



By grasping the low-hanging fruits outlined above, companies can realize significant expenditure reductions on raw materials, office equipment and supplies, and other purchases. In addition to conserving these resources, the cost savings derived can help to keep your products and services competitive while making your organization eco-friendly and thereby attractive to customers.

Organizations interested in more advanced energy-saving strategies may consider getting involved in "green" building and other pioneering eco-initiatives that promise long-term benefits.

Finally, monitor your waste volume each month to track progress and remember to (1) keep staff and management informed about the results of their efforts to reduce waste; and, (2) tell your clients about your waste reduction efforts. Businesses that reduce waste are not only regarded more favorably by customers, the public, and their own employees but motivate other people and businesses to do the same. Resolve to start your company's waste reduction programme today!

Biodegradable Waste is made of substances that will decay relatively quickly as a result of the action of bacteria, and break down into elements such as carbon that are recycled naturally. Certain biodegradable items can be composted or reused.

Non-biodegradable Waste is any discarded item that cannot be broken down by living organisms. Non-biodegradable trash accumulates in the environment because it cannot return to its origins.

When you look at the products commonly found in the marketplace, i.e. supermarkets, shopping malls, etc., you will find that the products being sold comprise mainly of items sealed in cans, aluminium foils, plastics, and other such non-biodegradable items that cause immeasurable harm to the environment. The next time you buy or use an item, think of what becomes of it after it has served its purpose and is discarded. Here is a list of common items found in municipal solid waste and the approximate time it takes to decompose on land and at sea:

Waste Type	Approximate Decomposition Rate
Glass Bottle	1 million years
Tin can	100-500 years
Aluminium Can	100-500 years
Cigarette Butts	1-5 years
Disposable Diapers	450 years
Plastic Bag	500-1,000 years
Plastic Dishes & Cutlery	100-1,000 years
Newspapers & Magazines	6 months to 10 years
Paper	10-30 days
Paper Towel	2-4 weeks
Cotton Cloth	2-5 months
Woolen Items	1 year
Styrofoam Cup	50 years
Plastic Beverage Bottles	450 years
Wood	10-15 years
Organic Waste (e.g. vegetable and fruit peels, plant cuttings, etc.)	1-2 weeks



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If you've been throwing money in the garbage, here are some

simple Green strategies

to Save your Company \$\$\$



Trinidad & Tobago is categorized as a small island developing state (SIDS), one of 52 SIDS identified worldwide. A major challenge of SIDS countries is, quite understandably, the sustainable management of natural resources. Land space limitations and physical geography together put pressure on SIDS to find environmentally-friendly alternatives to landfilling so land can instead be used for agriculture, expanding communities and businesses, and environmental conservation.

This article suggests some simple yet practical strategies that can be employed by business and industry to conserve valuable resources, prevent or reduce waste generation, and ultimately reduce waste quantities requiring final disposal.

Waste is defined as materials and/or supplies that were paid for and subsequently rendered useless, whether because they had reached their expiration date, had become defective or obsolete, or were deemed too expensive to repair or retain. Before these materials and/or supplies got to the useless stage, however, they invariably utilised energy and other resources in their manufacture, took up valuable storage space, and consumed fuels in their transportation. Reducing waste therefore reduces such needless consumption.

One strategy that could have a huge overall impact on waste reduction is that of Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP). EPP is the "green" procurement of goods and services that have a reduced impact on human health and the environment as compared to other goods and services serving the same purpose.

When EPP involves the purchase of recycled products it closes the loop in keeping our home and workplace recycling programmes going and conserving our natural resources.

The financial benefits of EPP are determined when the purchasing price and frequency of purchase is weighed against operating costs, maintenance repair and replacement costs, occupational health costs, and liability. Environmental and societal costs and benefits are harder to quantify but commonly cited benefits include:

Reduced materials consumption and improved energy efficiency

Reduced air pollution and water emissions

Reduced presence of toxic and hazardous substances in the workplace and environment

Increased use of renewable products leading to developed markets for environmentally preferable goods and services

Less waste in landfills and decreased costs associated with waste management, disposal and clean-up



reSolve today to Go Green

simple Green strategies

to Save your Company \$\$\$

In addition to EPP, here are some easy strategies for curbing or alternatively treating with some of the waste types common to most business organizations:

PAPER CONSUMPTION

Reduce	Reuse	Recycle	Save \$\$
Print or copy reports and other documents on both sides of the paper Scan, rather than copy, documents that are to be circulated to a number of recipients Eliminate unnecessary reports or forms or redesign them to use less paper There is no need for a cover fax if the document you are transmitting already has the recipient's name and address on it	Save and reuse one-sided misprints on printer/copier paper for printing drafts or binding to make scratch pads Where appropriate, reuse envelopes by using labels to cover the old address – let recipients know that you are recycling the envelope to save trees	Donate waste paper to a reputable paper recycling program. Contact SWMCOL's Marketing Unit at 625-6678/80 to arrange to have your waste paper collected for recycling. <i>Buy Recycled!!</i> Recycled paper costs a bit more but increased demand can help to lower prices. Buy recycled whenever you can.	Update your records management policy to employ an electronic file system and eliminate the space needed for paper files. Less storage = less expenditure! Application of these tips on a sustained basis can reduce paper consumption by as much as 50%

ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Reduce	Reuse	Rethink	Save \$\$
Install energy-saver lightbulbs in areas where artificial lighting is necessary Use energy-efficient appliances and office equipment (look for the "Energy Star" label) Keep air-conditioning units operating at optimum levels by regularly cleaning air ducts and filters	Use rechargeable batteries whenever possible Install reusable / washable ventilation and air-conditioning filters	Invest in durable, repairable merchandise that last a long time so you can avoid the expense of replacing them Train staff to turn off lights and air conditioning in unoccupied rooms	Find ways to introduce solar energy – solar-tube skylights bring in lots of natural light to otherwise dark areas such as corridors and washrooms Use solar powered lights outdoors to illuminate walkways and highlight foliage plants Switching desktop computers off each night can reduce their energy use by 70%

OFFICE SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

Reduce	Reuse	Recycle	Save \$\$
Offer incentives to office departments to implement sustainable methods of reducing their stationery usage Invest in an energy-saving photocopier/printer; today's machines are not only more user-friendly but environmentally-friendly as well	Purchase pens for which refills are supplied, rather than the type used only once and thrown away When upgrading office equipment, donate items that were replaced but still functional to NGOs, Schools or Community Centres	Utilize the services of a reputable ink cartridge refiller <i>Buy Recycled!!</i> Purchase refilled toner and ink cartridges for your copier and printers	Offer employees incentives for saving money on supplies – this must be long term to prevent the use of short-lived, cheap products.

WASHROOMS & LUNCHROOMS

Reduce	Reuse	Recycle	Save \$\$
Save on paper towels by installing a hand dryer Install dispensers that release adequate amounts of hand soap and toilet paper Encourage staff to bring home-made meals to work to cut down on the proliferation of non-recyclable single-use food containers entering the wastestream.	Incorporate a greywater ¹ recycling system into new building plans – filtered greywater can be used for flushing toilets and watering office plants and gardens Encourage employees to favour reusable coffee mugs, teacups, dishes and cutlery	Provide suitable disposal containers for separating lunchroom waste – salad greens, vegetable and fruit peelings and coffee grounds diverted from the wastestream can make great additions to a compost heap	Install automatic faucets, flushers, soap, paper towels, and toilet tissue dispensers – these "touch-free" devices not only save valuable resources but also effectively reduce possible cross-contamination. A healthier environment also means fewer sick days and more productivity!

Greywater is the wastewater generated from activities such as dishwashing, clothes washing and bathing.



SWMCOL's Public Education Campaign
to promote Environmental Awareness and Participation