

## How green is your office?

Michelle Grice (Shel Design)

Have you ever stopped to think about the 'ecological footprint' your business is making? Quite often it is in the area of printing and promotional materials where businesses are making the largest negative impact. It's amazing how many things we do around the office (home or external) that are done by habit without stopping to consider the effects on our environment. Or you may be one of those really savvy business mums who know the value to the environment, and to your business image, of using and promoting 'green' practices, and are already doing many of the tips on the list below – well done! Either way, this list will assist you to consider how eco-friendly your business is and might trigger some ideas to improve your current practice.

### General Tips

- Look for businesses that promote 'green' practices and make them your preferred suppliers.
- Consider whether some of your meetings can be done via phone or via applications such as Skype so that you are not driving as much.
- Join online networking groups such as Business Mums! This also potentially reduces the amount of driving if much of your networking and support comes from online sources.

### In the Office

- Consider whether you really need to print out that email/document/etc. Each time you print you are using energy, paper and ink.
- Re-use paper which has only been printed on one side for notes, phone calls, to-do lists and so on. You can staple or clip the paper together to create a notepad.
- Print on both sides of a piece of paper where possible (for home printers, you can feed the paper back through manual feed).
- You can make a huge difference just by changing the type of paper you use. Look for recycled content paper.
- Have 2 bins in your office, one for recyclables and one for waste.
- Recycle your printer cartridges. Go to [www.recyclingnearyou.com.au/](http://www.recyclingnearyou.com.au/). This is the Planet Ark and Sensis 'Recycling Near You' website. You can enter your postcode, suburb or council to find where you can recycle in your local area.
- Turn off your computer when you finish work for the night.
- Send your invoices via email rather than posting them – the receiver can then choose whether to print or not.
- Install energy efficient lighting. Go to: [www.greenhouse.gov.au/gwci/lights](http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/gwci/lights) for more information.
- Think twice before turning on the air conditioning or heating. In summer, open a window instead and in winter dress a bit warmer.
- Think about ways you can give things away instead of throwing them. For example old computer equipment, magazines, furniture. Rather than producing rubbish, see if someone else might get even more use out of your old things. Go to: [www.freecycle.org.au/2](http://www.freecycle.org.au/2) or call your local charity organisation (eg Salvation Army, St Vincent De Pauls, etc).

### Promotional/Marketing Materials

- Consider whether web marketing campaigns rather than print ones will provide the same (or better) result. We tend to 'go with what we know' and if we see a great flyer in our letterbox or a great brochure in the doctor's

surgery, we assume that our business needs the same materials. This is not to say that print materials should not be used at all, but consider web-based options as part of your marketing plan.

- Printers that use green printing methods eliminate a lot of waste in the printing process. Look (or ask your graphic designer to look) for printers that use:
  - Recycled paper with post-consumer content
  - De-inked paper
  - Acid Free paper
  - Uncoated paper (better for recycling)
  - Hydrogen-bleached chlorine free paper
- Choose recycled options for printing (most printers offer both options).
- Where possible, design standard size printed promotional materials to minimise paper offcuts.
- If you are a product based business, find packaging solutions that require minimal materials.
- Use thinner paper stocks for stationery (e.g. traditional, embossed letterhead are usually not necessary).
- Where possible use smaller brochures, flyers, books and so on to avoid using more paper than necessary.
- If you need to send files to a printer or graphic designer, upload large files rather than sending them on disc. If you don't have FTP, then you can use a service like YouSendIt: [www.yousendit.com](http://www.yousendit.com)
- If you are viewing proofs of your promotional materials ask for digital PDF proofs instead of hard copies where possible (if you are using a graphic designer, they will usually view proofs for you – but let them know you prefer this option).