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Understanding...

Success through responsible business practices

A guide to business sustainability
– and how it can work for you





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Understanding... Success through responsible business practices

Welcome to 'Understanding... Success through responsible business practices', one in our series of guides designed to help small businesses increase their confidence while respecting their people, community and planet.

In this guide we aim to demystify key topics by:

- Defining business ethics.
- Outlining the role of employees and your management of them.
- Demonstrating examples of how to conduct your business responsibly in the community.
- Showing you how to build and maintain a greener business.
- Explaining how technology can help.

For further guidance about technology and what it can do for your business, to access case studies and articles or to download copies of the other 'Understanding....' guides, go to BT Business Insight, a unique online resource for small businesses, at www.bt.com/insight

BT BEST, BT's Business Environmental Self-Assessment Tool, is designed to help all small businesses understand their environmental impact and take simple steps to becoming a greener, more sustainable company. Go to www.bt.com/btbest

Free business advice and support is available online and through local Business Link advisers. Go to www.businesslink.gov.uk

For jargon free and practical information on all aspects of responsible business practice go to The Small Business Consortium at www.smallbusinessjourney.com

For information, advice and practical solutions on environmental and social problems, visit Global Action Plan at www.globalactionplan.org.uk

Responsibility – and why it's good for you

From corporate social responsibility to green initiatives, more and more companies are looking at how they can improve the way they interact with the environment, their employees and their wider community. However, these initiatives are not limited to big businesses with big budgets.

Responsible business isn't just about going green or cutting down on waste. It's about creating a business model that supports and maintains a respectful attitude to both people and places – whether it's your own staff, your community or the planet at large.

In a time of economic uncertainty, responsible business practices – from the way you treat your staff to the energy you use – make great business sense. Employees and customers alike are becoming increasingly aware of the ethical issues surrounding business. Suppliers, partners and potential customers are becoming just as likely to ask to see your environmental policy as they are your pricelist. So by doing your bit, you're likely to get something in return.



Business ethics and protecting your people

Business Link advise that it is always a good idea to ensure you're not only keeping up with legislation, but also that you're providing a working environment that makes your staff happy and motivated. A good place to start is the Business Link website. It will soon become the only government website that businesses need to access. On the site you will find up to date authoritative information and interactive tools on things such as:

- **Employing people** – how to be a better leader to ensuring that you comply with legislation (www.businesslink.gov.uk/employingpeople)
- **Health and Safety** – the site makes it easier for you to understand the regulations that apply to you and your sector (www.businesslink.gov.uk/healthandsafetyresponsibilities)
- **Environment** – how to go green and save money (www.businesslink.gov.uk/environment)



What should my business ethics be?

Before you create your code of business ethics, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my workforce safe and happy?
- What do I want to achieve?
- How can I improve staff morale – and increase productivity and profit?
- What kind of leader do I want to be?

Hints and tips

- Check out workers' rights legislation to ensure you comply.
- Make sure health and safety standards are up to scratch.
- Conduct regular performance and pay appraisals to ensure a satisfied workforce.
- Implement HR initiatives to inspire staff and customer loyalty.
- Consider what example you'd like to set from an ethical perspective.
- Think about how you wish to be viewed by employees, staff and customers.

What are my obligations as an employer?

Under The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, you are required to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of your employees. Of course, many of these issues will be dictated by common sense, but it's important to be aware of the specific issues you're obliged to address.

Make sure you:

- ↘ Keep your premises clean, well lit and well ventilated.
- ↘ Maintain a reasonable temperature in the workplace, particularly if work involves intense physical effort.
- ↘ Provide clean toilets and washing facilities for staff use.
- ↘ Guard any dangerous machinery.
- ↘ Provide any physical protection necessary to the job.
- ↘ Provide adequate drinking water.

Furthermore, sufficient fire safety precautions must be provided. If you have a high-risk premises – such as a factory with potentially dangerous machinery – or if you have more than 20 employees, the Fire Precautions Act of 1971 requires you to obtain a certificate from a fire authority to ensure that precautions and means of escape are provided and maintained.

As an employer and business owner, you are legally required to maintain a safe workplace that is conducive to your employees' health. If you break any of these laws, you may be issued with prohibition or improvement notices from Health and Safety inspectors. In serious cases, failing to maintain health and safety standards could result in prosecution.

As well as being ethically and legally bound to protect your employees, ensuring that your business ethics help your staff also has huge business benefits:

- A safe workplace ensures a healthy and productive workforce.
- Demonstrable standards can persuade both customers and suppliers to work with you.
- Avoiding legal issues will eliminate costly fees and damage to your reputation.
- Fewer accidents mean fewer threats to productivity.

How can I avoid discrimination?

Preventing discrimination improves your chances of recruiting the best person for the job and getting the best performance from all those who work for you. However, unlawful discrimination discredits you as a business in the eyes of customers – and legally, it can be very costly. It is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of:

- Sex – including pregnancy and maternity.
- Marital and civil partnership status.
- Sexual orientation.
- Gender reassignment.
- Disability (where suitability for the job is unimpaired).
- Age.
- Trade union membership or non-membership.
- Religious beliefs.

The anti-discrimination legislation applies to:

- All employers in the private and public sectors, vocational training providers, trade unions, professional organisations, employer organisations, and trustees and managers of occupational pension schemes.
- Employees of any age and other workers, office holders, partners of firms and others.

There are generally four types of discrimination:

1. **Direct discrimination** – treating somebody less favourably on the grounds of his or her sex, race, etc.
2. **Indirect discrimination** – applying an apparently general rule that in practice disadvantages one sex, race, etc.
3. **Harassment or bullying**
4. **Victimisation** – treating someone unfairly because, for example, they plan to raise a discrimination-related grievance.

Business and their communities

A growing number of businesses, no matter what size, age, sector or location are interested in increasing their profitability and responsibility at the same time.

Responsible business is about achieving commercial success in ways that honour ethical values and respect people, communities and the natural environment.

These businesses minimise any negative environmental and social impacts and maximise the positive ones.

The Small Business Consortium sees a responsible business as one:

- That is run for the benefit of profit, people and the planet.
- Where responsible practices are part of the business purpose and strategy (rather than being a bolt-on to business operations).
- Whose employees value it as a great place to work.
- Whose customers and suppliers value it as a good company to do business with.
- The community values.
- Investors and financiers value.
- With a good health and safety record.
- That has environmentally friendly premises.

The communities your business is involved in (such as employees, the local business community, suppliers and customers) are diverse. So it is important to behave responsibly within all relevant communities.

How can your business benefit?

83% of the British public have purchased a product or service associated with a charity or cause they care about, compared with just 68% in 2002¹. Furthermore, businesses that take part in cause-related marketing are seen as more trustworthy and more innovative by consumers². As well as being ethical, therefore, there is a clear business case for being charitable and reaching out to your community.

But the list doesn't end there. Responsible businesses can also:

- ↳ Attract, retain and develop motivated and committed employees.
- ↳ Win and retain consumers and business customers.
- ↳ Improve business reputation and positive publicity.
- ↳ Maintain and improve their licence to operate from the local community.
- ↳ See cost and efficiency savings.
- ↳ Be suitable for more networking and speaking opportunities.
- ↳ Anticipate future legislation.



¹ Source: Business in the Community, Brand Benefits 2002.

² Source: Business in the Community, Brand Benefits 2003; Giving Now 2003; and Secrets of Success 2002.

Sustainable Success Steps

Step 1. Assess

- Find out about local, national or global causes that are relevant to your business.
- Discuss the interests of employees, customers and suppliers & get them involved.
- Look at the most relevant options to support a community programme that aligns with business objectives.
- If relevant, think about building a long-term partnership with a local community group, charity or organisation.
- **Business in the Community (BITC)**, a movement of 700 member companies committed to improving their positive impact on society, can help you reach out to your community? Visit www.bitc.org.uk
- Most regions have an organisation dedicated to helping companies get involved in local causes. Check with your Chamber of Commerce or other business advice services for local contacts. Find your local chamber at www.britishchambers.org.uk

Step 2. Commit

- Get the whole company to commit to your responsible business statement and vision, from the top down.
- Make sure that responsible business behaviour is integrated across the whole of your business and prioritise your actions.
- It's also important to understand any risks your business maybe taking.
- Follow existing standards that have been set up for processes such as environmental management, or those relevant to your area of work. Contact the **International Standards Organisation** or **British Standards** online.

Step 3. Tell the world

- Promote your ethical and business cases at every opportunity to maximise the benefit for you and the community. Not only will this raise awareness of the significant community issues you are helping, it can also raise your business profile and generate publicity that may bring other businesses on board.
- Over half of British consumers have chosen a product or service because of a reputation for responsibility³. So even if you have set your own standards, it's important to understand that ethical and responsible business is a learning experience.
- Being responsible is also a great way to connect with local businesses, ensuring a network of responsible companies in your area. Measure yourself against good practice models like the **Business Excellence Model** or the **GoodCorporation** principles of good practice. Contact the **British Quality Foundation** for more information.
- Apply for an accreditation such as a **Queen's Award** or a **Business in the Community Award for Excellence** to demonstrate your ethical and responsible business credentials and encourage other local businesses to follow suit.

Step 4. Nurture

- Make sure you organise, or assign someone to be responsible for this activity, ensure targets are set and maintain regular evaluation.
- Involve customers and suppliers which will help widen your resources. Measure and report what you do and what the impacts are, as this is a great motivator for employees involved. Plus it will help your business demonstrate the benefits these practices are bringing.

³ Source: The Ethical Consumer, MORI/The Co-operative Bank 2002.

Top tips for getting involved in your communities:

- Choose a charity of the year with your employees.
- Set up a payroll giving scheme.
- Ensure your website is accessible to all.
- Build a long term partnership with local organisations.
- Set up an employee volunteer programme.
- Offer work placements or a mentoring programme.
- Recruit locally and from diverse backgrounds.
- Work alongside other businesses in your area on community issues.
- Communicate your responsible business activities to suppliers & customers.
- Create simple purchasing criteria for suppliers in line with your vision.
- Ensure your procurement processes are transparent and open to all.
- Ensure you pay your bills promptly.
- Organise events with suppliers to share learning.
- Allow charity days for your employees, such as volunteering at a homeless charity or participating in a sponsored event.
- Encourage flexible working.



Adopting green business practices

Going green is now a critical business issue, from sole traders to multinational corporations. Customers and the public increasingly demand that businesses operate in an environmentally ethical way – and those that fail to meet these expectations can seriously damage their reputation.

A Henley Centre Headlight Vision Study into sustainable buying behaviours, conducted in 2007, found that 26 per cent of consumers would boycott firms that damage the environment. Up from just nine per cent in 2001, green business is becoming an increasingly pertinent topic.

This section, with advice from BT Business and Global Action Plan, will guide you on how to extend your business ethics to help the environment. But to get you started, it's useful to do some background research:

- See how **Global Action Plan** can help you measure and reduce your environmental impact, which will lead to reduced costs. This can be done through employee engagement programmes and policy and process development – www.globalactionplan.org.uk
- Get free Government-supported environmental consultation and advice over the phone from **Envirowise** – www.envirowise.gov.uk
- Find news and advice for firms trying to reduce the environmental impact of their business operations at **Business Green** – www.businessgreen.com

Whose responsibility is climate change?

Climate change is a huge threat to our planet and the continued existence of our civilisation. Long-term changes in global weather could have disastrous consequences – and in our post-industrialised society, issues of climate change are strongly linked with our production of CO₂, particularly through the burning of fossil fuels in transport and manufacturing.

Tackling climate change is not solely the responsibility of big business. As small and medium-sized businesses account for almost 60 per cent of the UK's workforce, climate change is something that should concern us all – both as individuals and small business owners.

For more information on climate change, visit www.bt.com/climatechange

BT BEST, BT's Business Environmental Self-Assessment Tool, is designed to help all small businesses understand their environmental impact and take simple steps to becoming a greener, more sustainable company. Go to www.bt.com/btbest



How can I make sense of environmental law?

UK environmental law for businesses can be a complicated area to navigate, but it's always worth keeping informed of current legislation to ensure your business complies. It's also useful to anticipate future legislation – such as carbon taxation – so that you're prepared for legal eventualities.

Environmental legislation is a huge area, and regulations vary widely according to your business size, location and sector. A company dealing with hazardous waste, for example, will face hugely different legal issues from an online sole trader.

The UK is also part of the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement that aims to cut greenhouse gases. Depending on the size and sector of your business you could be subject to carbon-cutting initiatives and legislation.

Visit the Government's **NetRegs** website at www.netregs.gov.uk to find out which specific laws apply to you. There are seven main business areas concerned with environmental legislation:

1. **Emissions and discharges** – such as oil storage, air pollution and vehicle use.
2. **Waste** – recycling, waste disposal, etc.
3. **Hazardous substances** – including pesticides, biocides, solvents, etc.
4. **Nuisance** – including noise and odour.
5. **Permits and licences** – covering issues such as waste management and environmental pollution.
6. **Wildlife and the environment** – conservation issues.
7. **Resource efficiency** – covering issues including climate change and energy consumption.

How can my business become more sustainable?

There are four main ways a business can become greener:



1. **Improve your energy efficiency.** CO2 emissions – thought to be the single greatest contributor to climate change – are predominantly caused by the burning of fossil fuels. From lighting and the power needed to run equipment to the fuel consumed travelling to work, every business owner is responsible for vast amounts of energy consumption. This section of the guide will give you simple tips on how to improve your company's energy efficiency.



2. **Work smarter and reduce travel.** Business travel is also a major contributor to CO2 emissions – but can often be reduced or avoided altogether through modern technology. See Part Four of this guide for further information.



3. **Recycle and resource efficiency.** Business-wide green initiatives can be as simple as making sure you recycle paper, glass and plastics. Re-using packaging and other materials is another realistic way to cut down on your material consumption.



4. **Sustainable sourcing.** Businesses of all sizes can take simple steps to encourage their suppliers to act in a more sustainable way. Remember, if your individual actions are mirrored by companies across the board, the overall impact could be enormous.

How can I make my office environment greener?

Buildings account for almost half of the UK's carbon emissions. According to the Building Design Partnership, almost 70 million metres of office space in the UK are unnecessarily lit. That's the equivalent of 8,750 football pitches, representing a cost of £200-£300 million a year.

A Forum for the Future research report for BT found that energy used to power heating, lighting and IT accounts for a greater proportion of each worker's total energy use than transport.

The UK Government wants new building projects to use a minimum of ten per cent of recycled building materials. The aim of this is to reduce unnecessary waste and harmful emissions in construction processes, and encourage more creative re-use of traditional waste products.

Energy saving in the office – did you know?

- Lighting an office overnight wastes enough energy to heat water for 1,000 cups of tea.
- A photocopier left on overnight uses enough energy to produce over 1,500 copies.
- Leaving a PC monitor on all night wastes enough energy to microwave six dinners.
- A typical window left open overnight in winter will waste enough energy to drive a small car over 35 miles.
- Switching off non-essential equipment in an office overnight saves enough energy to run a small car for 100 miles.
- A compressed air leak the size of a match head wastes enough energy in a working day to toast 444 slices of bread.

How can working with suppliers help?

Companies, however small, all have the ability to make a difference through the way they purchase.

For office supplies, source locally and in bulk. This will:

- Reduce transport costs.
- Cut down on fuel emissions related to transport.
- Cut the cost of supplies.

Switching to green energy from renewable sources can:

- Reduce your company's carbon footprint.
- Boost your environmental credentials among customer and partners.
- Save you money in the long run.

The biggest impact small and medium-sized business will have on the environment is through their supply chains and the environmental performance of their office equipment. So:

- Include environmental requirements in your contract documents.
- Ask your suppliers for their most environmentally friendly products with the least packaging. This will encourage them to reconsider their product choice.
- Consider adopting a policy of progressive greening – so every replacement product is more environmentally-friendly than its predecessor.

Follow this simple checklist to 'green' your office

- Use phone or video conferencing instead of travelling to meetings (see part four).
- Choose a green energy tariff where possible.
- Shut down computers and other electrical kit at the end of the day.
- Use recycled stationery and save paper.
- Check your suppliers have similar green credentials to your own.

How technology can help

We live in an age where we can harness technology to help us in the fight against climate change. However, in order to achieve this, it's important that we understand what's out there to help – and how we can change the way we work to facilitate greener business ethics.

However, whether you wish to improve efficiency or look at more innovative ways to reduce your carbon footprint, it's important to understand how your entire business manifesto can support a greener and more flexible work ethic.

Flexible working is a key option to help reduce transport-related carbon emissions, and improve your employees' work-life balance and productivity. More and more business of all sizes are realising the benefits of flexible working.

Figures from a 2007 British Chambers of Commerce survey found that:

- Nearly three quarters of employers offer part-time working.
- Nearly 70 per cent offer variable working hours.
- Over a third of employers offer employees the opportunity to work from home.
- 16.9 per cent offer job-sharing opportunities.



How can flexible working make me greener?

By supporting a more flexible work ethic – allowing employees to work from home or on the move in certain circumstances – your business can cut down on carbon emissions related to travel and help your community lessen the burden of rush-hour congestion.

The availability and affordability of business broadband packages mean that companies can quickly and easily link employees' home PCs to your business network. Similarly, online communities are springing up, bringing small businesses together with potential customers. All this makes it possible for staff to be just as productive working from home as in the office.

Recent research shows:

- On average, companies that offer flexible working enjoy a 20 per cent productivity gain.
- 65 per cent of small businesses cite flexible working as a staff motivator.
- Half of companies with a flexible working policy have noticed productivity benefits.
- 59 per cent of small business directors believe they can implement flexible working just as easily as larger organisations.

The environmental argument is no less persuasive. As well as reducing transport-related carbon emissions, provisions for home working can also reduce the need for office space. A study by the British Council of Offices found that the growth of IP-enabled flexible working has reduced the requirement for office space by a quarter in most industries.

- Within 12 years, teleworking and technology is predicted to achieve an 18 per cent reduction in heavy goods vehicle journeys.
- By 2010, the benefits to the UK economy in reduced congestions costs should be as much as £1.9 billion.
- BT employees save an average 12 million litres of car fuel every year by working flexibly.
- Increased home working has the potential to cut the worst peak traffic by up to ten per cent within five years – a reduction that would save 14.5 billion miles a year. That's the equivalent of 17 million cars saving a trip from Lands End to John O'Groats.

What about wireless working?

Technologies such as high-speed wireless broadband – or Wi-Fi – ensure that ‘out of office’ doesn’t mean out of touch. The UK’s wireless broadband network has grown considerably over the past five years. In fact, there are now almost 18,000 UK Wi-Fi hotspots in key locations – from hotels and airports to cafés and railway stations. Here, mobile workers can log on and experience the benefits of broadband while on the move.

An exciting development is the emergence of ‘Wireless Cities’. City centres including London, Liverpool, Birmingham and Cardiff are being transformed into wireless broadband zones. So wherever your staff are located within these zones, they can get online and stay productive.

Meanwhile, a new breed of ‘smart phone’ is now available. These devices allow users to send emails, edit documents and even automatically synchronise calendar and contact details with their office PC while on the move. They also mean that staff can do business anywhere, effectively taking their office with them, reducing travelling time on unnecessary trips back to a central base. Once again, this means less travel and reduced carbon emissions – as well as more responsive, more productive employees.



CASE STUDY

Flexible Working – A triple win for ESFAC, its people and the environment

ESFAC is a private company providing medical training services and emergency medical cover, particularly for corporate and public events. This means that the people working for, and running, the company need to be able to work easily and efficiently when not in the office.

Company co-founder and Managing Director, Kim Coe, says: **“As a small company my co-director and I are both heavily involved in service delivery, yet we also need to run the company. With an ever greater reliance on email communication, staying on top of things when we are away from base was becoming more and more of a challenge.”**

As well as needing email and internet facilities when on the move, its two directors also wanted to have remote access to the Microsoft Outlook application that stores its events calendar and business commitments. BT Office Anywhere, developed in partnership with Microsoft, brings advanced phone and data services together on a single device, enabling users to work as effectively away from the office as at their desks. The BT Office Anywhere subscription package can be tailored to suit user requirements.

Kim concluded: **“BT Office Anywhere is an absolute marvel. It really does enable us to have the facilities of our office wherever we are. On several occasions, having access on the move to vital business details has saved me the hassle of driving back to the office in between meetings – a win for me and the environment!”**

What other business tools can help?

Using **audio, video and web conferencing technology** saves money and cuts out large amounts of travel time.

- Independent research from BT found that the average journey time associated with a meeting is an hour and a half. Over a year this adds up to an average of four working weeks a year per employee lost to travel.
- The average cost associated with three people carrying out this travel is £305 per meeting. Compare this with the cost of around £17 for holding a conference call instead and you get a saving of around £30,000 over the course of the year.



Of course, there are also significant environmental benefits:

- Defra figures show that a 322-mile round trip flight from London to Manchester generates 89kg of CO₂.
- However, it is generally recognised that CO₂ released at high altitudes contributes between two and four times more to global warming than the same volume released at ground level.
- So an equivalent CO₂ figure for this flight could be anywhere between 178kg and 356kg.
- While other forms of transport emit less carbon, the point remains a powerful one. Holding a conference call rather than travelling to a meeting is a more environmentally responsible way of doing business.

Recent years have also seen the emergence of new and exciting forms of **online software** that enable better collaboration between employees and reduce paper waste. Known as 'workspaces', the simple idea is to improve team working by storing all the documents and information relating to any given project in one place.

- It's like a virtual meeting room, filing cabinet and notice board rolled into one. Team members can pin notices on the message board and speedily locate any reference materials or plans pertaining to their project role.
- From an environmental perspective, the document control feature can vastly reduce paper waste. Most of us have experienced the headache of reading and editing a document, only to find we are using an old version.
- This not only wastes time – it also wastes a huge amount of paper. The virtual workspace concept removes this problem by holding the master copy of each document, so you're always working on the most current version.

Finally, **electronic signature technology** can help in the fight against paper waste. Using electronic signature tools, there is no need to print off contracts to sign them. Look for services that comply with the UK Electronic Signatures Act, which gives electronic contracts the same weight as those executed on paper.

- Electronic signatures mean documents never need to be printed.
- There is also a potential to cut down on office and filing space for paper contracts.
- With the potential for smaller premises comes the chance of reduced energy costs.

CASE STUDY

BT brings sustainable benefits for green holiday

Bluestone is a 500-acre luxury holiday village set largely within the renowned Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, offering family and activity holidays with minimal environmental impact.

To meet the needs of the staff and guests, a complete communications and IT solution was needed across the whole complex. **“We had the opportunity to scour the market to obtain state-of-the-art communications and we wanted to make sure we had as future-proof a solution as possible,”** says Allan Christopher, Finance Director at Bluestone.

Dave Thomas of BT Local Business South Wales impressed Bluestone with a combination of personal service and access to all of BT’s resources. He knew the local area and developed an effective long-term relationship with the start-up.

BT supplied computers, a call centre, mobile phones, CCTV, and digital cabling throughout the 500-acre site.

“There were cheaper products on the market but we wanted a top quality solution,” explains Allan Christopher. **“We are a five star holiday destination and BT was able to provide a five star package at a very competitive price, not just for now but for future expansion on our existing site and other locations.”**

Because BT offers the simplicity of a one-stop-shop coupled with service and environmental ethics that match Bluestone’s own values, the two have developed a strong, forward-looking partnership, with BT winning preferred supplier status for future developments and planning to host its own corporate events at the complex.

Resource Efficiency – did you know?

- Every tonne of recycled paper saves 32,000 litres of water.
- Every year, BioRegional Development Group, an independent organisation, recycles 4,300 tonnes of paper – that’s the weight of 600 double-decker buses that would otherwise go to landfill.
- A circle of arrows with a percentage in the middle shows how much of the item is made with recycled materials.
- A circle of arrows on its own just means recyclable – a big difference!

What is green marketing?

In the last ten years, IT and communications technology has been instrumental in making it simpler, faster and greener for companies to promote themselves and win new business. This has also resulting in a demand from consumers and suppliers that are seeking to work with environmentally sustainable businesses.

Social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace have been big news for some time now. However, there are also sites dedicated to business networking, such as BT Tradespace. These services allow small business users to exchange views and experiences with peers, find new business partners, source potential employees and reach out to an unlimited pool of potential customers.

Once again, a positive side effect is reduced carbon emissions. The old days of travelling to networking events are long gone. While face-to-face meetings remain a vital part of networking, doing the groundwork online can cut travel time and help the environment.

Online marketing is another important way you can promote yourself responsibly. In the early days of the web, few businesses had a full understanding of how to market themselves online. Now however, no promotions plan is complete without an online component.

Whether you promote your company via email marketing campaigns, a blog or online advertising, you’re avoiding the mass distribution of paper-based marketing materials that have clogged up our letterboxes in the past.

CASE STUDY

Eco-want makes magic with BT Tradespace

Alex Gardiner's company, Kyle Electronics Design Ltd, is currently developing the Eco-Wand, a revolutionary tool that tests room temperature, pressure and humidity to help customers reduce energy bills.

Although he was confident in the success of the Eco-Wand, Alex joined www.bttradespace.com, the online social networking site for small businesses, to help create publicity for his product. He was introduced to the site at Glasgow's Growing Your Own Business exhibition by a BT representative and was impressed by the various opportunities it offered to market his product and increase his customer base.

“As a small company with only a few products, I cannot afford the time or cost involved in setting-up anything more than a simple website. However, BT Tradespace is very easy to use and has been a great help in raising awareness of my product,” said Alex.

Despite the fact he'd never blogged before, Alex now regularly writes blog posts on his Tradespace site. **“I've noticed traffic increasing after each new post I write”** he explained, **“and I've also been able to upload photos quickly and easily so I can show potential customers how the Eco-Wand works and why it's so useful.”**

Alex plans to start selling the Eco-Wand online through the PayPal facility offered by BT Tradespace. He said: **“BT Tradespace is a highly useful site for someone like me, who wants to turn a small business into an international success. I'm sure many customers will be attracted to the Eco-Wand thanks to BT Tradespace, as it does so much advertising work for me.”**

BT Tradespace Basic is a simple-to-use free business community. It allows members to upload unlimited blogs and contact details to their page – together with two podcasts, five photos, two videos and membership to one community.

For those with more demanding requirements, BT Tradespace Contact is an enhanced service where businesses can upload unlimited content and use advanced features, such as Click to Call, and join unlimited communities.

What about my IT systems?

IT is a significant generator of carbon emissions. Research by analyst house Gartner, found that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) account for approximately two per cent of all global carbon emissions. Amazingly, that's the same as the aviation industry! So it's increasingly important to understand how business users can reduce the environmental impact of their ICT systems.

IP networks replace the old setup of a company having one network for voice / phone calls and another for data / IT. Instead, IP combines the two, so that all information – from phone calls and emails to documents and video clips – travel along one set of cabling on the same network.

By uniting all data onto one system, businesses can take advantage of a whole host of services that save time and money. For example, you can make calls from one office to another – and just like sending an email, it's effectively free of charge. The term for this kind of merging is convergence – the benefits extend to the environment, as well as helping productivity and your bank balance.

- Relying on a single, unified network means only one set of network connections, cable and hardware. In turn, this means you only need to power one system.
- A single network also means you only need to hire one ICT service provider, cutting the carbon emissions associated with finding and using multiple companies.
- In many cases, IP networks allow for upgrades and repairs to be carried out remotely, reducing or eliminating the need for engineer travel.



Useful links

Check out these websites for further guidance and tips:

Environmental issues

- **Global Action Plan** helps companies of all sizes respond to environmental challenges and reduce expenses through the measurement of their impact, ideas to reduce it and employee engagement programmes, policy and process development. They can also help you to obtain environmental management system accreditation – www.globalactionplan.org.uk
- **The Small Business Consortium** offers jargon free and practical information on all aspects of responsible business practice specifically for small and medium sized businesses – www.smallbusinessjourney.com
- **The Climate Group** offers information on programmes supporting businesses on their journey to a low-carbon economy – www.theclimategroup.org
- The **Defra** website offers information on the Government's climate change programmes – www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/business

Power usage

- **Global Action Plan** can complete an energy audit of your business and help you implement simple changes to reduce it – www.globalactionplan.org.uk
- Get details of all green tariffs available to consumers at **Green Electricity** – www.greenelectricity.org
- Switch to a greener energy supplier at **Greenhelpline.com** – www.greenhelpline.com
- Get news, views and practical advice on how to live a lower energy life at **Energy Future** – www.energyfuture.org.uk

Waste and packaging

- **Envirowise** can help you increase profits, minimise waste and reduce your environmental impact – www.envirowise.gov.uk
- Get information on packaging recycling at **WasteOnline** – www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/InformationSheets/Packaging.htm
- The **Low Carbon Buildings** programme provides private businesses with grants for microgeneration technologies – www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk
- **Global Action Plan** can help you to reduce the amount of waste that you produce and ensure that barriers to recycling are understood and tackled – www.globalactionplan.org.uk

Travel

- Educate employees who do drive to do so more efficiently with Global Action Plan's EcoDriving simulator – www.globalactionplan.org.uk
- Reduce your need to travel with the **Energy Saving Trust** – www.energysavingtrust.org.uk
- **Seat 61** explores different ways to avoid air travel – www.seat61.com
- **BT BEST**, BT's Business Environmental Self-Assessment Tool, is designed to help all small businesses understand their environmental impact and take simple steps to becoming a greener, more sustainable company. Go to www.bt.com/btbest
- Get advice on sustainability from **BT** – www.btplc.com/ClimateChange

Offices worldwide

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