



p-TIPS

Armchair environmentalist (greening the office)

Daunted by the sheer immensity of environmental problems, UK activist Karen Christensen wrote *The Armchair Environmentalist: 3 Minute-a-Day Action Plan to Save the World* (MQ Publications Ltd., 2004). It contains a host of tips easily implemented by individuals of all ages and institutions of all sizes and types. We all know that a greener workplace means a greener planet, more productive employees with less absenteeism, and financial savings in the long term. The following tips are suitable for most enterprises, but particularly for Asian-Pacific SMEs.

- 1) Literally green up with live plants, which are good for the air and the spirit. In dry climates, stand the pots in trays of pebbles and water to increase humidity (employees who use computers will complain less of dry eyes).
- 2) Use bamboo, wood, and other natural materials for as much office furniture as possible (definitely a cost savings in tropical Asia and the Pacific).
- 3) Put low-energy light bulbs in ceiling and wall fixtures (save those high-powered bulbs for desk lamps).
- 4) Make the best use of natural light and ventilation (put desks by windows—and those windows should open).
- 5) Install ceiling fans to supplement air-conditioning. They'll bring down electricity bills (but you may need to invest in paperweights).
- 6) Check for unsuspected sources of air pollution, like carpets, photocopiers, art supplies, and cleansers. Put copy machines and laser printers as far away from employee desks as possible (they contain toners and solvents that no one should have to breathe).
- 7) Reuse, reuse, reuse (think of paper, envelopes, files, binders and folders, boxes and packing materials, string, etc.).
- 8) Use nontoxic, odor-free, water-based marking pens and water-based correction fluid (they'll do less damage at final disposal and make office air cleaner).
- 9) Avoid plastics when possible (for example, metal paper trays may cost more initially than their plastic counterparts but they last forever).