

Step One: Gathering Information

Information gathering is one of the most crucial steps in the development of a waste prevention programme. Before you begin planning a course of action, you first need to answer some general questions, such as:

- What is already being done?
- What has been done in the past?
- What obstacles might arise?
- What support exists?

Baseline Data

For your data to be meaningful, you need to begin by taking baseline measurements before implementing your programme. A baseline is a measurement of the “before scenario.” It gives you the figures to measure against once the programme is underway.

Accurate baseline data is essential so the type and amount of information you collect for the baseline is dependent on the programme you are delivering.

What to Measure?

What you measure depends entirely on the programme you want to implement and the messages you want to communicate. Measurements need to be understood by a wide audience so they must be meaningful. Examples include:

- Amount of waste per employee or unit manufactured.
- Percentage of waste being recycled.
- Energy consumption per unit manufactured, employee or per square metre of premises.
- Reduction in paper consumption.
- Litres of water consumed per employee or unit manufactured.
- Current spending on waste disposal or recycling costs.
- Current purchasing costs of relevant raw material.
- Current cost of energy and water consumption.

Step Two: Securing Support

Adequate cross sectoral support will be critical to the success of the programme. Essentially support needs to be both top down and bottom up. Each organisation has a unique culture and some organisations adapt faster to change than others, all these parameters should be given consideration when seeking support for the programme.

Senior management must decide to tackle waste and commit the necessary resources: Time (their own & other staff) and Finance.

The organisation could express its commitment by creating an environmental policy or statement that will guide the organisation's activities in relation to the environment.

An environmental policy should:

- Briefly describe the organisation's activities and significant environmental aspects,**
- State a commitment to continually improving environmental performance and waste prevention,**
- Provide a framework for reviewing environmental objectives and targets,**
- Top management should sign & date the policy.**

Measurements can be tailored to your specific programme and can be as simple or complex as you wish them to be.

Where Do You Find the Information?

Gathering baseline data and information throughout the programme will be a time consuming task which may prove arduous. More than one person will hold the information you need and getting historic data so that the green team can assess trends could be testing, you simply don't know till you start. However difficult it will be worthwhile as a successful programme hinges on the quality of the information collected at the outset. More information is available in the [Resources](#) section of the website

Step Three: Forming the Green Team

With support from all the necessary parties secured, the next step is to put a team in place to carry the programme through to implementation.

Purpose of the Green Team

A team approach allows the work to be distributed among several people and enables people from all over the facility, office or building to contribute to the success of the programme. The green team will be responsible for many of the tasks involved in planning, designing, implementing, and maintaining the programme.

Green Team

Your environmental team should be composed of a representative cross-section of employees, tenants, management, and facilities staff.

Selecting Team Members:

By far the most important consideration when putting together the team is to make it as representative of the organisation as possible.

The size of your team will depend on the size of your office or building and the scope of your programme. Team members can be volunteers or appointed. In either case, it is important that they are enthusiastic and able to commit time to the project. To increase motivation and interest, it is important for all involved to receive periodic recognition for their efforts.

Green Team Leader

Every team needs a leader and this must be someone who can bring energy and drive to the programme but who is also involved in a practical manner. Likely candidates would include the facilities manager, environmental manager or an employee who is known as an environmental champion.

The team leader should have a strong commitment to the goals of the programme, organisational experience, and good communication skills.

Next Steps

Once your team has been established, it should meet regularly to develop a plan, and begin implementation. The time it will take the Green Team to plan, implement, and monitor an initiative depends on the size of the facility and the type of activity (e.g., waste reduction, energy or water conservation, procurement). It is vital that adequate time is invested now and this will pay off in due course once the programme is underway.

Step Four: Selecting & Planning a Programme

Remember all the data you gathered in step one? Well, it's time to take it out for a closer look. From this data, the Green Team can select specific target areas.

Prioritising

After identifying the key activities, the team will need to decide which activity to target first. One way to prioritise your activities is to establish selection criteria and then allow the team to rank the various activities. The following are examples of selection criteria to consider:

1. Which resources can be used more efficiently?
2. How and who will conduct a waste audit and an audit of water and energy consumption for discussion at the green team?.
3. How will we communicate messages to staff in order to influence and change their behaviour?
4. How can we review resource intensive processes or practices?
5. Can we review practices that utilise hazardous materials.
6. What format will water and energy conservation programmes take?
7. If there are multiple tenants what is the best method of communicating with them?

You will probably want to add criteria of your own that relate to your particular office, building or facility.

Step Five: Launching the Programme

Now its time to spread the word to ensure the programme doesn't remain your organisation's best kept secret.

Beginning Your Programme

When you are ready to launch the programme there should be an announcement or email from the green team – if possible get a “Green Team” email address set up and brand any posters or newsletters so that co-workers or tenants begin to recognise messages from the green team.

The kick-off announcement should include:

- A commitment to the programme from the top level management.
- A description of how the programme will benefit the organisation, the community, and the environment.
- Identification of the Green Team leader, assistants, and members.
- The employees or tenants crucial role in the success of the programme.
- If there are going to be training sessions, include the timetable of when these will be held.

Kick-off Event

- Be creative!
- Create a name, slogan and/or mascot or branding.
- Hold a contest to select the programme's name.
- Distribute items & information to promote the programme.
- Introduce the programme in conjunction with a National or European event such as Waste Awareness Day or Waste Reduction Week.

Training Sessions

If training sessions are required these should take place as close to the kick-off as possible. They can be conducted independently

or as part of regularly scheduled staff meetings or training sessions. Larger offices or buildings may want to hold separate training sessions for personnel by job function. Management and facilities staff should be trained on the programme before the kick-off. You may also want to provide separate training sessions for general office staff, purchasing, landscaping, operations and maintenance personnel.

Posters, displays, videos and PowerPoint presentations can be an effective means to convey these aspects of the programme. Posters and flyers should be displayed several days before the first training session. After the programme is established, training should be incorporated into the new-employee induction programme.

Step Six: Encouraging Participation

Keeping up momentum in the early days of the programme may prove difficult particularly if a lot of effort went into the launch. Participation and enthusiasm across all sectors is required to ensure the programme stays on track.

At the first sign of any wavering of commitment to the environmental program, the Green Team leader should work quickly to uncover the cause of the problem and then take immediate action to correct it. If people begin to return to their old habits, whatever the reason, the programme is at risk and may fail.

Promote the Programme

Continually reinforcing a new habit is extremely important. It takes continual education to change people's behaviour. To keep everyone updated and excited about the accomplishments of the programme try:

- Posting frequent programme updates or general environmental tips on the intranet or the organisation's homepage, in newsletters, on central notice boards, and via email.

- Calculate the environmental impact of the programme. Examples include:

- reams of paper saved,
 - litres of water saved,
 - kg's or tonnes of waste diverted from landfill,
 - €s saved in waste disposal,
 - € saved in energy costs.

- Continue to brand the programme, use humour if appropriate,

- Reward suggestions from staff with simple prizes,

Offer Incentives

Every person will have a different motivation for participating in the programme. The more approaches you try, the more people you will reach. Sometimes a certificate honouring or recognising a

person's actions is all that's needed. Here are a few more examples:

- Give prizes to the divisions/floors/units with the highest participation for a time period (e.g., month, quarter, year)
- Donate any revenue to a local charitable organisation.
- Solicit suggestions from employees/tenants for new ideas for the programme; give awards for the best ideas or suggestions.
- Hold internal recognition events where awards are given.
- Set an office or building-wide goal and provide rewards when it is met (gift tokens).
- Display results in the canteen or reception area (Good examples include a timeline or thermometer showing how much further has been achieved and how much there is to go).

Avoid Conflicting Messages

Once your organisation has adopted a programme with environmental goals, it's important not to send conflicting messages with your education and awareness events. Here are a few suggestions to help you avoid this:

- Plan events throughout the year.
- Give incentives and prizes that are in keeping with the overall goals of your programme; not disposable items that will end up in the waste stream.
- Give out items made from recycled and recyclable material to reinforce the idea of "buying recycled" and showcase these products.
- Give items that employees can use to save money at home — such as battery rechargers, reusable shopping bags, water hippos to encourage them to continue their environmental efforts at home.

Step Seven: Monitoring the Programme

Once your programme is underway, the Green Team will need to undertake careful monitoring to gauge its effectiveness. This monitoring should consider the following variables: what data to record, how frequently to monitor, and the type and format of recording system. Only through regular monitoring (and recording what you find) will you be able to adequately assess your programme's effectiveness.

Why Measure?

Measuring success provides you with information to help promote your programme and find ways to improve it. Measuring will tell you if you are on track to meet your goals. Top management, stakeholders, employees, tenants, and the community can learn how your organisation is eliminating waste, saving money, and helping the environment. If one of your goals is to receive external recognition for your efforts, then measuring your programme's effectiveness is essential to provide evidence of your activities and successes. It also gives you the hard data you might need to justify the continuation of the programme and to let employees or tenants know that their extra efforts are indeed making a difference.

If the measurements reveal that the programme is not meeting your goals, the team needs to decide what the problems are and how to correct them. Be sure to document any changes to the programme and why they were made. This experience can help you with future projects. On the other hand, if the results show that the programme is effective, you're ready to take on your next challenge!

Next Steps

The Green Team, in conjunction with the organisation's management, will decide the next steps to take. As part of its decision, the team will need to answer such questions as:

- Has enough time passed to accurately judge the success of the first effort?

- **If so, did the team meet its goals?**
- **If not, can the problems be solved?**
- **Are team members willing and able to begin another initiative.**
- **Is the management ready to support another effort?**

If the goals were not met, the Green Team needs to find out why, make corrections, and give the initiative more time to show success before beginning any new challenges. Without initial success, management support for future efforts is unlikely.

Once you have the programme in place and are getting measurable results, call another meeting of the Green Team to re-examine your activities. What were your other priorities?

Remember, the goal is to continually expand and improve your environmental programme, thus making your business more sustainable. The most important thing is to keep moving forward and communicating change across the organisation.