

# Green Purchasing for Business

Office products



Small Business Environmental Assistance Program: [www.pca.state.mn.us/sbeap](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/sbeap)

## Small purchases increase profits

### Greening your office purchases

Office products may seem like a relatively minor expense, but replacing conventional products with environmentally responsible alternatives, can save you money, attract customers, and benefit the environment.



Many green office products, particularly energy-efficient products, will save you money year after year. For example, converting to an Energy Star-certified printer that uses less energy can lower your energy bills. Many green products cost the same or less and perform as well as their traditional counterparts—so why not get them?

Even if the product costs a little more, you have the opportunity to lead by example while being green!

For more information on green purchasing, visit [www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbeap-p2.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/programs/sbeap-p2.html).

### Green marketing

A word of caution: Accurately describe your green practices to your customers. Be specific—do not just claim you are a “green” company. This can be confusing and frustrating for the customer.

Green business practices are increasingly becoming tied to market share. Customers may be skipping over you for lack of action or clear messaging. So show them you are thinking about the environmental impact of your decisions. When you buy a green product, tell your customers. Customer attraction and retention may depend on it! Can you afford not to buy green?

### How do I start?

Take note of your product purchases. Where are you buying green and where are you not? Particularly with bigger purchases, it is essential to try products first or speak with someone who already has. Start with your current vendor and ask for green products; if they don't provide green products, ask for them or consider looking for other local companies that do.

### Example: Fairview Office Park, Syvantis Technologies, Inc.

Green purchasing only begins with office products. Syvantis Technologies in Baxter, Minnesota, has saved money and reduced its impact on the environment by incorporating green purchasing throughout the business.

Syvantis saved \$10,000 through **reuse and recycling** by salvaging cabinetry and doors from its old office. The company will save \$3,800 per year in garbage collection by recycling paper, plastic, and aluminum.



Stormwater practices implemented by Syvantis Technologies, Inc. include a rain barrel, pervious pavement, and low-mow grasses.

Syvantis will save \$148,000 by **conserving energy** over the next 10 years by cycling the air conditioning and right-sizing the air conditioning systems, using heat pumps, and improving insulation.

Fairview Office Park will save \$175,000 through **stormwater management practices** in 10 years! Rain and snow runoff is captured on site with the use of rain gardens, pervious asphalt, and rain barrels. Rain gardens save money in the long term because they require no watering or mowing, and little maintenance in the form of weeding.

Work on greening your supply chain or becoming a green supplier yourself! Check out [greensuppliers.gov](http://greensuppliers.gov)

## Multi-function printers

Multi-function printers increase productivity while reducing product costs and energy bills. Lindsay Windows and Doors in North Mankato, MN recently purchased a multifunction copier. It is already saving money in replacement costs for a



few smaller printers and a fax machine, in addition to printing more efficiently. One big paper-saving aspect of the printer is that jobs are sent to a "mailbox" on the printer, preventing unwanted printouts from being printed and forgotten. Regular

monthly savings are realized, which make a difference over time. If multifunctional printers will not work for you, be sure to buy duplex printers. They have the potential to significantly cut paper purchases and save money in other ways by reducing staffing and storage demands.

## Server consolidation

Today, most small businesses own one to two servers. Servers are big power users, due to the energy that they draw and to the cooling required to keep them at the right temperature. It is estimated that every server costs about \$50 per month to run<sup>2</sup>. Encourage your IT department to partner with other local small businesses to share a single server. The technology to share physical server boxes is already available and used by many larger companies. By doing so, total power consumption for the businesses drop significantly.

## Remanufactured cartridges

Remanufactured cartridges (remans) can cut cartridge costs by 30 to 50%. They also offer clear advantages over new—they save on resources and sometimes even offer improved product quality. In many cases, they can contain up to 20% more toner or ink<sup>1</sup>. Remans can be used in almost all printers and are available from most vendors.



## Computers and monitors

There are computer and monitor purchasing practices, as well as behaviors, that can help save money. Syvantis Technologies, Inc. shuts down computers at night, which saves \$90 per computer per year.

When purchasing, be sure to look for Energy Star® or the more environmentally stringent EPEAT-certified computers and monitors. Computer systems that meet Energy Star requirements can use up to 80% less energy in machines that are on but not in use<sup>1</sup>.

[www.epeat.net](http://www.epeat.net)

Energy Star Office Equipment:  
[www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

## Light sensors and lighting

Replacing the less efficient T-12 fluorescents with T-8s is one of the easiest efficiency upgrades to perform, with a very quick return on investment. Vision-Ease Lens in Ramsey, Minnesota, recently installed lighting sensors and a new lighting system for \$159,150, with a \$44,982 rebate from Connexus. They are saving 800,836 kWh and \$41,323 in cost savings per year. With the rebate, Vision-Ease realized a 2.75 year payback period. Without the rebate, the payback period would still have been only 4.8 years.

Installing lighting sensors in less frequently used spaces, like conference rooms, also reduces energy use by requiring occupants for illumination.

## Printing services

When sourcing your print jobs, look for Sustainable Green Printing Partnership or Great Printer-certified printers in Minnesota. Certified companies have the potential for more competitive pricing, and using their services is a good opportunity to show your customers your green leadership. Kvale Good Natured Games, LLC in St. Paul, MN specifies Great Printer certification on all product and promotional printed materials. Benefits include better pricing over national green printers and environmental savings.

[www.sgppartnership.org](http://www.sgppartnership.org)

[www.pimn.org/environment/greatprinter.htm](http://www.pimn.org/environment/greatprinter.htm)



## RESOURCES

- ▶ Small Business Assistance Program Pollution Prevention: [www.pca.state.mn.us/sbeap-p2](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/sbeap-p2)
- ▶ Minnesota Waste Wise can help green your business with a personalized environmental sustainability and waste audit. For a nominal annual fee that you are likely to recover in the first year by implementing cost savings measures, Minnesota Waste Wise will help you through the entire process, from beginning to end. [www.mnwastewise.org](http://www.mnwastewise.org)
- ▶ Purchasing is one aspect of a certification program for business operations called UPonGREEN. Consider getting certified as a green business. [www.upongreen.com](http://www.upongreen.com)

<sup>1</sup> Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Guide: [www.rethinkrecycling.com/government/eppg/-buy-products-services/office-machines/copiers](http://www.rethinkrecycling.com/government/eppg/-buy-products-services/office-machines/copiers)

<sup>2</sup> Syvantis Technologies, Inc. [www.syantistech.com](http://www.syantistech.com)



**Minnesota Pollution Control Agency**

651-296-6300

800-657-3864

[www.pca.state.mn.us](http://www.pca.state.mn.us)