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Writing a Proposal to the CEO about Going Green

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Introduction

Purpose: In this paper, we will find out the why it is essential to adopt and follow green, environmental friendly practices, how it will help in long term sustainability, the means by which everyone can contribute to eco friendly practices and how following such practices will help preserve the earth's biodiversity and lessen the impact on climate change.

Background: Organizations across the globe are concerned with environmental sustainability and trying to find solutions to reducing their carbon footprint. Buildings contribute almost 40% of CO₂ emissions in the U. S. and reductions efforts to reduce the levels of emission helps in the sustainability efforts (LaSalle, 2009). Well known corporations have implemented green practices because it improves business values. A lot of consumers are adopting ethical consumerism, which means that they are consciously purchasing goods and services which follow green practices and ethical standards. Cannon, IBM and Intel are some of the companies following such practices (Rodriquez and Stephenson, n. d.). These companies, as well as other corporations, have understood that success in business now does not only mean economic performance but also the environmental and social concerns, to improve sustainability and enhance

their reputations as a caring organization (U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2009). Scope: There are governmental regulations in place for environmental issues, and with climate change impacts already visible, these regulations are bound to become more stringent. Organizations, already adopting green practices will find it easier to blend into the future socio economic climate. Additionally, as we will see, these green practices also result in substantial cost savings to the organization.

Discussion

I. Main Point 1

A lot of countries have allocated land for green agriculture, where farming is done without the aid of chemical fertilizers. Instead, organic fertilizers like manure and compost are used, and despite initial fears that this would reduce the yield, there has been sufficiently robust yields to ensure economic viability. Chemical fertilizers affect the quality of ground water due to seepages, and green or organic farming is a conscious way to protect the earth's environment. There are support groups in most countries and autonomous organizations like the United Nations and Greenpeace are spreading awareness globally. Protecting the environment has to be a global initiative, and it is foolhardy to expect one or two countries, to lead the way. It has to be a concerted effort by every conscious human being.

Sub Point 1. Large automobile manufacturers are experimenting with automobiles which operate on electric power or alternative fuels like biofuels and hydrogen. The purpose is to reduce the emission from the combustion of fossil fuels, which directly impact the environment by emitting carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide. Petroleum refinery majors like ExxonMobil

have invested millions of dollars into research on Algae Farming, where certain algae in tandem with sunlight produce biofuels, which are environment friendly. Airports are also contributing to protecting the environment.

Sub Point 2. A large number of airports use solar panels mounted on their roof tops to generate energy for their own requirements. Airports have also started controlling deicing operations, since the deicing procedures involve the use of harmful chemicals which seep into the ground and impact the quality of groundwater adversely. Aircraft landing and takeoff procedures have been changes, since it was observed that the angle of descent or ascent determined the amount of fuel consumed and hence also the level of environmental pollution. To protect the earth's green cover, anti deforestation laws have been enacted in most countries across the world. Schools have introduced environmental studies in their syllabus to educate children about the earth's environment and the consequences of environmental pollution.

II. Main Point 2. There are many ways for an office to go green. Energy and materials are used to produce market and transport/ deliver almost all things which are bought and used. For implementation of a " Green" program in office, consumption of all resources have to be mapped and monitored. The U. S Environmental Protection Agency (U. S EPA, 2009), has given guidelines for offices / businesses to go green in five steps:

Assess the level of compliance, Engage employees, Find support, and Build knowledge, Plan.

Define your green vision, choose approach, Assess impact.

Turn the strategy into action

Measure progress, Communicate, periodically update goals.

These steps make it practical for an organization to adopt green practices to ensure their contribution to a green earth. With ethical consumerism growing, an increasing number of people are opting for green products, which may be food, beverages, cosmetics or clothes. Organic, eco friendly product sales are increasing at the rate of 20% to 25% annually (U. S EPA, 2009).

Greening products at office, like renewable energy sources and energy efficient lighting may cost more initially, but pays back over time and actually reduce costs. These products are more affordable now, and if required, even financial assistance is available in the form of loans. Acquiring knowledge of green methodologies and proper planning ensure that the greening efforts in office will not be in vain. Solar energy is being used in all parts of the world and it's a completely renewable source, as long as the sun is there. There are solar solutions available for offices and commercial building, where solar strips of photovoltaic cells are attached to windows receiving sunlight, to generate electricity. Green initiatives can be taken outside the office area also; with employees arriving at the same time, sharing common transport. The same employees who are following green practices in office, can replicate some of them in their homes also, which would increase their overall contributions to a green earth. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) has programs to help in the reduction of environmental effects and consumption of resources for offices and businesses. The full list of environmental and sustainability programs are

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available on the internet, for those who are concerned but do not know how to go about it. Additionally, there are different standards laid out by government and non government bodies, which provide clear guidelines as to what is considered a pollutant and at what levels. These standards make it easy for an organization or business to understand the implications of their own contribution to the impact on the environment and ways and means of reducing them.

Sub Point 1. Here we will focus on two areas of green initiatives in office, which are paper and energy.

Paper:

Paper is produced from wood, which is a valuable natural resource. Reducing the green cover provided by trees also adversely impacts the environment. An average office in the U. S. uses about 500 to 1000 sheets of paper per month per employee (LaSalle, 2009). Such volumes have a negative impact on environmental sustainability. The cost of printing comes to approximately between \$. 06 to \$. 13 per page (McCool, 2008). At the lower end of usage, 500 sheets per employees at \$. 06 totals to \$360 annually. At the higher end of 1000 sheets at \$. 13, the total is \$1560. This is a high cost and efforts can be made to reduce this. It is also observed through studies that around 17% of what is printed is actually not required by the person who did the printing. That indicates that without any complex calculations or strategy, 17% of printing and paper costs can be saved straightaway (McCool, 2008). With the advent of the internet, it seemed that printing costs would reduce substantially, since all the information required by a user would be available on the internet, and one would just have to open the website concerned and

read whatever was required. But just the opposite has happened, where the printing of online material is increasing for later reading. As early as 1975, the concept of having a paperless office was floated, but never really took off. People were printing less then, since the cost of printing pr page was much higher. With advances in technology, printing cost per page has reduced, but the overall cost has increased due to increasing volumes of printing. Some methods to reduce costs of printing are given below. These will help the environment as also save expenditure. Source: Green Office Guide and GreenPrint Technologies.

Try and use E mail as much as possible instead of printing. Handouts, instructions, website details can all be e mailed.

Buy recycled paper; it will reduce the cost of purchase of new paper.

Use double sided printing where possible. Use of print preview will help in eliminating cover pages or blank pages from being printed.

Using the pages per sheet technique, which allows the user to chose how many pages per sheet, should be printed. This helps in saving unnecessary wastage of paper due to printing with large fonts or graphics.

Turn off images before printing. It will consume lesser paper and ink.

Use recycled paper for single side printing. These can also be used for note taking.

Use of projectors for meetings instead of giving printed handouts.

Paper and packaging make up around one third of the solid waste used in landfills (U. S EPA, 2009). By the judicious use of paper and printing, an average office can be expected to save a minimum of 20% of their paper and printing costs.

Sub Point 2. Energy:

Fossil fuels provide most of the energy needs of the world. These are petroleum, natural gas and coal. These are non renewable sources and their extraction creates an adverse effect on the environment. Fossil fuels combustion releases green house gases like carbon dioxide (CO₂), which accumulates in the upper atmosphere and traps radiation from the sun, thus causing warming. The other green house gases like nitrogen oxides and Sulphur are toxic in nature and cause damage to the earth's flora and fauna and also create health problems for humans. Energy cost is the biggest contributors to operating expenses and it is estimated that almost one third of the energy used in an average commercial building is wasted (U. S EPA, 2009). Poor energy management needlessly escalates energy costs and also harms the environment. Some methods of saving energy usage in a typical office space are given below:

Automatic thermostats should be installed, for controlling heating or cooling of the office. These two, contribute to around 40% to 60% of energy usage in an office or commercial building. The thermostat should be set to 78 degrees Fahrenheit in summer and 68 degrees in winter, programmed to start perhaps half an hour or one hour before employees are expected to arrive. It can also be programmed to shut down after office hours.

Insulation of the doors, windows, floor and ceilings should be double checked, so any leakages can be plugged to increase the efficiency of the cooling/ heating system and conserve energy.

Replace old printers and photocopiers with energy efficient ones. These will ensure long term savings.

Alternate energy sources like solar power can be used to reduce consumption of traditional energy sources.

Lights can have a photo sensitive detector, which will keep it switched off, when there is sufficient natural light. Also different, more efficient lighting technologies can be used to reduce energy usage.

All computers and printers should be switched off when the office closes.

Leaving printers, photocopiers and computers consume a lot of energy, which is wasted, since there is no one using it once the office closes.

Replace old CRT (cathode Ray Tube) monitors with energy efficient LCD (liquid Crystal Display).

III. Main Point 3. Benefits from Greening the office space are given below (U. S EPA, 2009).

Reduction in expenditure from reduced waste and better efficiency.

Enhances organizational image.

Better public relations.

Higher employee morale.

Stay ahead of the curve in relation to competitors.

Attract ethical consumers.

Exhibit high standards of leadership.

Increase the organizations credibility.

Be better prepared for future laws and regulations governing environmental pollution.

Sub Point 1. The figure 1. 0 gives the estimated savings for reduced usage of paper and printing.

Assumptions: The pages per employee per year have been scaled down by

10% for each instance of reduced number of employees. The logic used is that because of the lesser number of employees, it is assumed that the scale of operations would also be reduced, hence a decreased need for printing. Blended cost of printing from the two ends of the scales discussed earlier has been taken to arrive at \$1 per page.

Sub Point 2. The simplest way of reducing energy consumption is by using energy efficient lighting. These may cost more initially, but pay off in the long run. Figure 1. 1 gives a comparison between the different types of lighting. Source: NRDC

Assumptions: energy costs have been taken at 11 cents per kWh (Kilo watt Hour). The total cost of bulb plus energy has been calculated on 800 lumens producing bulbs. As we can see, the LED is the most efficient and cost effective system for lighting. Initial cost is high, but it pays back with a few years, in terms of life span and lower energy consumption (Horowitz, n. d.)

Conclusion

It is only through the focused and sustained efforts of the majority of the population, that a difference can be envisaged, which will make the earth a better and healthier place for our future generations.

Recommendations

Form a Green Team in the office tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Green measures decided upon.

Engage employees. This is very important, since no new plan will succeed unless there is a “ buy in” from employees. It is not possible for the Green Team to monitor all the time, and employee engagement for implementation of a green plan will ensure its success.

Provide recycle bins for glass, paper, aluminum cans. There are various agencies and organizations involved in the recycling process of such goods, and some even offer collection from the user's location.

Spread awareness amongst employees of the laws governing environmental pollution, and how they can help in contributing to controlling this factor.

Encourage employees to come up with eco friendly ideas, which are realistically implementable. The organization may also consider providing an incentive to the employee whose idea is selected for implementation.

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