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Seven ways to save energy in your business

Going "greener" can cut business costs and carbon emissions. Here are seven tips for saving energy and reducing your utility bills.

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Small business owners spend more than \$60 billion a year on utility bills, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Small Business Administration (SBA).¹

Making even a few minor changes, however, can yield major savings for your business and the environment. Start protecting your profits, and the planet, with these seven ways to save energy.

1. Track how much energy your business uses, and celebrate successes

Your first step should be to identify how much energy your business uses before implementing "green" practices. Use the EPA's [ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager](#) or similar tools offered by many utility providers, including [ComEd](#) and [PG&E](#). These free online tools can calculate your energy usage based on basic information about your space, utility bills, and energy costs, as well as find opportunities to save energy and money.

After implementing [energy-saving techniques](#), track the success of your improvements by revisiting these tools when you pay your monthly utility bills.² Consider earmarking a portion of your savings for a bonus such as a celebration once you reach a certain milestone, or for an end of the year party.

2. Save energy by replacing traditional lighting with LED or CFL bulbs

Light-emitting diode (LED) and compact fluorescent light (CFL) can reduce energy consumption, and they're better for your bank account. LEDs use up to 80 percent less energy than incandescent light bulbs and can last more than 25 times longer.³ CFLs can reduce operating expenses by two-thirds and last up to 10 times longer. Both generate less heat, which can lower air conditioning costs.⁴

You can also cut lighting costs by installing occupancy sensors, which turn off lights when rooms are vacant, and ENERGY STAR-qualified exit signs, which can save up to \$10, as of January 2015, per sign in annual electricity expenses.⁵

3. Maximize the efficiency of your HVAC system

The EPA estimates that a dirty filter can add as much as \$5 as of January 2015, to your monthly HVAC bill, so it's important to change your filters regularly — as often as once a month during peak heating and cooling seasons.⁶

Give your HVAC system a regular checkup to catch leaks and other inefficiencies that might raise your bill. To prevent wasteful problems, the EPA recommends negotiating an annual contract with your HVAC technician for "pre-season" tune-ups to your furnace and air conditioner.⁷

"Electronic devices may be your business's biggest energy hogs. Even when they're turned off, your computers, printers, and coffeemakers consume phantom power and increase electricity costs."

4. Install a smart technology, programmable thermostat to save energy

If you forget to adjust a basic thermostat at the end of the workday, you pay for hours of unused heating or cooling. A smart technology, programmable thermostat, on the other hand, can learn your schedule and adjust accordingly and it can be conveniently controlled via mobile phone in case you need to adjust it while you're on the go. Installing a programmable thermostat can cut HVAC costs by as much as 30%.⁸

5. Insulate drafty spaces to save energy

Drafty offices are more than uncomfortable. They're expensive, too. Poorly insulated spaces struggle to hold onto heat in the colder months and cool air in the warmer months, require more energy to maintain the temperature, and raise your utility bills.

Insulate drafty areas around windows and doors with caulking and weather stripping. A few hours of do-it-yourself work could stop leaking air and save money.

6. Unplug electronics at closing time

[Electronic devices](#) may be your business's biggest energy hogs. Even when they're turned off, your computers, printers, and coffeemakers consume phantom power and increase electricity costs.

Stop the drain on your resources by unplugging electronics when they're not in use. When that's not convenient, plug in your devices to power strips that minimize phantom consumption and enable the energy-saving "sleep mode."

7. Collaborate

Differences between who owns the building and who pays the bills can cause challenges, but those can be overcome by working together. For example, if you are a tenant, talk to the building owner about splitting incentives so you both benefit from building upgrades, or vice versa. Review, "[Working Together for Sustainability: The RMI-BOMA Guide for Landlords and Tenant](#)" for helpful engagement tips.

It takes plenty of energy to run a small business — from you *and* your power company. Leverage these ways to save your office's energy so none of it goes to waste.

¹ "Improving Energy Use and Efficiency for Small Businesses: Going green can save you green." Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Small Business Administration (SBA). www.score.org/system/files/u209922/serv_energy_going-green_factsh.pdf

² "Energy Benchmarking for Small Businesses." Green Impact Campaign. greenimpactcampaign.org/small-business-energy-benchmarking

³ <http://www.earth911.com/eco-tech/cfl-led-choose-light-bulb-options/2/>

⁴ "Change for the Better with ENERGY STAR." EPA. www.energystar.gov/ia/partners/publications/pubdocs/ESsmlbz508.pdf?0b55-1475

⁵ "Tips for Energy Efficiency." SBA. www.sba.gov/content/tips-energy-efficiency

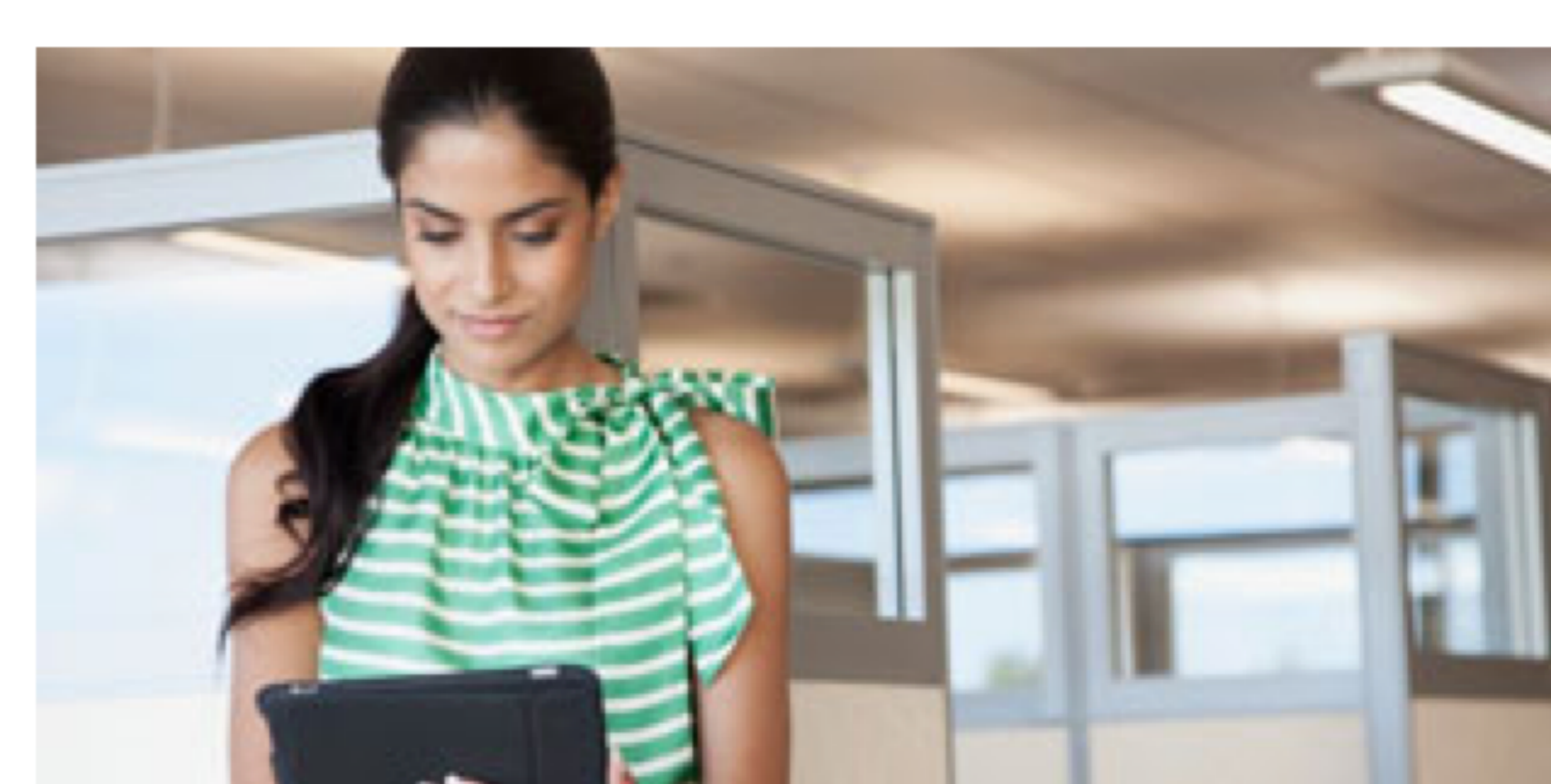
⁶ "Small Business: Energy Efficiency with ENERGY STAR." EPA. www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-and-you/small-business/small-business2.html

⁷ "Small Business: Energy Efficiency with ENERGY STAR." EPA. www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-and-you/small-business/small-business2.html

⁸ "Small Business: Energy Efficiency with ENERGY STAR." EPA. www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-and-you/small-business/small-business2.html

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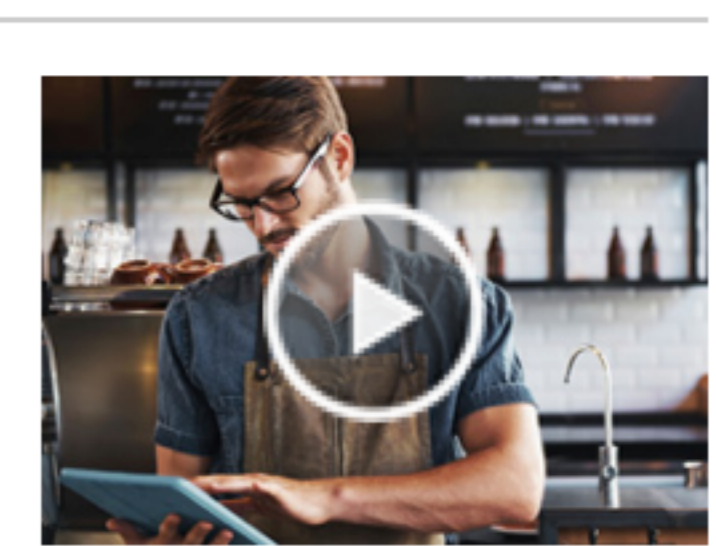
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