

GREENING YOUR LAW PRACTICE

Pursuing sustainability through green business practices is not only good for the environment, it can literally mean more green in your pocket. Getting started is easy. Review the tips below, take a fresh look around your office, and pick one or two ideas you can implement now. Bookmark others for the next time you need to replace a monitor or printer.

How Green Is Your Internet?

Green your Web site by offering intake forms online. Clients will appreciate the convenience and so will you and your staff. Electronically filled intake forms are easy to read and easy to process. Design the form to match the information gathered by your practice management software. Having clients fill out the form in advance means you can spend more time with them when they come into your office, and the money saved in printing and paper costs will add up.

Caveat: E-mail intake forms directly to prospective clients or use a secure <https://> connection. Proper disclaimers will prevent creation of a lawyer-client relationship where none is intended. See “Disclaimers for E-mail, ListServes, Usenets, Web Sites, and Newsletters,” www.osbplf.org, under Practice Aids and Forms, in the Technology category.

Practice tip: Using Acrobat to “extend” features in Adobe Reader allows clients with Version 7 or later to access your online forms and save a local copy. In Acrobat, choose Advanced > Extend Features in Adobe Reader. . .

Online collaboration, document sharing, and Web and video conferencing are increasingly popular. You and the client stay put – reducing your mutual carbon footprint – and meeting be-

comes convenient again. Read more about this practice at the ABA Legal Technology Resource Center, www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/fyidocs, under Web and Communication Technology.

Put the ultimate power of the Internet to work by accessing your office from home. Work remotely using www.LogMeIn.com, www.GoToMyPC.com, www.PCAnywhere.com, Windows Desktop, or a Virtual Private Network. If your daily commute is 20 miles or more, you can easily save 1,000 miles in a year by telecommuting one day a week.

Make the Most of Your Monitor

Consider converting your old-style monitor to an energy-efficient flat-screen LCD. Don’t worry if the purchase is not within your budget now. When your old monitor needs to be replaced, the newer models will be waiting. Check the Web sites of *PC World*, www.pcworld.com, and *PC Magazine*, www.pcmag.com, for reviews when you are ready to buy. If you are a Mac aficionado, use Google® to search the latest discussion threads and forums.

Install dual or oversize computer monitors to reduce printing costs. Nothing beats the convenience (or saves unnecessary print jobs) like being able to compare documents side by side. Dual monitors also mean you can keep a working document up on one screen while your calendar or time and billing program sits ready to use on the other screen.

Oregon offers free recycling of certain electronics, including computers and monitors. To find an e-collection site, or for more information, see www.deq.state.or.us/lq/ecycle/index.

DISCLAIMER

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htm. As of January 1, 2010, electronics cannot be disposed of in the garbage or at disposal sites.

Print Smart and Save Money

Greening your printing practices is one of the best moves you can make. Fewer print jobs mean less paper, ink, chemicals, and plastics consumed. Consider these possibilities:

- Share resources by networking your laser printers. Dedicated printers for each employee make it too easy to hit “Print.”
- Require employees to enter a security code before printing a job. Many printers have this feature, and it is widely used in financial and legal departments of companies where confidentiality must be protected. Employees must actually go to the printer, enter the code, then walk back to their desks to hit “Print.” The “walk-to” feature reduces waste in two ways – it makes employees think twice about whether they need to print and whether they want to walk to the printer twice – once to enter the code and again to pick up their print job.
- Use recycled paper. The average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of paper per year, according to the Federal Network for Sustainability. No statistics exist for the average worker in a law office, but the numbers are likely to be much higher. Print on recycled paper, and then recycle it again. (Be careful to protect confidentiality at the end of this process by shredding or otherwise properly disposing of your documents. For more information on document retention and destruction, see “File Retention and Destruction: Guidelines,” www.osbplf.org, under Practice Aids and Forms, in the File Management category.)
- Mandate double-sided printing, which Hewlett-Packard estimates can cut paper waste by 25 percent.
- If a document flows slightly over to a second page, use the “shrink to fit” setting in your word processor’s Print Preview mode to shorten the document to one page. Note: Shrink to fit works by reducing font size, which may make reading difficult for some clients. If this is an issue, adjust margin settings instead.
- Download free utilities like www.printgreener.com or www.fineprint.com that print to PDF and remove extra pages from print jobs.
- Take advantage of the return-and-recycle programs for laser cartridges offered by manufacturers. See the directions printed on or inside the box of your new replacement cartridge.
- Get rid of your fax machine and use an e-fax service instead.

Or Just Don’t Print at All – Put the Power of Your Scanner to Work

If feasible, add desktop scanners to supplement networked or centralized scanners. Once you’ve integrated scanning into your work for clients, look for other ways to use this technology. For example, save a trip to the bank by scanning your checks straight into your business account using a service like www.DepositNow.com.

For truly big savings, move toward going paperless. See “Is It Time To Go Paper-Less?” at www.osbplf.org, *In Brief*, then February 2009. Read more about this practice at the ABA Legal Technology Resource Center, www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/fyidocs, under Law Office Technology: Software.

Other Tips

Buy Energy Star equipment and appliances whenever possible. Unplug equipment or power off when not in use, especially over the weekend. During the workweek, set equipment to enter standby mode when idle for 10 or 15 minutes.

Replace standard lightbulbs with compact fluorescents in desk lamps. If feasible, ask your property manager to do the same with overhead lighting. Are you building out new space or remodeling? Control lighting with motion sensors and timers for more savings (and a regular signal that it’s time to get up, stretch, walk around, or take a break).

Make recycling as easy as possible – everywhere you have a trash can, add a recycling bin. Don’t forget work rooms (near copiers and mail sorting) and lunch rooms.

Opt out of direct marketing services with www.DMAchoice.org, <http://privacycouncil.org>, www.precycle.tonic.com, www.ecocycle.org, www.catalogchoice.org, www.41pounds.org, www.stopjunk.com, or www.stopthejunkmail.com.

Stop financial and insurance solicitations using www.optoutprescreen.com.

Go green in the kitchen by using washable cups, glasses, and towels or green products from sources like www.marcalpaper.com or www.earth-centric.net/servlet/StoreFront.

Shop green for office supplies at www.thegreenoffice.com, www.ecobusinesslinks.com/office_products_recycled.htm, <http://greenearthofficesupply.stores.yahoo.net>, and www.greenofficestore.com.

Seek out green vendors for your other business needs.

Barter or “freecycle” the next time you need a desk, credenza, bookshelves, or another office item. The Freecycle Network™ is an international grassroots movement of over six million people who are “giving and getting stuff for free.” Visit www.freecycle.org for more information.

Get organized! Significant time, money, and energy are wasted buying supplies you already have but can’t find. While you’re at it, organize your office systems, too. The practice management advisors at the PLF can help! Go to www.osbplf.org, then select Services under Practice Mgmt Advisors.

The Future

Monitor green practice trends at Ecopreneurist, <http://ecopreneurist.com>, and GreenBiz, <http://www.greenbiz.com>, and take advantage of the ideas in the Green Business Guide, <http://www.business.gov/expand/green-business>.

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Sources: Eco-Friendly Printing: However small at first glance, these seven changes really add up, http://biztechmagazine.com/article.asp?item_id=542; Going Green, ABA Legal Technology Resource Center, www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/fyidocs; Going Green to Stay in the Black, www.abanet.org/lpm/magazine/articles/v35/is5/pg09.shtml; Ecopreneurist, <http://ecopreneurist.com>; and GreenBiz, www.greenbiz.com. See also Oregon Sustainability Resources, www.deq.state.or.us/programs/sustainability, and U.S. Government Sustainability Resources, <http://epa.gov/sustainability>.