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Your employees are throwing away cash with both hands

Save big money by reducing waste

By K.J. McCorry

Can you imagine your horror if you found an employee flushing dollar bills down the toilet? This happens every day in businesses nationwide. Most employees are not aware or even conscious of the waste and the money that is actually going down the drain. According to EnvironWise, it could be up to 4 percent of company operational expenses.

Here are a few ways your company can reduce waste in your business:

Recycle More and Reduce Trash

Typically trash companies charge separately for trash and recycling. Much of what ends up in the trash could actually be recycled; because recycling charges are usually lower, this is a great way to save money. About 80 percent of what Americans throw away is recyclable, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Until recently, Brooklyn Brewery, a beer distributor out of Brooklyn, spent about \$3,290 per month (more than \$39,000 per year) for waste disposal. By implementing some simple recycling programs the company saved about \$25,000 annually in the program.

Waste Management of Colorado encourages businesses to recycle more. In fact, they have a program where your company can earn credits toward your bill by finding new markets for your unused materials. Contact them directly (www.wm.com) for more information.

Make sure that recycling in your business is convenient and easy. Provide each office and cubicle with separate recycling and waste receptacles. Inform and educate your janitorial staff on recycling and waste management and find ways to streamline their work. Use your company's newsletters and communications to remind staff and employees to recycle until it becomes a habit for everyone.

Reduce Paper and Printing

Reducing paper is another way to save money. The average worker uses about 700 pounds of paper per year according to Environmental Defense. That adds up to about \$700 per employee just for paper. Xerox did a study in 2008 and found that about half of the documents printed in a typical office are thrown away within 24 hours. That is \$350 per year per employee. Multiply that by the number of employees you have in your office — now you are talking substantial savings.

Here are some simple ways to reduce paper use:

- **Change Copiers and Printers to Duplex Printing:** Ask your IT experts to change the copiers and printers to default automatically to two-sided printing.
- **Create One Paper Tray for Reuse:** Dedicate one paper tray in the copy machine for the backside of bad print jobs. Often the documents we print are for drafts or temporary use and could be printed on the backside of old print jobs.
- **Refrain from Printing Meeting Handouts:** A great deal of paper is wasted in meetings with handouts for all participants. Encourage participants to bring their laptops to meetings, or view them via the LCD in the conference room.

Encourage a “Turn Off” Campaign

Businesses lose a lot of money by leaving on lights, computers, and other equipment during off hours. Turning off unnecessary lighting and equipment is one of the easiest things a company can do to reduce waste and save money. Overall, you can reduce your company’s annual energy consumption by 7 percent to 12 percent according to Energy Star. Lighting consumes about 40 percent of the energy used in an office building. Computers consume about 1,000 kilowatt hours per night, which adds up to \$150-\$200 per computer per year of wasted energy.

Encourage your employees to turn off the lights and equipment in their office before they leave for the day. Assign one person/s to be responsible for common areas. Again, it will be essential to continue to remind employees through all the mediums of communication until it becomes a habit.

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