

Ask SCORE...

Counselors to Naples Area Small Businesses

SCORE Naples
www.scorenaples.org



Got business questions?

Ask SCORE

By: Gray Poehler, Business Counselor

Think “Green” The Shade of Things to Come

QUESTION: *As the owner of a small business that depends on the support of our local community, I try to reciprocate by doing my part to save the environment we all cherish. Can you suggest ways that I and other business owners can make our operations more cost effective and environmentally friendly? Curtis N., Naples*

ANSWER: *Being environmentally conscious is not just good for the earth; it’s good for your business as well. Studies show that consumers are increasingly attracted to businesses that promote their proactive efforts to protect the environment. Also, many practices and products that help reduce pollution and conserve natural resources can help reduce business costs over the long term. Simple steps such as recycling paper, plastic, glass, soda cans and turning off lights are a good place to start, but there are many other ways you can make a big difference without a lot of effort or expense.*

Some sure energy savers include replacing incandescent light bulbs with Energy Star-qualified fluorescent lamps (CFLs), which cost about 75% less to operate, and last about 10 times longer. Regularly changing heating and air conditioning filters and investing in regular maintenance checkups will also keep the systems operating as efficiently as possible. Remember, when it’s time to upgrade computers or appliances, purchasing Energy Star-qualified products will ensure that you’re getting the most from every kilowatt of power.

Making greater use of email and electronic file transfers are certain to cut down on the amount of paper your business uses. If you rely on incoming or outgoing faxes, a computer fax modem will enable you to exchange these documents without the need for making printed copies.

There are more recyclable items around your office that you may realize. Your municipal solid waster department can provide information on materials and recycling procedures. Another good source is the Electronic Industries Alliance web site www.eiae.org, which provides information on finding local organizations that will recycle computers and printers. Many charities accept unwanted office furniture for repair and reuse by other businesses, organizations, schools and individuals.

Purchasing products and equipment made from recycled or sustainable materials is also a good way to do right by Mother Earth. According to www.GreenBiz.com, recycled-content products typically perform as well as new ones and are competitively priced. The purchase of environmentally friendly office products has become easier thanks to the growing awareness of major office products suppliers. Whether you shop in their stores or online, you'll find a wide range of recycled paper products, energy-saving equipment, and attractive furniture crafted from sustainable resources. Resolve to ask for and demand these products before you make your next purchase.

The GreenBiz site provides descriptions and links to nearly 100 helpful organizations and Web sites, many of them by state. There are also hundreds of books and reports geared to specific industries. Take time to explore this valuable site for a wealth of news, tools, and tips on going green. Select "Small Business" in the "Resource Wizard" pull down menu for topics geared specifically to small business.

To learn more about operating issues facing your business, contact the Naples Chapter of SCORE, Counselors to America's Small Business. SCORE offers FREE business counseling to US citizens and legal aliens. There you'll meet knowledgeable volunteers ready to help you realize your dream. Just call 239-430-0081 or visit WWW.SCORENAPLES.ORG and click on "request counseling now as a first time client." The SCORE business office is located at 900 Goodlette Road North, in the Fifth Third branch bank building. Office hours are 9:00 AM to Noon, Mondays through Fridays.

Naples SCORE will offer a FREE workshop titled "Creating a Web Site for Your Business", Saturday, March 29, from 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM, at the Collier County Public Library, 650 Central Avenue, in downtown Naples. Call 239-430-0081 or register online at WWW.SCORENAPLES.ORG. Click on "Workshops" under client services.

If you would like an answer to your question, please fill out the form located at www.scorenaples.org/askscore. A counselor will contact you within 48 hours. Please include your name, email address and a contact phone number.