

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

From the Oct. 2007 Issue

By Rob Carmines, CPA, MST, CFP, PFS First of all, let me apologize for probably being the last guy in the world who should be writing an article on this subject. While I know the benefits

of going green, preserving the environment, reducing pollutants, and, more importantly,

showing a little environmental and social conscience while saving some green (\$) at the same time, I don't really walk the walk. The biggest blasphemy of them all is that I drive a Suburban for goodness sakes. In any event, it is my task to have a brief discussion about what's going on out there in the way of greening up firms.

Discussion Areas

This warrants a discussion in several areas. To start with, we have the direct form of greening — changing the way we do business so that we take advantage of technology to help preserve resources and protect the environment. Next, we can explore ways to conserve energy and reduce costs through physical means. Namely, that means building improvements, updating heating and air conditioning systems, etc. Finally, we should take a brief look at what's going on out there in the realm of community planning because it should be interesting to see how communities are also moving towards preserving the environment.

The Green Movement

Everywhere I look, I see articles and news items that detail how firms and communities are embracing the “green” movement. I always thought green referred to eyeshades or legal tender. Boy, was I wrong. It encompasses everything from

emissions, energy consumption, cleaning products to telecommuting. In this week

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

mugs over Styrofoam cups is that the energy used in washing is far less than that required to recycle or dispose of the cups.

Cleaning Supplies & Geo-Thermal Heating

Even such luminaries as Don Imus (the former radio personality) have gotten on the green wagon. His wife formed a company devoted to promoting the use of organic and natural cleaners instead of toxic chemical cleaners like chlorine-based cleaners and such. Many hospitals, doctors' offices and other businesses have adopted such supplies, as well. They feel it is better for both the environment as well as their employees. Her website (www.dienviro.com/index.aspx) includes examples of the use of green technology in construction and building. Energy efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems are a great way to save money and help the environment. Geo-thermal heating systems have been used since Roman times and certainly have generated substantial interest as energy prices soar. Such systems utilize loops of pipes buried underground that help heat in the winter and cool in the summer. If you have ever been in a basement or cave, you can see the benefits. Most basements or caves stay a relatively constant temperature in all seasons. Using that temperature to cool or heat the fluids in your heating system utilizes very little energy. While such systems are more costly than traditional systems, there is a definite payback in energy bill savings.

Green Roofing Materials

Other initiatives include a big push for green roofing materials. Not quite like the old thatched or peat bog roofs from Europe in the middle ages, but you get the idea. You may be familiar with the push to require commercial buildings to utilize rooftop gardens as a way to increase energy efficiency as well as give back to the environment. These systems are now also being utilized in residential

housing. A website promoting this genre of roofing is www.greenroofs.com.

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

“Old School” Green Initiatives

Getting back to more mundane “old school” green initiatives, I am still amazed at the prevalence of conventional lighting versus fluorescent lighting in residential and commercial buildings. Such lights last eight to 10 times longer than incandescent light bulbs and produce about 90 percent less heat. Additionally, the new breed of fluorescent lighting is a far cry from the old tubes of the past. According to studies, one 20-watt Compact Fluorescent Light replacing a 75-watt bulb can save \$66 over the life of the bulb. The savings are more for higher wattage bulbs, as well. That's a lot of bucks over the life of a building. Another “old-school” idea is to have a setback thermostat on your HVAC system. Additionally, having your HVAC service group come out and inspect your ducts can be extremely beneficial. They're not inspecting for mold or dust, but for airflow and ambient cooling power. Eliminating dead spots where hot and cold air collect can do wonders to reduce the inevitable thermostat wars and avoid hot-cold swings in the office or home temperature. Certainly, replacement windows and re-caulking or sealing entryways and windows provide additional benefits. So will making sure your ceilings and crawl spaces are adequately insulated. As you are likely aware, a myriad of tax incentives exist that are aimed at such items as energy efficient heat pumps, replacement windows and the like. But you can see savings even greater than these tax incentives by reducing your costs of operation and ownership.

Transportation

Getting to and from the office can also give you an opportunity to go green. We have three employees who have Toyota Prius vehicles. While I tease them that they just about offset what my Suburban uses in fuel, I definitely envy them when I go to fill up my 41-gallon tank! An interesting website (www.terrass.com) helps calculate the damage your car's emissions do to the environment; you should definitely check it out. I found that my Suburban does a staggering

amount of damage. My vehicle emits greater than 17,000 pounds of CO2 per year!

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

and energy — turn on the hibernate mode, turn off lights when leaving the room. Heed all of the little bits of sage advice your parents used to tell you! Isn't it hard to believe they were right?

Telecommuting & The Paperless Office

A final way to save energy is to encourage telecommuting and to adopt a paperless office. We have several employees who work a substantial amount of time from home. This results in a real cost savings in commuting (especially since one is in Alaska). To make this arrangement work, we went paperless in 1999. It has been amazing to watch our use of paper, toner binders and other supplies decline dramatically over the years. I don't know when I last used green bar pads. Plus, we see many other benefits. The system we use also assists in making additional "on-the-fly" backups of our tax and accounting program's data in addition to keeping our scanned images. We can now access client data from anywhere, at anytime and forward needed information instantly via the Internet. It is truly a wonder to see it in action.

Who knows, in the future, maybe we can be known for something other than green eyeshades!

Robert Carmines has 27 years of experience as a CPA, and is a partner of Carmines, Robbins & Company, PLC (www.carminesrobbins.com), in Newport News, Va.

Technology

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us