

# Sustainable Business Information Sheet

## Energy efficient and sustainability changes implemented by business



**Queensland  
Government**  
**Environment  
and Resource  
Management**

### The 'paperless' office

Many businesses are recognising the business and environmental advantages that can be achieved from introducing a range of management decisions, technologies and design features that help to reduce their energy consumption and environmental impact.

This information sheet shows how one small business implemented management decisions to reduce their energy usage and environmental impact, and how it affected their business.

**Design House**, a graphic design and website management business wanted to reduce their paper usage and associated project costs, and make environmentally sustainable changes to the business. It was decided the quickest, easiest and most cost effective way to do this was to link all work and management practices to a computer-based system.

#### What they did...

##### Changes to work practices

Being a graphic design business meant traditionally generating many paper-based drawings and design proposals, sketches, drafts and final copies for clients and printers. By using specific computer programs, staff are able to generate all these documents on computer. The electronic files are then emailed to clients for approval, and printers for production. This change in work practice eliminates the need for a considerable amount of paper, pens, markers, printer ink, packaging, and postage or courier costs. It has also reduced the need for large work spaces and drawing tables which allowed them to down-size their office space. This reduced their lighting requirements and lowered the energy costs associated with lighting, cooling and heating, and their annual expenditure on leasing their premises.

These relatively small and inexpensive changes to work procedures also had the added advantage of speeding up the entire design and production process, which means jobs can be completed and approved faster, allowing time for more projects to be undertaken. This effectively provides the opportunity for business growth with no increase to staff or capital expenditure.

As a business that develops and manages website content for clients, **Design House** has linked to an external, independently operated server to host their clients' websites. This eliminates the need to run their own server 24 hours a day, 7 days a week which has produced energy savings and transferred maintenance obligations to the external server.

The business also uses multiple portable hard drives for both back-up and security purposes, ultimately providing huge flexibility for staff to operate in any location required.

##### Changes to office management practices

Management also undertook changes to standard office operations. Printers are set to the black and white default setting which has reduced the costs associated with purchasing colour ink. Setting the 'greyscale' or 'draft' default on the printer also saves ink. Recycling bins are placed near printers and desks to encourage recycling of paper when it is used.

All invoicing is generated electronically and emailed to clients who, in turn, pay electronically with notification emailed to **Design House**. This strategy alone has reduced paper, time, postage, and trips to the Post Office and bank needed to efficiently run the business.

Client emails, faxes and other correspondence are not printed out and filed as a paper copy but are received and filed electronically in the appropriate client and project files. This strategy, while reducing the paper required also enables efficient management of project files and reduces the need for searching and tracking procedures.

Developing a monthly e-newsletter that is emailed to clients, suppliers and colleagues, and is published on their website allows them to regularly promote and inform clients about new campaigns and other important news.

**Design House** also advertises its energy efficient and sustainable practices to its clients, suppliers and on its website. They choose to work with printers and production houses that are also committed to energy efficient and sustainable practices.

#### **What savings they made...**

When **Design House** decided to become a 'paperless' office and implement energy efficiency and sustainable practices they had little idea of how far reaching these changes would be and what level of significance they would have for their business. As a result of some very cost effective changes to work practices and operations they have made considerable savings in several important areas. Firstly, they have reduced operational costs significantly. They now spend only a fraction of their previous budget on office 'consumables', for example, paper, ink, postage. They have also reduced their power bills and annual leasing fees.

Secondly, they can grow their business with no changes to staffing arrangements and minimal or no capital expenditure. The financial advantages associated with this are considerable.

And thirdly, **Design House**, through small, cost effective changes to business practices, have made significant contributions to reducing their energy consumption which is something that not only benefits them in a financial sense but all of us in an environmental sense.

#### **Business contact details**

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**For more details about Design House's sustainable practices go to...**

<http://designhouse.com.au/sustainability/>