. In other words, if you feel happy, you may wear your yellow shirt to work. Yellow is a happy color. If you look on the walls in the doctor's office, they are most likely blue or some other calming color. Green is a color of growth and nurturing. Used in the garden, can give those feelings liberally.

Many people focus on the brightly colored flowers - the reds, yellows, and oranges, but they overlook what a simple green can do for the garden. The next time you go to the greenhouse to pick out flowers for your garden, take a moment and consider this. It's important because the garden - and your whole house - should reflect your personality. If you are the nurturer, let the green come out and show the neighborhood that this is your sanctuary.

When it comes to greenery, use it liberally in the garden. It's difficult to have too much green. Using green in the garden has a two-fold effect. First, by filling the garden with a green backdrop, the other colors will stand out more vibrantly. If you set off a firework in the middle of the day, it's rather unimpressive. But if you place it on a dark backdrop, it will light up the sky. Green in the garden helps to accomplish this. Green also has a second effect. It gives the appearance of a lush, healthy garden. It's nice to see the different flowers in a garden, but if you fill in the areas between them with some greenery it makes the entire landscape seem to jump to life.

So when it comes to your garden, does your loving and nurturing side come to the front? Can your neighbors see the effect of your green thumb? With the careful placement of some green plants, you can bring your garden to life and make it an extension of yourself. After all, you spend a great deal of time, effort, and money in the garden. Shouldn't it reflect part of you?

Kirsten Hawkins is a food and nutrition expert specializing the Mexican, Chinese, and Italian food. Visit

<http://www.food-and-nutrition.com/>

for more information on cooking delicious and healthy meals.



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