

the green office guide for agencies

Think global, they say,
and act local. Here's how.

We started this report by inviting you to look at CSR with fresh eyes, then considered the clients, the agenda, its history, and stakeholders, and finally we looked at CSR in action. We close this report with a mini “green guide” for advertising agencies based on some hard-won advice from those who have gone before.

First, and most importantly, tackle this area in as professional way as any other area of your business. Sort out your priorities early on and use your best people to make sure fine words are turned into efficient, effective action. And once you are under way, tell the outside world – including clients – what you are doing.

Companies go down this track for a number of reasons. Some go green to save money. Some do it to reassure clients, or because **clients are expanding their corporate responsibility to include their whole supply-chain – including marketing suppliers**. Some do it because they have no choice – their employees insist. And some do it because it seems like the right thing to do. Whatever their motives, many corporations - and a growing number of public sector agencies – now build environmental, community and ethical priorities into their strategies and operations. Oddly, however, with a few notable exceptions, the communications sector has been slow to catch on.

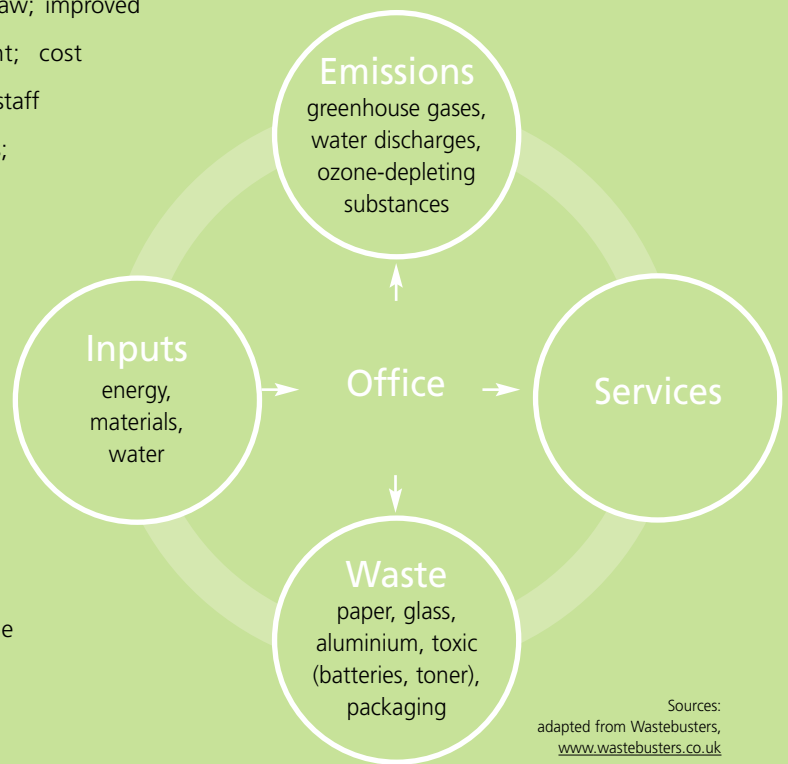
So how to get started? There is a large and growing literature on all of this, but for those who just want to get started let’s boil it all down into 9 key points that should help even the most distracted agency get to grips with the agenda. But let’s kick off with a question that is sure to be asked early on.

1. Why bother?

Time is money. So why spend – or invest – it in this area rather than others? Different agencies build their CSR business case in different ways, but key drivers most often mentioned include: compliance with the law; improved management control; risk management; cost savings; recruitment, staff morale, and staff retention; alignment with agency values; and – the key to sustaining such initiatives in the long term – differentiation and competitive advantage.

2. Can you map it for me?

Complexity baffles people, so how do we make this simple? Try mapping an agency's inputs, outputs, emissions and wastes and it ends up looking like the graph alongside.



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3. Where do we start?

The first lesson from those who have done it before: start by working out your priorities. The following are critical success factors:

1. Get early, top-level support.
2. Set up a small task force to manage the process, picking people who can make things happen – either directly or through their networks. Include staff from such areas as office facilities management, procurement and personnel.
3. Give the team a defined timescale, making its longer-term future depend on real progress.
4. Get a sense of where urgent action is needed by using staff surveys and such processes as energy and waste audits.
5. Zero in on areas with greatest impact, positive or negative.
6. Identify potential areas for improvement, along with likely costs and timescales.
7. Involve all relevant members of the team – ensuring their ideas for action and improvement are taken into account.
8. Develop an action plan setting out priorities, with key deadlines and milestones.
9. To build momentum, start with 'low-hanging fruit', that is no cost or low cost actions offering immediate gains.
10. Later, as the momentum builds, move on to more resource-intensive actions, especially those with a longer timeframe.

4. Where does reporting fit in?

Action, they say, speaks louder than words. Don't get hung up on reporting to the exclusion of other things. But note that many companies have found that committing to an annual progress report can help to drive internal processes. Done well, reporting helps identify areas where management systems are weak or non-existent, or where new responsibilities need to be allocated. Most importantly, though, the knowledge that progress – or the lack of it – will be reported at the end of the year spurs action.

Since most agencies in this sector are much smaller than their corporate clients, they could benefit from looking at the reporting processes developed for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Examples include:

- **The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).** Launched in 1997, and now into its second official cycle of guideline development, the GRI has published a set of indicators for companies to use in reporting and communicating their progress towards their CSR goals. Whilst it is most useful for large manufacturing companies, it does provide SMEs with the types of tools and framework needed for developing a robust process to CSR reporting. Although its 97 separate indicators would be burdensome for a SME to report to, it does give a condensed set of 50 indicators that would more than satisfy the aspirations of an advertising agency wanting to begin reporting. (<http://www.globalreporting.org>)
- As a less daunting alternative to the GRI, **CERES (Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies)** is developing a set of reporting guidelines specifically for SMEs, the CERES Reporting Requirements for Small Enterprises and Non-profit Organisations. For SMEs wanting to get to grips with the impacts of their office and operations, these guidelines provide a digestible version of the GRI, and will embed a robust framework that could be expanded to GRI-style reports in the future. The guidelines make the point that the environmental, social and economic issues facing a small organisation are often quite different than those faced by a large company. Despite comprising of a smaller set of indicators, these guidelines are based on the GRI, and therefore represent a robust framework for a SME embarking on reporting. (www.ceres.org)



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5. What is green housekeeping?

It really doesn't sound very exciting, does it? But for many firms this is the key to gaining employee attention early on. And with over 70% of office waste recyclable on average, there is significant potential to reduce the environmental footprint of your office⁽¹⁾. Lessons learned include the following:

- Adopt the '**Reduce, Reuse and Recycle**' approach.
- For example, instead of focussing just on paper recycling, encourage greater use of **electronic messaging**.
- Aim to **cut out problem materials**, or reuse them before focussing on recycling.
- Set up paper, glass and aluminium **recycling schemes**.
- Recycle, or properly dispose of, potentially toxic products, including batteries and toner cartridges.
- When ordering new photocopying or printing equipment, make sure it can use **recycled paper** – and offers double-sided printing options.
- Set **double-sided** as the default option on any printing equipment.
- Consider **using cloth** instead of paper towels in kitchens and washrooms.

(1) Wastebusters, Green Office Manual, page 3

- Reuse and **refurbish furniture**, where possible.
- Provide a central area where employees can bring **unwanted office supplies for reuse by colleagues**.

6. What is green purchasing?

Often, the biggest leverage that companies or agencies have is through their supply chains. Simply put, this involves vetting suppliers in terms of their own environmental or wider CSR performance. It also involves considering the environmental performance of office equipment such as computers and monitors. Given that their energy use ranges from 20% up to 70% of total office energy consumption, the potential for energy – and cost – savings is significant⁽²⁾.

Key steps here include:

- Build environmental criteria into tender and contract documents.
- Ask suppliers for information on product options offering improved environmental performance – and, where appropriate, specify them.
- Brief purchasing staff on the priorities identified by the project team.
- Investigate products covered by certification schemes such as the EU Eco-Label Programme.
- Select office equipment offering energy efficiency and other green options.
- Encourage suppliers to minimise – or take back and reuse – packaging.
- Buy products in bulk, where appropriate, including coffee, tea, sugar and other consumables.
- Buy from ethical suppliers wherever possible.

7. What about buildings?

This is a vital area, but often tough to tackle if you rent or lease your premises. So here are some relatively easy early steps:

- **Reduce lighting use** through time or presence controls and a 'switch-off' campaign – with signs reminding people to turn off lights and equipment at the end of the day.
- Check that **heating and air conditioning are only on when necessary** and regulated to the correct temperature.
- **Reduce water use** in bathrooms by upgrading equipment with new water-saving toilets and taps.
- Take the opportunity of any office refits or reconstruction to specify and incorporate **energy saving and other relevant measures**.
- Specify **non-toxic and solvent-free paints**.
- Look for **furniture and carpets with natural products**, recycled components – and those which can be recycled at the end.

(2) UK Government statistic. See www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/sdig/improving/partf/gpguide.htm

8. And transport?

This is a huge area of impact, not only on the environment, but also on the efficiency of business. In the UK, for example, business managers spend nearly 11 hours per week driving to an average of six meetings. Two of these are spent in traffic jams⁽³⁾. While many companies feel they can do little to reduce transport – this is not the case. Here are some steps that leading companies have taken:

- **Offset carbon emissions** from all travel by linking up with organisations like the Climate Care (www.co2.org) or Future Forests (www.futureforests.com).
- Encourage employees to **adopt flexible working hours** or to work from home.
- Where possible, use **video-conferencing** to replace travel, especially air travel.
- Provide incentives to **use public transport**, car sharing schemes or cycles.
- Promote **car sharing and cycling**.
- Offer alternatives to car usage, including season tickets for public transport – coupled with taxi availability for emergencies.
- Where cars are used, specify **fuel-efficient, low emission models**.

9. Anything else?

Once you get started, there are lots of things that can be done. For example:

- **Events:** Follow the advice under item 8 above, highlight the environmental actions being taken in event publicity, supply name-cards in reusable plastic holders (and make sure you get them back and reuse them), and provide clearly labelled recycling facilities.
- **Knowledge sharing:** Create opportunities and systems to promote knowledge sharing and organisational learning. Suggestion schemes are a good way to start, but the best companies do a lot more. Invite in thought leaders and agenda-shapers and have them brief your team. Invite key champions from client companies to do the same – and from suppliers and client organisations you would like to work with.
- **Incentives:** Motivate staff by providing them with clear, timely feedback on progress. Pinpoint areas of weakness and ensure they are dealt with. Begin to link targets and progress made to performance reviews and compensation.
- **Volunteering:** Encourage employees to volunteer in their local communities or to support other community projects. Make sure that the projects align with the agency's values – and regularly report on the investments made in terms of money and time, and on the progress achieved.
- **Pro-bono:** Volunteer time and resources towards developing campaigns that promote causes in which the agency believes.

And if you want more detailed information on how to make all of this work, see the UNEP/META Working Paper (2000), Green Housekeeping Guide – UNEP's Guidelines for Advertising and Media Agencies, or track down a copy of The Green Office Manual: A Guide to Responsible Practice, published in 2000 by Earthscan in the UK (www.earthscan.co.uk).

(3) Environmental Transport Association (1999) Going Green Magazine, ETA Services Ltd, Weybridge, quoted in Wastebusters (2000), The Green Office Manual, Earthscan, London and Sterling, Virginia.

