

Going Green Can Save You Money and Attract Top Talent – 3 Essential Ways to Become More Eco-Friendly

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World Environment Day, the United Nations' day to promote awareness of the environment and encourage action, recently took place and is a good reminder of how important it is for companies of all sizes to assess their environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals and sustainability efforts. Awareness and action however are evergreen. Recent statistics show sustainability matters more than ever to consumers and employees; nearly 70% of workers said they would be more likely to accept a job at an organization considered to be environmentally sustainable, even if it meant a lower salary.

It's important for small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs) to keep these statistics in mind, because not only can a business' sustainability efforts attract top talent, but they can also have financial benefits for the company. For example, investing in quality tech products that can be easily repaired and upgraded helps to extend the product lifespan and build a more sustainable tech industry, saving money that would otherwise be spent on new devices.

I've always believed sustainability is all about finding solutions with a meaningful long-term impact and how we can work together towards a better tomorrow. Fortunately, sustainability is at the core of what we're doing at Lenovo. Not only have we developed plastic-free packaging for many of

our products, but we've also taken important steps to help customers improve their carbon footprint. We recently launched Lenovo's Intelligent Sustainability Solutions Advisor (LISSA), an AI-powered sustainability engine that gives customers actionable insights to understand the estimated emissions impact across their IT lifecycle and deploy customized solutions that align with their sustainability goals.

Lenovo is also committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 with science-based targets validated through the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) Net-Zero Standard.

Here are three essential ways your SMB can integrate sustainability throughout the business.

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1. Reduce, reuse, repair

Waste from electronic devices is often overlooked, but it's a huge problem and increasing. According to the United Nations, around 53.6 million metric tons of e-waste are produced every year worldwide.

That's why the phrase "*reduce, reuse, repair*" should be top of mind for all SMBs that want to be more sustainable.

One way to reduce waste is to implement circular practices for electronic devices within your business. Part of this means embracing practices that prioritize product longevity and repairability.

Invest in quality tech products and laptops that are designed to be easily repaired and upgraded, thereby extending their lifespan. Look for repair-friendly technology that has easily replaceable parts for your employees. Employees will be able to quickly DIY their repairs, reducing the downtime they would normally spend waiting for support.

2. The power of packaging

Business owners often overlook the role packaging plays in their sustainability practices, but it's a serious issue. Worldwide e-commerce used approximately 2.1 billion pounds of plastic packaging in 2019, and this number is projected to more than double to 4.5 billion pounds by 2025. This means sustainable packaging is extremely important not only for the products companies sell, but also for the devices they choose to purchase.

When possible, SMB owners should purchase products that use recycled, renewable and bio-based materials. For example, bamboo and sugarcane fiber are great alternative options to traditional packaging because they are made with 100% renewable materials. So, looking for partners and vendors that focus on reducing packaging consumption and promotes an ecosystem of more sustainable practices and solutions.

SMBs that sell physical products should take similar steps to ensure that they are not producing excess waste through their packing and shipping processes by ensuring they are sustainably made and recyclable. Highlighting sustainable packaging is not only beneficial to the environment, but will also resonate with environmentally conscious consumers, and could have a positive financial impact for your brand. Recent surveys, including those conducted by IBM with NRF and the Baker Retailing Center at the University of Pennsylvania, found between half to two-thirds of consumers say they will pay more for sustainable products; for consumers ages 18 to 34, the number jumps to 80%, according to a Business of Sustainability Index report.

Related: How Your Business Can Unpack and Prioritize Sustainability Through Recycling

3. Invest in the future

Sustainability can be further integrated into your business by investing in the future, which could include activities such as exploring avenues for recycling, limiting energy consumption, and supporting sustainable charities or initiatives. For example, investing in tech products that have a long battery life reduces energy consumption and e-waste. Plus, working with organizations like the Global Electronics Counsel, which promotes the purchase of sustainable technology, could have long-term benefits.

Adopting energy-efficient practices, participating in recycling programs and supporting sustainable causes not only contributes to a positive corporate image but also nurtures a sense of responsibility among employees and customers. By investing in the future, your SMB can actively participate in developing a more sustainable tech industry.

World Environment Day serves as a good reminder for SMBs to reflect on the ways they can play a pivotal role in shaping a more sustainable future for all, but businesses should remember that environmental awareness isn't just one day.

E-waste is an issue that is not going away anytime soon and is a significant environmental concern, so remembering to "reduce, reuse, repair" (and also recycle) can help make the tech industry more environmentally friendly. Prioritizing sustainability is not just a trend; it is a fundamental facet of your business that can attract top talent, foster better financial decisions and perhaps most importantly, have a positive impact on our planet.

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