

Where's the will to go green?

Despite legislation and soaring fuel costs, there is still a long way to go in shaping Britain's business for a sustainable future. **David Lewis** advises on why businesses should go greener

The need for businesses to be seen to be green has never been more prevalent. As the population continues to grow, the demand for food, water and energy will rise by as much as 50 per cent by 2030, according to a recent global trends report. More so, energy costs alone are forecast to grow by 25 per cent over the next 10 years.¹

However, whilst the majority of UK businesses are incorporating sustainable strategies and initiatives, the experts' consensus is that simply not enough is being done to prepare for these changes. In fact, the warning from the UK Carbon Trust is the potential of 'sleepwalking into a resource crunch'.

One issue is misconception regarding initial financial output. With economic uncertainty, it is easy to understand why some people are deterred by the cost of 'going green'. However, 'green' and 'growth' should by no means be viewed separately but rather in conjunction as we work towards a low-carbon future and economic recovery.

According to the Department of Energy & Climate Change, inefficient buildings account for 43 per cent of the UK's total greenhouse gas emissions and UK industry could save up to £32bn over the next four decades by reducing carbon emissions and energy usage.²

Conclusive argument

The argument for a greener, cleaner business then appears conclusive, but for those starting out on sustainable strategy – where to begin?

As a good starting point, it is important for businesses to begin with the basics such as: turning off computers, televisions and all others appliances when not in use, switching off lights when not needed, reducing the thermostat on the heating and installing insulation. It may sound simple but it's often the smallest changes which can make the biggest difference, in some cases helping to reduce the energy bill by up to 30 per cent



Taking the first steps in energy management is the most difficult for most companies

which can translate into thousands of pounds in energy savings for the larger business.

At the next level, there are energy efficient utility products to consider. One easy but effective change, for example, is to switch to low energy lighting. For what is a relatively simple job, switching to LED lighting will deliver real tangible energy savings from day one, equating to a typical 77 per cent energy saving on the equivalent incandescent bulb. Added to this, is an average life expectancy of around 50,000 hours which drastically reduces maintenance and replacement costs. Used in conjunction with lighting control products such as occupancy

detectors, time relay delays and dimmers, businesses can benefit from significant cost and energy savings for relatively little disruption and expense.

The next step, once the basics are in place, is a move to automation. For some time, automation has been deemed a lifestyle choice rather than a tool for energy management and it's important that this misguided perception begins to change for UK businesses.

To place this into context, Schneider Electric estimates that businesses and consumers could reduce between 10 and 15 per cent of their energy usage through the implementation of energy

efficiency measures with a further 5 to 10 per cent achieved through automation. The savings however don't stop there as a further two to eight per cent can be saved through regular maintenance and making adjustments to the technology over time. Better still, for busy businesses, automation reduces the onus upon individuals so that minimum effort is required.

One true solution

The Simple Energy Management Solution SEMS by Schneider Electric is a good example. It combines all of the inherently independent mechanisms of metering, monitoring and simple control with a straightforward user defined interface for information to create one true solution. The technology has been specifically designed for use in small to medium sized buildings, such as retailers, health centres and small offices.

The final message then is one of continuity. Although sometimes overlooked, once sustainable products and practices are in place, it is almost just as important to monitor, maintain and improve them by continuously assessing consumption and patterns, then making changes as appropriate. In this way, businesses can ensure an optimum level of efficiency at all times and eliminate energy waste, making for a lean business infrastructure.

Both nationally and globally, the pressure to go green is mounting. However, it's not just about corporate responsibility; by investing in a sustainable strategy businesses not only gain environmental status but can achieve significant savings future-proofing their business for the changes ahead. Surely, it's time to join the green scene? ●

References

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-21922098>
2. The Department of Energy and Climate Change

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www.schneider-electric.co.uk