

Breathing life into business

Tanya Newton

With meetings, appointments, that big report due, the launch of your next campaign, and the analysis of results from the last one, you're most likely in for a busy week. But amongst all the hype and running around, have you stopped just for a moment, to think about the effect that your company is having on the environment?

When the office lights come on in the morning, when you trawl through spreadsheets analysing data and when you catch a taxi to the airport for an interstate meeting, your company becomes a contributor to the wider issue of global warming through its emissions of carbon dioxide. I bet you can see the black balloons already.

While the issue of climate change is heating up around Australia, with water restrictions and increasing pressure on the government to do more, climate change is a topic that should be on every organisation's agenda. And not as an item at the bottom of the list so that it can be hastily skimmed over.

We seem to be far more aware of climate change as individuals, making more conscious choices around our use of resources like water and electricity at home, yet the potentially huge changes that could be instigated by businesses of all sizes has not yet been fully explored. The issue of carbon emissions and environmental credibility is slowly becoming more real amongst the population at large and your customers and shareholders will soon start asking the tough questions.

Some large corporates are starting to recognise that they can make real improvements to their bottom line by making environmental responsibility an integral part of their business strategy. For example, making a small change to a product's packaging, using energy efficient lighting, and purchasing LPG powered vehicles are all seemingly small things that can equate to reduced ongoing expenses as well as emissions.

You don't have to implement huge changes, or be a multinational corporation to make a difference. The advertising agency where I work, Oxygène Branding & Communications,

has recognised the importance of the issue and has taken direct action to offset all of the agency's CO₂ emissions.

"Climate change is perhaps our first truly global crisis, as every single person on earth is directly effected. As an agency we could easily sit around and wait for the multinationals and large corporates to take action, but we decided to take a leadership position and act now", Oxygène Director Simon Rowell said. "The cost of becoming carbon neutral is not huge, and the process was pain free".

After being independently audited, Oxygène's CO₂ emissions were found to be just over 62 tonnes per annum. This is now being offset through investment in international energy efficiency and forestry projects, including the replanting of cleared land in the high carbon yield forests of the Strezlecki Ranges in South Gippsland.

Oxygène has also made an effort to reduce its use of energy at the outset. A recycling program and the use of energy efficient lighting are just some examples of small changes that have helped to create a 'greener' workplace.

Other options for reducing the impact of CO₂ emissions include minimising your overall consumption of energy (via more efficient equipment, using teleconferencing over flying, etc) or replacement (such as switching to 'Green' electricity).

It's time to combat CO₂. Time? Don't worry, it won't take much. In between reading the latest business report online and your next video conference, all it takes is some simple research and a phone call. Companies like Ecovantage can help you to work out the carbon footprint of your business by measuring energy, waste and travel impact and can assist you to take the necessary steps to reduce, replace or offset your CO₂ emissions. No matter how big or small your business, your CO₂ footprint can be eliminated.

Whilst the pressure on individuals and the government is slowing building and the masses are starting to create the push for change, now is the time for Australia's businesses to stand up and take direct action to reduce their effect on the environment. The benefits that come from being environmentally sound far outweigh the costs and it's easy to organise too. Now is the time for change - it makes business sense for all of us.

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