

## **Top 10 for 2010: Top 10 Ways to Be Green (and Healthy) at Work**

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We all know the three R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and in general, most workplaces are already making great strides to be more green. Recycling programs for paper products, plastics and even electronics are now frequently seen in the corporate environment. But what can your organization do to help employees be green and healthy? Read on for more ideas.

### **1. Get to work on your own steam.**

Not only will this help to reduce your carbon footprint, save on gas and costs of operating a vehicle; your heart and lungs will thank you. Additionally, many people who commute on their own power by cycling, walking, running, paddling, a combination of these methods and more, find the exercise they get (and the related endorphin's or 'feel good' hormones) to and from work help them better manage their stress at work and decompress after a long day!

### **2. Take the stairs.**

Reduce energy costs and impact of taking the elevator and get some exercise while you do it.

### **3. Drink water – but skip the bottle!**

Not only is bottled water costly (and mostly unnecessary due to the high quality drinking water we have in BC); bottles from water and other drinks generate significant amounts of waste. While we are able to recycle these bottles, reducing the total number of bottles is always a better choice! If you are concerned about the quality of your local water consider getting a water filter system and using glasses instead.

### **4. Offer 'green' food choices at work.**

Whenever possible consider having meatless, organic food as options for work sponsored meals and snacks. If your company has a food supplier or cafeteria, work with them to increase the amount of organic produce and staples and have them offer meatless options more frequently. This not only helps our planet reduce the impact of livestock; eating vegetarian meals is generally considered to be a great choice for your health!

### **5. Organize a 'Clean Up' day.**

Work with your organization to get involved with an initiative to clean up a river bed or clean up trash along roadways. Not only do initiatives like this help to keep our planet 'green' – the physical activity helps promote a healthy body! Side bonus – teambuilding for you and your colleagues!

### **6. Create an online classifieds or lending tree for health and wellness books and tools.**

Not using your stationary bike or a reference book on Pilates? Why not lend or sell it to a fellow colleague who might be able to make use of it? Not only does

this prevent the item going to waste – it helps your fellow colleague improve their own health (and reduces your stress for watching the item collect dust)!

### **7. Minimize your off-gases.**

Consider making it a workplace policy to buy office furniture, carpet and paint which is free of volatile organic compounds (VOC's) and won't off-gas chemicals. Where possible consider buying furniture which is either 2<sup>nd</sup> hand or manufactured using recycled items. Make your space planet friendly and body friendly!

### **8. Consider using green cleaning products at work.**

Wherever possible look at using non-toxic 'green' products in the workplace. Minimizing these toxins in our environment is not only good for our earth – it's better for your health.

### **9. Go green – with plants (real ones).**

Live plants not only absorb Carbon Dioxide from the air we breathe and produce the oxygen we require for living; they can also help to absorb indoor 'pollution' from toxic chemicals which are inherent in our indoor lives.

### **10. Walk or Run for the Planet!**

Organize a workplace challenge to train and participate in a local charitable walk or run. There are heaps of charitable walks and runs out there – so find one everyone can get engaged in and start training today. Organize group walks and runs before, at lunch and after work and organize a group gathering after the event to celebrate the success! Better yet, work with your company to sponsor an event and work with a local race organizer to plan it!

#### **Recommended Resources:**

Environment Canada –great toolkits and resources

<http://www.ec.gc.ca/education/default.asp?lang=En&n=8E7932A0-1>

Let's Go Green Canada

<http://www.letsgogreencanada.ca/home.html>

Interesting article on how being sustainable promotes engagement in employees

[http://workplaceculture.suite101.com/article.cfm/being\\_green\\_at\\_work\\_brings\\_more\\_job\\_satisfaction](http://workplaceculture.suite101.com/article.cfm/being_green_at_work_brings_more_job_satisfaction)

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