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Green becoming the color of business

East Bay Business Times - by [Eve Abbott](#)

Ever wonder if one person makes a difference? How about reusing paper printed on one side for drafts and graphics? Or using shredded paper for packing? Turning in ink cartridges to Staples for \$3 coupons usable for any purchase. There are a lot of businesses doing green things for our communities.

Value of greening

Even before the worldwide success of Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth," an international study about "green" or "Cause-Related Marketing" (CRM) reported:

- 81 percent of consumers agree that they are more likely to buy a product or service that is associated with a cause they care about.
- 77 percent of consumers said "Cause-Related Marketing" positively changed both their behavior to and perception of a company or brand.
- 67 percent of consumers think that more companies should be involved in CRM.

Green business today

Oakland-based Give Something Back sells business products for less and donates the profits back to the community. Fifteen years and more than \$3 million in donations later, over 13,000 customers have chosen Give Something Back, leading to its nationwide expansion. Inc. magazine has named it one of the fastest-growing privately held companies in America.

Give Something Back's corporate headquarters is outfitted with a solar roof and stocked with biodegradable cleaning products. Green also means solar panels, high-efficiency lighting and low-flow toilets. Plus recycling: paper, batteries, toner cartridges, aluminum cans and cardboard. Already one of the largest environmentally responsible companies in the Bay Area, Give Something Back is certified by the Alameda County Green Business Program (www.greenbiz.ca.gov/AboutUsAC.html).

Green office products

Give Something Back features recycled products including folders, calendars, pens and recycled papers that match or beat the quality of virgin-fiber papers. It encourages customers to continue the green cycle, by participating in a toner cartridge recycling program and by choosing products that are recyclable or biodegradable.

Green is the color of money

In fact, CEOs in businesses both large and small are realizing that greening their business affects the bottom line in a big way. Oracle Corp. invested \$10,000 in restroom lighting and sensor upgrades and as a result is saving \$100,000 each year at one site.

Turn e-waste into green

BuyMyTronics.com started with an idea to keep broken and used iPods out of landfills. When founder Brett Mosley's iPod broke, it dawned on him that there weren't many eco-friendly or economically rewarding ways to deal with it.

It currently accepts iPods, cell phones/PDAs, iPhones, Zunes and game consoles with a quick, easy online system that delivers your payment by check to you or by PayPal. Soon, they will pay for laptops, digital cameras, GPS devices and camcorders with the same focus of keeping used and broken electronics out of our communities' landfill waste.

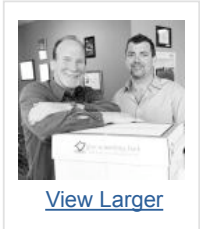
Changing your business

Allison Bliss sees a growing green trend in the clientele of her East Bay marketing and communications agency (www.allisonbliss.com). Allison is attracting clients that share the same mission as her company: use business to support their community and the planet.

For example, Allison's client The Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center (www.rencenter.org) has begun a conversion of their lighting system to the new energy-efficient fluorescent lights. Working with PG&E to qualify for a 40 percent rebate on costs, the center expects it will take two years before they see big cost savings.

Operations Director Lisa Kirvin explains: "We want a lighter footprint by incorporating green practices and to set a positive example for our clients since we own our building. Besides, it's just good business and our supporters are eco-conscientious in their own business practices, too."

At another one of her clients, Locke and Key Executive Search, employees are implementing environmentally sound practices at work with green construction:



- Cut back on commuting by walking and biking to run errands.
- Get as paperless as possible: when receiving a mailed/faxed résumé, they request a soft copy and recycle the original.
- They do get bank statements on paper, but all bills are handled online.

Although Kermit the Frog and Ray Charles once sang "It ain't easy being green," there are more environmentally friendly large and small options available than ever before. Do it for you, your family, community and your business.

Eve Abbott is author of "How to Do Space Age Work with a Stone Age Brain." Contact her at Eve@ABrainNewWaytoWork.com.

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