

Greening Your Spa

Good for Business - Good for the Environment

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The subject of global warming, reducing green house gases, limiting your “carbon foot print” are important issues not only for the environment but your business as well. Many of you have seen or heard about Al Gore’s movie, An Inconvenient Truth, which contributed to his being awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize. The focus of the film is to highlight the dangers of global warming and the need for each of us to take action to help save our planet. Dramatic words, yes. But the problem is very real. More and more of your clients are concerned about global warming. You can focus on their concerns as well as do the right thing and work by making your spa and med spa more environmentally responsible and, publicize this to create a competitive advantage. It is a truly win-win situation.

Operating an environmentally responsible business will also help reduce your operating costs; thereby making the business more profitable by conserving resources and reducing waste. Most of the suggestions that follow are not rocket science but rather common sense. There are also a myriad of community resources available to you at little or no cost to help accomplish your goals. With the ever increasing cost of energy and record oil prices, it can pay you to “go green”.

One place to start is your local utility company. They will come to your site and conduct a free energy audit that provides a list of specific ideas that can help reduce your energy costs. More often than not, they will also be able to offer you energy efficient products such as light bulbs, insulations and retro-fitting of heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems at attractive, subsidized rates with low cost financing and tax credits. Look for and take advantage of financial and tax incentives.

A good second stop is on line information sources such as the Federal Government’s Energy Star website www.energystar.gov/smallbiz . You will find links to state and local resources to help save operating costs including assistance in purchasing energy efficient equipment. Another web site that may add value is Greenbiz www.greenbiz.com that has a plethora of directories, web sites, links and data base search information.

Take the time to understand how your business affects the environment. Begin by making changes that can be done profitably or, at the minimum, not increase your costs. Going green can make you more profitable, not less. Take small steps. Do not try to do all this at once. Each little action can lead to the next - a gradual, incremental approach works best. Please remember, it is not possible to do everything right.

Let your clients and staff know what you are doing and why. Use this as a way to create a strategic advantage and to distinguish yourself from others. Doing the right thing does not have to cost you money.

For many of us, we may have heard the term “carbon foot print” but are not sure what it means or how to calculate it. Most of the tasks we conduct in the normal course of our business and personal life generate carbon emissions. These emissions accelerate global warming and climate change. The total amount of greenhouse gases you and your business produce, which are measured in units of carbon dioxide, are referred to as your “carbon foot print”. If we all took steps to reduce our “carbon footprint”, there would be a drastic reduction of these harmful greenhouse gases. Also, and very critical, is that the planting of trees naturally and significantly reduce greenhouse gases. If you would like to calculate your spa’s “carbon foot print” go to <http://www.carbonfootprint.com/USA/calculator> for a simple form to complete.

Environmentally friendly actions to green your company do not have to be large. Many small steps create measurable and sustainable positive changes.

Draft a company policy on environmental responsibility - a kind of eco-vision statement. Post it around your spa for all to see. This will show your clients and staff your intentions to be a responsible and positive force in helping to solve the world’s global warming problem.

The following are some ideas that can help “green” your business and that can also be used as marketing points as you present your spa and practice as “environmentally green friendly”.

One of the single most productive and effective actions you can take to help green our world is to **plant trees**. A single tree will absorb one ton of polluting carbon dioxide during its lifetime. Affiliating yourself with non-profit organizations that plant trees is worthwhile. Look for a local organization in your community to partner with. Think about developing a program which you can publicize that donates funds to plant a tree for a particular service or purchase.

Have a goal to plant 1,000 trees or whatever number is required to allow you to mitigate any green house gases you produce. Combine the planting of trees program with steps you are taking to reduce the production of carbon dioxide so you can boast to your clients, the community and the world that you are a practice that does not contribute to global warming.

Turning off all equipment when it is not being used, yields a savings of 25%. Most equipment left in the off position still use electricity. Turning off all computers at the end of the day will save 50% of their energy consumption. These actions will save 10,000 pounds of green house gases annually.

Conduct a water audit. Make sure there are no leaking water taps. One drop of water per second wastes 10,000 quarts per year. Just think of all the droughts we are experiencing in the United States and worldwide. Install flow restrictors or aerators on all water spouts. Each low flow valve installed on a hot water tap saves 350 pounds of carbon dioxide per year. Doing laundry on the warm rather than the hot cycle saves 500 pounds of carbon dioxide. Make all toilets low-flow by retrofitting them. These are all very low cost measures you can take.

Changing light bulbs to compact low energy bulbs will save 150 pounds of CO₂ pollution per year for each light switched to low energy. Think about installing occupant sensors that turn on lights when someone enters the room, upgrade ballasts on florescent light fixtures, and use timers on appliances and lights. These changes more often than not pay for themselves in a month or two. Many are also provided free or at a subsidized cost by your local utility company.

If you can find a way to move your thermostat down 2 degrees in winter and up 2 degrees in the summer, you will reduce pollution production by no less than one ton.

Look to purchase products that do not come with superfluous packaging. This is extraordinarily wasteful in both the energy needed to produce the packaging and the cost of disposing of it. Just reducing packaging waste by 10% at your spa can reduce another ton of pollutants from entering our atmosphere.

Ask your staff and clients to check their car's tire pressure. Properly inflated tires reduce gas consumption by 3%. Saving a gallon of gas eliminates 20 pounds of CO₂.

Look to buy paper and packaging that have the highest concentration of recycled contents. You should easily be able to find paper that has no less than 30% to 50%

recycled content; 100 % is also possible. Ask your supplier to make sure you are not buying paper that has been bleached with chlorine.

Use paper in place of plastic bags.

Think about changing from paper cups, plates and plastic utensils to reusable ones.

Collect used paper separately for recycling. Establish a trash recycling program wherever possible. Create a reuse when possible culture.

Look to stock your restrooms and shower areas with post consumer recycled products. Let your clients and patients know what you are doing and why with posted information. Make it a positive action which clients will respect.

Ask your suppliers to let you know what they are doing to reduce their emission of greenhouse gases.

Seek out eco-friendly cleaning and laundry products. There are now even inks, toners and the like that are environmentally friendly.

Get your staff involved in offering suggestions as well as monitoring your practice's eco-friendly efforts. Create your own "green team".

Last, and certainly not least, seek recognition for all of your efforts. Do not be shy. Market your eco-friendly business to gain public relations, and new clients as you would a new product or service.