

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

How Your Business Can Buy Green and Save Green

In many companies, buying products and services follows a simple pattern: Assess what is needed, see what is easily available, and go with the cheapest option that does the job. However, sometimes a low price tag doesn't mean your business will save money in the long run. Often the opposite is the case.

TRUE COSTS

A cheap but less durable piece of equipment may break early or require time-consuming and costly repair. Energy-intensive appliances and computers run up high electricity bills. Feedstock deliveries in single-use transport packaging, such as cardboard boxes and disposable pallets, result in higher disposal costs. The environment pays a price, too: open space taken up by landfills, pollution from electricity generation and harmful resource extraction to replace discarded products. In addition, toxic chemicals—used in your production process or for landscaping or janitorial services—can take a toll on your employees' health and well-being. That can mean lower productivity and lower profit.

A BETTER WAY

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) is a business principle that aims to reduce the negative impacts products and services have on human and environmental health. In practice this means that a purchase decision is not based only on the price of a product, but also on its environmental attributes such as durability, reusability, recycled content, energy efficiency, toxicity, and the waste the product will generate. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), companies who practice EPP report not only savings and improved employee health and safety, but also a competitive edge. More and more, consumers and other businesses are demanding environmentally friendly products and practices.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Changing your company's purchasing practices can be done in small manageable steps. To find a starting point, determine the products your company or department buys in large quantities, and replace them one by one with "greener" alternatives. In an office setting, the "biggy" will probably be paper. Consider switching to copier and

printer paper with high post-consumer recycled content. For more information and a directory of environmentally friendly paper sources, go to www.conservatree.com.

Other office supplies have environmental pitfalls, too. Look for greener options such as remanufactured—rather than new—ink cartridges, replace disposable tape dispensers, pens and pencils with models that take refills (and keep plenty of refills on hand), and use only rechargeable batteries. Opt for reusable cups, silverware and dishes instead of single-use, and consider cloth towels instead of paper towels.

Is your business due for a larger investment, for example a computer system upgrade? This is a great time to consider "green" purchasing principles. Choose models that allow for upgrades to extend their useful lives, and look for energy-efficient machines marked with the Energy Star label. (To find Energy Star computers and monitors, go to www.energystar.gov.)

Your company may not purchase or use a lot of hazardous materials, but the environmental impact of certain chemicals, such as solvents and dyes, can be significant. While it may be difficult to find a substitute for a hazardous but essential ingredient in your production process, you can find many cleaning and landscaping products in less or non-toxic versions very easily. If you contract these services out, look for vendors that specialize in low-toxic practices or ask your existing vendor to make the switch.

For more tips on introducing "green" purchasing practices to your business, and for details on the environmental aspects of specific products and services, visit www.stopwaste.org/epp.

FINDING "GREEN" PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Talk to your current vendors first and tell them why it is important to you that they offer environmentally preferable products and services. Many companies have simply not been asked but will consider your request and even research greener alternatives. If you're not sure about a new product, don't hesitate to ask for a sample. Many suppliers will provide trial products and services at little or no cost, if this may lead to subsequent business.

To find providers of specific products and services, explore the following



Taking the first step toward environmentally preferable purchasing practices at your business can be as easy as stocking your office printer with recycled paper.

resources:

MONTEREY BAY CERTIFIED GREEN BUSINESSES

Find certified green vendors in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties, including printers, auto care providers, janitorial services and many more.

www.montereybaygreenbusiness.org

MONTEREY BAY GREEN GARDENER PROGRAM

Find a landscaper specializing in environmentally friendly gardening and landscaping.

www.green-gardener.org

MONTEREY COUNTY COMMERCIAL REUSE & RECYCLING GUIDE

Newly revised guide listing local providers of used appliances, office furniture and building materials, re-refined motor oil and other reused and recycled materials, in addition

to commercial recyclers and general informational resources.

To request a copy call 755-4579 or contact recycle@co.monterey.ca.us

Recycled Content Product Directory Database of vendors offering recycled content products, maintained by the California Integrated Waste Management Board and searchable by category.

www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RCP/

NATIONAL GREEN PAGES

A country-wide directory of environmentally preferable products and services, searchable by category, keyword and state.

www.greenpages.org

For more information about Environmentally Preferable Purchasing, or to schedule a waste assessment for your business, please call the SVSWA at 775-3000.

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