How businesses can go carbon neutral

In 2019, the United Kingdom legislated a net-zero emissions target. A small step that paved the way to achieving their objective of being carbon neutral by the year 2050. In due time, they envision a quarter of Britain covered in trees, quieter roads, and the air clear from harmful fumes — a picture that pushes everyone to make a concerted effort leading towards the goal.

Climate change, greenhouse gasses, and air quality have long been hot topics through the years. News reports opened the eyes of the world to natural occurrences like wildfires, flash floods, and drought which pushed many companies to reassess their environmental impacts. As an effect, many revisited their transport networks, waste disposal management, recyclable-supply use, and efforts for sustainability. Small and measured steps are being done by advocate companies because from a business perspective, there are actually more pros to cons in making your business carbon neutral: you can increase your revenue by standing out from a pool of commercial businesses, reduce overhead costs by changing consumption behaviour on energy and other supplies and reduce the risk of possible future regulation that may tax carbon consumption.

Shifting from usual to carbon-neutral is soon going to be the path everyone is

required to take and while many businesses from both private and public sectors have already set their own unique objectives for the net-zero goal and listing down their targets which is rather an easy step, staying true to achieving them is another matter. It may seem to be taxing and tedious at first but by making small changes, you can reduce your CO_2 emissions. Start with these ideas:

Create strong and factual data

This is an important step many companies tend to neglect since they find that the most practical way to be carbon neutral is to already start implementing strategies. While that may work for others, it is still best to measure carbon footprints first. The results of such will provide you a good baseline as to where you should start and what specific steps would it take for you to achieve your carbon-neutral goals. _Conduct a simple survey_ and do qualitative interviews among your employees so that you can craft strategies that truly correspond to your company's needs and goals.

Plan for the long term

Achieving carbon neutrality cannot be achieved overnight, it is even going to take more than a year. Having said that, you want to plan for a change that you can run and sustain over the long term. It is not just a phase where you can be robots for a while and then get back to your normal selves after a period of time, it is going to be a life-long commitment. Your goal is to make all your employees, customers, and clients genuinely commit to sustainability so they can be more eco-responsive individuals on their own not only in your company but also in their private lives.

Evaluation is always important

An evaluation provides a systematic method to study an intervention or a change made. It helps to determine what works or worked well and what could be improved. Monitoring and evaluating to ensure everyone adheres to the standards and goals set can bring the entire team in the right direction. Evaluation and feedback can also allow for individual check-ins should there be moments of discouragement, demotivation, or lack of participation. Using the results of the evaluation, you can also grant incentives or small prizes to your employees who have shown tremendous improvement and efforts and let them be your change champions for inspiration.

Switch to renewable energy

Provided that your company office has a wide roof space, you can benefit so much from installing a solar energy system. Advancements in technology have made it possible for you to offset some or most of your entire energy consumption with an on-site renewable energy system. You can also try partnering with your electric company for energy provision via larger solar panels and wind turbines nearest you. Purchasing a renewable energy certificate can also offset your electricity usage.

Skip the plastic and encourage recycling

Plastic only ends up in our landfills — not to mention its production, transport, and disposal which also creates CO_2 emissions. Arrange a dialogue with all of your suppliers and let them know you are ditching the use of plastic so they can also work on delivering their goods to you without packaging waste. In addition, for your company to have a recycling culture, staff training must be made so they can be educated regarding new practices. Installment of trash bins for bio, non-bio and recyclable items must be in visible and easily accessible locations. Printer ink cartridges can also be refilled instead of disposed of immediately. Perhaps you can also make a system of collecting organic waste in your company cafeteria or common pantry.

Go paperless

Instead of investing money for reams of paper only to end up with a pile of scratch pads and a mountain of trash, you can opt to go paperless. You may reduce the amount of paper you order in your monthly supply or reduce the number of printers. Lean on to emails for memos, notes, and notices.

Encourage shuttle service or carpooling

Many companies give out incentives to their employees who support public transportation, shuttle service, and carpooling as an effort _to reach net-zero emissions_ and save money. They also value the importance of traveling and safety, especially during these challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, so employees are not required to physically travel to another location only for a meeting. They opt for the use of video conferencing apps instead.

Article by BASH SARMIENTO