

Sustainability, it's in the details

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Adapting to new working practices presents an incredible opportunity to assess and adjust our approach to [sustainability](#). Changes don't have to be extreme; they can include a range of small but effective actions such as embracing recycling and reusable materials, switching to more eco-friendly modes of manufacturing and reviewing transport or packaging best practice. Small wins across a wide range of areas can have a big impact.



RoadLight via [Pixabay](#)

Reduce, reuse, recycle

From separating the paper, plastic and cardboard used in the office, to reducing the use of disposable cutlery, sustainability initiatives often start with the little details first. One of those details needs to be equipment and technology [decisions](#). The reason is obvious: technology – such as PCs, laptops, and smartphones – represented just 1% of the world's carbon footprint in 2007. Today, that's already tripled and is on its way to exceeding [14%](#) by 2040. Whilst technology is intrinsic to the modern business, there are still small – yet hugely beneficial – changes organisations can make to address one of the most serious problems for the environment.

For example, keeping a business phone for three years instead of two, or a laptop for six years instead of five, can make an impact on a company's use of materials. If enterprises are doing this on a national scale, there will be less demand to create as many new devices each year, reducing the overall amount of raw materials mined to match this demand. When companies need new products, they can opt for [remanufactured](#) or refurbished equipment.

As well as being better for the environment, companies can save on average 30-50 per cent of the selling price compared to the same equipment that has been made [new](#). Furthermore, thanks to ratings programmes and awards schemes, customers have greater visibility of brands and products that are less harmful to the [environment](#).

Cut the commute

Greener ways of commuting to work each day – or not commuting at all – can also be beneficial. The average co-working space, for instance a communal office closer to home, can help generate [carbon emission](#) savings of 118 metric tonnes annually between now and 2029 [5]. Prior to the pandemic, a select number of companies had introduced more flexible working policies – allowing people to work from home or cultivate a co-working space in an agile environment. Now, many companies support a mixture of [remote and office working](#) - reducing carbon emissions while improving staff wellbeing.

Technology is making this all possible. With the right solutions and printing capabilities, workers can seamlessly transition between the office and their remote working environment. For example, before 2020, video conferencing had already become a staple in workplace communication, connecting colleagues around the world, but under pandemic working conditions its usage increased dramatically to facilitate everyday meetings that could not be done face-to-face.

Reap the benefits

With so many opportunities to meet sustainability goals through incremental steps, it's important to remember why they will remain so valuable over the next decade. A [report](#) published in 2020 found that 80% of Europeans think big companies and industry are not doing enough to help the environment – suggesting that businesses who strive to make a positive difference can attract customers, while those who don't may lose them.

Taking action on sustainability can also increase the chances of attracting and retaining talent. Some 26 per cent of UK workers said they would accept a lower [salary](#) to work for a sustainable organisation, while half of those surveyed said they would consider declining a job offer from a company with harmful practices. A 2020 survey on the opinions of [millennials](#) across 43 countries found that the proportion who thought 'reducing its impact on the environment' is something their employer is doing well (61 per cent) was 22 per cent higher among those who intend to stay in their jobs for five or more years compared than those expecting to move on fairly soon.

Sustainability for businesses today is less about 'if' and more about 'how'. The good news is that by working on the details and making small changes, businesses can make a significant impact. All it takes is the first step forward.

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