



Sustainability in the workplace





“Then I realized that there are only two ways of dealing with the obstacles in your way. Either you let them discourage you, or you use them as an opportunity to get creative.”

Introduction

Nope, you don't have to wait until you've come up with the perfect sustainability strategy.

Rethink, reduce, reuse, recycle, repair. These five verbs are all you need to take the first steps towards more sustainable office behaviors. (Well, they're perhaps not all you need. Because there's this practical little guide too!)

'Just going for it' is key, but don't do so without informing your colleagues and employees about why you are taking those steps and where you want them to take your business. Invite people to participate, and to actively contribute ideas. Why not put your heads together to compile a list of the five actions that will help you make the most progress?

Be sure to get your suppliers and other stakeholders on board as well. The more you spread the word, the more attention CSR gets. The painful fact that [Earth Overshoot Day](#) comes earlier every year proves that this is an urgent matter, to say the least.

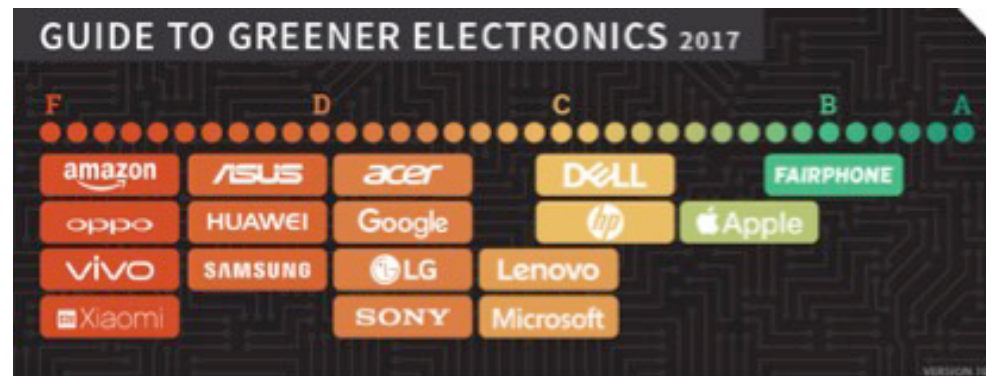
Thinking of a sustainability strategy tailored exactly to your organization's needs? Then [this article \(in Dutch\)](#) is a must-read.

Let's get to work!



IT

- Consider the total cost of ownership (TCO)
- Check your office appliances' energy efficiency with the help of the ENERGY STAR or EU labels
- Take a peek at Greenpeace's Guide to Greener Electronics



Leaving your computer on stand-by all night? That consumes as much energy as it takes to make 30 cups of coffee.

- Use rechargeable batteries and collect used batteries (or better still: use no batteries at all)
- Don't leave your appliances on stand-by; switch everything off instead
- Put your computer in sleep mode rather than using a screen saver
- Don't leave your charger plugged in
- Collect empty cartridges (or ask Recyca to help) and use refillable cartridges
- Choose an energy-saving mode for your office appliances
- Close the loop by giving your hardware a second life (www.close-the-gap.org)



Office kitchen, cafeteria

- Opt for Fair Trade, organic, local, ... products
- Provide vegetarian meals
- Take a closer look at the coffee you sip all day.
Is it Rainforest Alliance Certified?
- Ban disposable cutlery, plastic cups and plates
- Avoid PET bottles; drink tap water instead
- Say no to single-portion packaging
(e.g. for milk, sugar, ...)
- Don't throw your leftovers in the bin
(<https://www.shareyourmeal.net>)





Cleaning

- Use plant-based cleaning products
- Make Ecover, Froggy and Sonett your best friends
- Sort your waste (food waste, plastic, metal, glass, paper,...)
- Use recycled toilet paper
- Put a brick in your toilet tank to save water when flushing
- Install a refillable soap dispenser or use a plain soap bar



four boxes of
A4 copying paper
= one tree

Office supplies

- Keep an eye on your stock!
- Paper
 - FSC or recycled
 - 80 grams versus 75 grams
 - Paper tape versus plastic tape
 - Notebooks with glued spines rather than spiral spines
 - Duplex printing as the default setting
 - Work digitally whenever you can
 - Make your fonts one size smaller
- (Ballpoint) pens and pencils
 - Refillable
 - Cardboard or wood instead of plastic
 - FSC-certified wood
- Recycled Post-its and labels
- Refillable glue pens and correction rollers
- Stapleless stapler
- Cardboard protective envelopes instead of bubble mailers
- Collecting point for old (ring) binders, perforators, staplers, envelopes, stationery, ...



Communication



- Choice of paper
- Plant-based ink
- No large color areas on your printed materials
- AnySurfer-label/green hosting
- Event guidelines:
 - Accessibility
 - Waste streams
 - Green Key
 - Catering
 - Working with disadvantaged groups
 - Goodie bag
- Up-to-date databases
- Respect for privacy
- (The point of) promotional gifts



Office furniture

- Circular?
- Cradle-to-cradle?
- Design for Disassembly (NNOF - BMA Ergonomics)
- Ergonomics
- Plenty of greenery
- Second-hand furniture
- FSC-certified wood



Leaving the
air conditioner running
for one extra hour
consumes as much
energy in one month as
watching tv does in
a whole year.

Spread the word

- On your website/blog
- Mention the certification labels (e.g. FSC for printed matters), but make sure they are correct
- Sustainability report
- Share your actions or ask the questions that are still on your mind:
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