

## **Ask SCORE**

*A newly hired employee has suggested that we try to more environmentally conscious in our light manufacturing business. I think it's a good idea, but I don't know where to begin. Can you direct me to some helpful resources?*

How “green” is your small business? That’s a good question, considering the growing awareness of environmental and sustainability issues. And it’s more than just a fad; it makes economic sense. Many green operational strategies can prove less costly in the long run, boosting your profit margin.

What’s more, studies show that more and more consumers prefer to do business with environmentally responsible companies, reinforcing their own personal and/or business commitment to green practices.

But there’s much more to integrating green thinking into your small business than replacing light bulbs and setting out recycling boxes. And a good source of guidance is the Green Business Guide at the Small Business Administration’s website, [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).

Here you’ll find many simple, yet highly effective ways to reduce energy use and conserve resources, funding assistance for implementing major energy improvements, and tips for employee-based environmental programs. There’s also guidance for making your products and services more environmentally friendly, regulations governing marketing green products and examples of how several small businesses have already reduced their carbon footprint.

In addition, SBA’s webpage on waste ([www.sba.gov/content/waste](http://www.sba.gov/content/waste)) offers a number of ideas for reducing waste in the workplace, including recycling some materials to give them a useful “second life” and cost- and Earth-saving measures such as safely reducing packaging materials.

Speaking of recycling, your local waste collection agency may have readily available information and ideas for keeping items out of landfills, including recycling items such as electronics, office furnishings and substances used in manufacturing processes.

Another helpful source of information is GreenBiz.com, a service of the Washington, D.C.-based Green Business Network. In addition to providing the latest news on a variety of sustainability fronts, GreenBiz.com also offers several e-newsletters, educational events and valuable background information to help you better understand the driving forces behind the green business movement.

The Small Business Environmental Home Page ([www.smallbiz-enviroweb.org](http://www.smallbiz-enviroweb.org)) is tailored specifically to the needs of small business, providing links to state agencies, trade associations and other programs focused on reducing pollution.

*This column is brought to you by the Merrimack Valley Chapter of SCORE, with nearly 70 current and former business executives available to provide free, confidential, one-on-one business mentoring and training workshops for area businesses. Call 603-666-7561 or visit [merrimackvalley.score.org](http://merrimackvalley.score.org) for information on mentoring, upcoming workshops and volunteer opportunities. SCORE is a national, non-profit organization and a resource partner of the U. S. Small Business Administration.*