

## 4 ways to go green

By Martha Visser

October 18 2007: 9:50 AM EDT

Want to make your small firm an eco-friendly powerhouse, and more profitable?  
Here's some tips.

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(Fortune Small Business) -- "As a business owner, I feel good coming to work every day," says Sara Kubersky, 32. She and her sister, Erica, 27, co-own Mooshoes on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Started in 2001, the company sells shoes and accessories that she refers to as "vegan." But their office is also entirely green. Kubersky says this fosters a sense of solidarity and loyalty in her staff. "They actually care," she notes. It must be working. Generating more than \$1 million in sales a year, the company has twice had to move to larger offices. She points out that this growth is due, in part, to the loyal customer base built and retained by the company's green approach. "We could tell that other companies are getting in on the trend," she says.

Here are some tips to help your business go green:

Get smart about recycling.

Look at what your company consumes and find ways to recycle, reduce and reuse.

Recycle paper and introduce less-toxic supplies and materials. Companies such as Green Earth Office Supply sell recycled-paper products to businesses. Another good source is The Green Office, an online retailer of recycled, environmentally friendly, and sustainable business products, school supplies, and paper.

Refill computer ink cartridges rather than add them to the landfill. The same goes for obsolete computers. There are companies, such as Petaluma, Calif.-based Ecohaul, that will, for a fee, remove, refurbish and, short of that, properly dispose of old office equipment and supplies. And it can be a heartwarming win-win to donate something no longer relevant to your business to a worthy school or nonprofit. Be sure to check out any applicable tax credits.

Review your energy use. If you're ambitious and building a new commercial space or remodeling an old one, it may pay to install solar panels. The Califon, N.J.-based Public-Private Partnership for Advancing Housing Technology recently renovated a 19th-century Victorian mansion, maintaining the historic integrity of the building while refitting it with solar panels that provide heat and hot water. Now a bed and breakfast called The Raritan Inn at Middle Valley, it is entirely self-sustaining, needing no outside electricity or heating. Joe Wiegand, a senior research engineer from the National Association of Home Builders research center says the inn is making news for its energy approach. And the inn can also take advantage of New Jersey's clean energy program, which offers up to a 70 percent tax rebate. "New Jersey has a very extensive incentive in place for photovoltaic energy," he points out. Many other states have similar programs.

Think outside the gas tank. Transportation can have a huge impact on the bottom line for businesses large and small. If you need a company car, consider going hybrid. As consumers continue to embrace automotive alternatives, more models are entering the market and incentives continue. In fact, the IRS just announced the 2007 hybrid Saturn Aura was recently certified for an alternative motor vehicle credit. There's plenty of information on the latest in alternative transportation at car-centric websites such as Edmunds.com and carmax.com.

Do your research.

Co-op America, a green advocacy organization and eco-driven online catalog, has earned a Business Seal of Approval award for its product assortment as well as offering an inspiring assortment of hints and tips on how to go green. And there are strong resources outside of the United States, such as Friends of the Earth Scotland, an organization that offers a useful online audit to assist in the greening of your office. And, for the ultimate inspiration, check out the Gateway to Astronaut Photography of Earth, an online collection of global shots dating from the Mercury missions in the late '60s.