



The Green Architect

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Greening Your Office

Whether or not you're environmentally conscious, it is hard not to notice the amount of trees our profession consumes. At a recent open house, Ah'bé landscape architects—a 15-person eco-sensitive firm—created a "sculpture" from all the waste paper their office generated in a six-week period. Amazingly, they collected 670 pounds of paper, enough to occupy 17 cubic ft of landfill, or 5.5 trees.

As WWCOT started talking green, the mounds of paper thrown away each day prompted us to look at the way we did business. We connected with a nonprofit group called SustainableWorks (www.sustainableworks.org) that supports the City of Santa Monica's mission to improve the quality of life by doing things to improve air and water quality, conserve energy, and improve traffic.

SustainableWorks (SW) works alongside companies for a year to analyze their practices, product purchases, and policies. I've found the process to be very enlightening, and I want to share the ideas here.

First, SW visited our office and compiled reports of commendations and

recommendations. The Commendations Report made us feel good knowing that we were already doing some environmentally positive things (like buying 100% recycled paper towels and napkins). The Recommendations Report was much longer and contained a variety of considerations to improve our impact on the environment. From that long list I have pulled a few suggestions, and added a few of my own. If you're interested in the entire list, please email me at blairs@wwcot.com.

General:

- Designate time to educate employees on new environmental actions taking place. This is critical to making any change. We are finding that without explanation, people don't understand or support the changes.
- For marketing materials, give preference to eco-friendly items such as commuter mugs, organic t-shirts, canvas bags, etc.

Reduce Waste:

- Minimize access to disposable kitchenware, i.e. put paper plates on top shelves and ceramic at eye level.
- Create a "REUSE" section in the office supply area where gently used file folders, envelopes, and binders can be relabeled or cleaned for reuse.
- Place recycling bins next to trash bins at each workstation. The managers of the "greenest high rise in California" have eliminated the cost of waste removal by selling their white paper waste. Each employee is provided with a large trash can for recycling under his/her desk and a one gallon container for "trash" on top. By separating the waste and selling the white paper, the building saves \$57,000 annually. The money they make on the white paper offsets the cost of the waste hauling.
- Set printers to print double-sided. When a document needs to be single sided, spend the extra time to change the default.
- Make scratch pads from old blueprints cut into smaller pieces.

Purchasing:

- Purchase recycled-content paper items, giving preference to those containing the