

Quick Wins to Reduce Your Carbon Footprint

There are several relatively easy 'quick wins' that your organisation can implement to reduce its emissions.

These steps could reduce your carbon footprint, enhance your operational efficiency and cut expenses, all of which can positively impact your bottom line.

Whether or not your organisation has already started to measure its emissions and implement a climate action plan, or you are unsure of where to start, these simple recommendations can get you started on the right path.

1. Engaging your employees

Identify solutions that can significantly reduce your carbon footprint and inspire behaviour change across your workforce. These changes can help the wider organisation achieve environmental targets. Behaviour change can be implemented most often at a lower cost than installation of physical measures or savings from installed measures and is just as important an opportunity to reduce your organisation's emissions and energy bills.

Different strategies your organisation could look to implement include, setting up an internal working group or establishing a 'green champion' to motivate staff on specific aspects of your environmental policy, using employee incentives to help reach targets and creating a feedback loop to encourage active participation.

2. Communicate with suppliers

It is equally important to start a conversation with your suppliers and review your supplier contracts with your own emissions and wider sustainability in mind. Initiate a conversation with your suppliers to explore potential quick wins within your procurement process.

For example, consider ways to reduce the number of trips your suppliers make, explore the use of electric or hybrid vehicles for transportation where possible,

and inquire about your suppliers' own carbon footprint, net zero plans and credentials.

Where feasible, collaborate with suppliers who prioritise sustainability in their operations.

3. Renewable energy

To enhance your sites sustainability, consider transition to renewable energy sources like wind, solar, hydro and biomass. These clean options can cut energy costs and benefit the environment.

Additionally, adopting renewable energy may provide financial incentives. Sustainable heating technologies, like heat pumps or solar thermal collectors, may qualify for the government's non-domestic renewable heat incentive. In addition, if you generate electricity through solar PV or wind turbines, you can receive payments from your energy supplier through the government's feed-in tariffs.

Start by exploring renewable electricity tariffs with your supplier, either matching your usage with renewables or contributing to renewable development. Remember, while green tariffs help, they do not replace efforts to reduce or generate your own power.

4. Conserve water

Begin with a thorough water audit. This involves assessing how water is used throughout your office, identifying areas of high consumption. Installing water metres and monitoring systems to track water usage in real-time can provide valuable data for identifying areas where efficiency improvements can be made.

Prioritise routine inspections of pipelines to promptly detect and address leaks. Timely repairs are crucial to prevent water waste.

5. Recycling

Recycling is arguably one of the easiest ways to reduce waste and improve resource efficiency in the workplace. A best practice organisation will be operating efficient recycling schemes for metal, paper, cardboard, glass, food waste and toner cartridges, at the very minimum.

Ensure your waste collection is reliable, and regular. Ensure any private waste collection suppliers are reputable. Enquire and ask for references for how the company treats and processes waste.

6. Paperless office

Becoming paperless can be beneficial for the environment and for your organisation at the same time.

Folders and cabinets full of paper are not the most practical in our digital world and can lead to office inefficiencies. Where possible, try to avoid printing altogether by encouraging electronic-only communication and document storage. The immediate savings and benefits your organisation can make are significant, and include reductions in paper waste, ink cartridges and electricity.

7. Lighting

Try to make the most of natural light wherever possible by positioning desks closer to the light. This reduces the need for powered lighting. Research also shows that natural light has a number of health and well-being benefits, such as being a source of vitamin D as well as boosting employee productivity.

Choose LED lights over other lightbulbs across your sites, as they are significantly more energy efficient. Install timers on your lighting and/or motion activated light sensors which will turn on for a designated period of time, or whenever there is activity in the room.

While LED lights may require a higher initial investment compared to other lighting choices, they prove to be a cost-saving solution over the long term.

8. Power-off

Electronic equipment such as computers and laptops are plugged in but not being used/on standby, account for a considerable amount of electricity consumption.

Encourage employees to unplug devices and turn off machines when not in use. This is especially true of computers and monitors, where it is common to leave them not only plugged in but also switched on in screen saver mode. Switching devices off will also boost your organisation's cyber security.

9. Heating and cooling

Understand how the heating and cooling systems in your workplace operate and take advantage of any energy efficient settings that are built in. For example, you may be able to use timers or sensors to control your energy output. Turn off heating and cooling in unoccupied rooms and ensure windows and doors are closed when using heating or air-conditioning to optimise efficiency. The optimisation and regular servicing of your boilers is key. In the summer, if it is not too hot and it is secure to do so, open windows instead of opting for air con.

10. Insulation

It is almost meaningless to focus on heating and cooling without considering the insulation of your building. Check your windows are properly sealed when closed and with no drafts. The same goes for doors and door frames. Again, start your energy efficiency journey by evaluating your current set up properly, before jumping into the procurement of new insulation products.

11. Gather feedback and communicate progress

Sustainability, climate action and organisation reputation are now interlinked. Employees and customers, in particular the younger generations, want to work for organisation with a strong social outlook and conscience. Having a clear and measurable climate action plan will make your organisation a more desirable employer to work for.

Communication is a key way of ensuring everyone's involvement in implementing more sustainable practices across your organisation. Make sure that everyone understands the why, the what and the how behind your carbon reduction

strategies. Sharing regular feedback on targets and achievements to staff also helps to maximise employee engagement and drives behavioural change. Reward individuals and teams on their achievements.

12. Measurement and tracking

Measure and benchmark everything in relation to your environmental impact, consumption and expenditure, wherever possible.

The three most common metrics include your carbon, water and ecological footprints. Sustainability reporting is already mandatory in larger organisations and the requirement will soon filter down to smaller organisations. The sooner your organisation starts to embed environmental change and record its climate position the better.

Carbon footprint calculations are also a sensible form of risk management for any organisation to enable you to make quick decisions regarding future legislation changes, supply chain disruption and hikes in the price of energy. Calculating your carbon footprint, and working to reduce it, can lead to cost savings for your organisation too.

13. Review your pensions and investments:

Many pension funds have investments in high greenhouse gas emitting industries, but pension funds can also be part of the solution. Your employees will likely want increased transparency and reassurance that the pension funds your company invests in are not negatively impacting the environment and accelerating climate change. Setting up a sustainable pension is one of the most powerful tools you have at our disposal to minimise your organisation's climate footprint. Investigate your current pension portfolio and make the switch to ethical, validated green pension funds.

14. E-waste:

59.4 million tonnes of e-waste were produced globally in 2022, an increase of more than 21% compared to five years prior. There are facilities that wipe clean and take apart hardware and recycle the internal parts in the UK and/or export overseas. Find your nearest e-disposal location and make the effort to drop off your e-waste. Also, there are now low carbon web servers and website hosting platforms so even your web based/virtual footprint can be measured and kept to a minimum.

About CAFA

Climate Action for Associations (CAFA) provides the information, guidance and certified solutions that membership organisations need internally and to support their members they represent. CAFA has a tailored service to help members of trade associations to measure, report and reduce their emissions in line with science-based targets.

To find out more contact: alison@cafacollective.org or call 0424974737.