GOING GREEN

Here are some ways to make your business or nonprofit more environmentally friendly:

Paper and Printing

- Buy paper that features at least 30 percent recycled content.
- Recycle office paper. In Lansing, you can drop mixed office paper off at the Waste Reduction Services facility, 530 East S. Street (http://www.lansingmi.gov/pubserv/wastereduction/, (517) 483-4400). In East Lansing you can recycle office paper at 1800 E. State Road, or 841 Timberlane Street (http://www.ci.east-lansing.mi.us/, (517) 337-9459). If your business is located in other communities, check with your local government public services office to find out how you can recycle office paper.
- Set your printers and photocopiers to double-sided printing, or “duplex mode,” as a default mode (or purchase/use printers and copiers which feature this mode) for all drafts and internal documents.
- Where possible use “draft” mode on your printer to reduce ink or toner use.
- Do not print out documents unless you have to; use e-mail as often as you can for communication, or scan other documents and save them as PDFs.
- Join a partnership program, such as the Environmental Protection Agency’s WasteWise program (http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/partnerships/wastewise/index.htm) to reduce the amount of paper your business uses. Joining is free, and you will need to track your efforts to be recognized as an EPA WasteWise Partner.
- If you are a nonprofit organization, you can electronically file your IRS Form 990 or 990-EZ, as well as the most commonly used Charitable Trust Section forms, with the Michigan Attorney General’s Office. For more information go to http://efile.form990.org, http://www.michigan.gov/ag or call the state’s Charitable Trust Section at (517) 373-1152.¹

Computers

- Set your computers to go into hibernation or standby mode after a short amount of idle time – say, 10 minutes.
- Turn computers off completely at the end of the day.
- Switch from desktops to laptops for even greater energy efficiency.

Lights

- Switch from traditional incandescent light bulbs to energy-saving long-life compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs).
- Turn all lights off when you are not in the office.
- Install light timers or sensors that turn lights off when no one is around.

¹ Tip courtesy of the Michigan Nonprofit Association (http://www.mnaonline.org).
Food/Kitchen

- Get rid of paper plates and Styrofoam cups. Start using reusable and washable plates and utensils, recycled napkins, and coffee mugs instead.

Programs (see our sheet on “Green Incentives” for more ideas)

- Join a “green” initiative in your community. Just as with exercising, you’ll have more motivation if you join a group with tangible goals and measures of progress. In the mid-Michigan area you can join the Greater Lansing Go Green! Initiative (http://GoGreenGoLansing.com), which involves taking a “business pledge” to reduce waste and energy use, encourage alternative transportation, implement recycling, and purchase environmentally-friendly products.
- If your community doesn’t have its own program, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) encourages small businesses to join the Energy Star Network (http://www.energystar.gov) then click on “Buildings and Plants,” then left-hand menu “Getting Started for … Small Business.” Under “What You Can Do” click the link that says “Join Energy Star for Small Business.”
- You can also buy power from renewable resources – like wind or solar energy – via the EPA’s Green Power Partnership (http://www.epa.gov/greenpower). Keep in mind that if your business uses less than 1,000,000 kWh of electricity per year, you must purchase green power for at least 10 percent of your next year’s electricity usage. See the web site for more details.

Buildings

- If you are planning on constructing or updating your building to house your business or nonprofit organization, or are in the building business, you can seek LEED (Leadership) from the U.S. Green Building Council (http://www.usgbc.org). According to the USGBC, the LEED Green Building Rating System is a third-party certification program for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. There are several categories in which you can seek certification for commercial buildings, including commercial interiors; core & shell; new construction; schools, healthcare & retail; and existing buildings operation & maintenance.

Links and Advice

- Co-op America’s Green Business program: http://www.coopamerica.org/greenbusiness/
- GreenBiz – news and information on how to align your green environmental goals with your green money goals: http://www.greenbiz.com/
- Green Business – online community for eco-entrepreneurs: http://www.greenbusiness.net/
- Natural Resources Defense Council Green Business Guides: http://www.nrdc.org/enterprise/greeningadvisor/?gclid=CMPN4NaxopcCFRg6awodDRHR1g