



LOW COST WAYS TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

By their very nature, charities are often environmentally-friendly workplaces. What's budget-friendly is usually what's environmentally-friendly.

But let's take some time to address that as we work for our various causes, saving the planet is sometimes not top of mind. (Unless of course, your work for an environmental charity!) Unfortunately sometimes our need to cut costs, or be client-centred can have a negative environmental impact, so it's important to think about what we can do to offset those decisions.

In the long run, you might want to consider creating a workplace policy outlining your organization's environmental footprint, and getting energy-use and other audits done. But let's start with the basics.

We're breaking the rules. Charity Savant's Cheat Sheets normally have 5 tips, but there are so many easy ways to reduce your charity's environmental footprint that we just had to share them all.

1. Enable and encourage working from home: Help your employees reduce their environmental footprints by creating a work from home policy, and setting up remote access to their workstations. Nixing the commute even just one day a week saves 20% in transportation. Even better: switch to a 4 day work week!

2. Set up a commuting program: When you do need your employees to be in the office, think about creating an environmentally-friendly commuting program. Organize car-pooling for your staff and volunteers or subsidizing public transit costs. Or even partner with a local bicycle shop to offer your employees discounts on bike purchases and servicing. And make sure cyclists have racks to lock up their bikes while at work.

3. Save electricity: Not only is it environmentally-friendly to reduce energy consumption, it'll save you money in the long run.

- Many workplaces leave computers on when they're not in use. Encourage employees to shut down before they leave.
- Use power bars for your equipment and turn them off at the end of the day, or when they're not in use.
- Replace your light bulbs with CFLs or other energy efficient bulbs.



- Turn off lights in rooms you're not using. Or install motion sensor lighting in bathrooms, meeting rooms, and hallways.
- Use a programmable thermostat to automatically reduce energy use when the office is empty.

4. Buy recycled products: There are lots of products that don't need to be purchased new. And we're sure you've already got a tonne of second-hand pieces of equipment in your nonprofit office. You can also buy remanufactured ink and toner products, recycled paper, and other office supplies.

5. Invest in durable equipment and furniture: On the flip side, don't be afraid to invest in equipment and furniture that you'll need for the long haul. Sure this might cost more upfront, and most charities want to save money. But you should avoid going with the cheapest products if they're poorly made. You'll wind up replacing them constantly and contributing your fair share to landfills.

6: Go business casual: Many charities are pretty casual in the first place. But if you have to crank the air conditioning in the summer to accommodate the suits, reconsider your dress code. Not only will you reduce the need for cooling, your employees won't need dry clean their clothes as often, reducing the chemical waste produced by dry cleaners.

7. Buy in bulk to reduce packaging waste: Avoid buying single-use items, and if you can, even go so far as to purchase items in bulk. This is not only less expensive, but it reduces packaging waste. So order your offices supplies and non-perishables like sugar, coffee, and tea in larger quantities.

8: Buy cutlery and dishes: Plastic forks and paper plates definitely not environmentally friendly. Invest in cutlery, dishes and drinkware for your staff and volunteers to use. On top of being sustainable, it feels a bit more professional when you're serving your donor coffee in a mug rather than a paper cup.

9. Recycling and composting: Most of us have recycling bins, but do we really know what goes in them? Remind your staff, clients, and volunteers about what is recyclable by posting signs near your bins. And take that extra step by starting up a compost pile. Don't know what to do with all that dirt? Use it in your office plants, or donate it to a local community garden.

10. Ditch bottled water: The bottled water industry creates a significant amount of waste. Bottled water is not only 2000 times more energy-intensive than tap water, it's estimated that 2 billion tonnes of water bottles are sitting in landfills in the US. So, if your tap water is safe to drink, make the switch. Buy a pitcher to keep cold water in the office fridge. And get a filter if the water tastes funny.



11. Set up an office collection for items that are hard to recycle: Electronics and batteries can be a pain to recycle. Set up a collection in your office for your staff and volunteers to contribute to. You'd be surprised how many old phones people have lying around!

12. Switch to environmentally-friendly cleaning products: You can easily make the switch to using environmentally cleaning products. If they cost more than you're comfortable with, and you've got some spare time (who does?) consider making your own products.

13. Avoid travelling for meetings: Make it easy to video conference or use conference calls so your staff can avoid travelling for meetings. In some cases, this isn't possible - like if your staff are doing home-visits with clients, or a fundraiser is planning to meet with a donor. But you can use video and teleconferencing for meetings with suppliers, vendors, and maybe even your board meetings.

14. Sign up to use a bike courier: If you use courier services locally, consider switching to a bike courier service. Bike couriers can be cheaper, faster, and are definitely more environmentally friendly.

15. Conserve water: Along the same lines as drinking tap water, conserve water in other ways. If you have control over your office fixtures, use low-flow faucets and toilets. If you don't, try installing aerators on faucets and shower heads. Fix any leaky taps and toilets, and try collecting rainwater to water your gardens and plants.