



By Alice O'Hearn



How To Make Your Law Office

Green

They say “Green is the new Black,” but in the legal industry, making the change to a sustainable office and work environment can be an overwhelming task. With planning and organization, even the least energy-efficient firm can do its part to conserve. Though Las Vegas is a relatively new city, many of its firms are in some of its oldest buildings. The decision to go green is not as easy if you are in an older building or are a tenant with little control over the materials used in your office. For those who own their own buildings, major changes can be costly but have effects beyond their long-term energy savings. To best decide how you can green your own office, first identify your reasons.

Why go green?

Energy efficiency and sustainability are no longer buzz words used by those in the industry. Clients and employees alike see them as a responsibility of our profession. Among the

reasons firms have determined for improving their efforts in these areas are:

- Giving back to the community
- Social responsibility
- Employee morale
- Reducing waste and expenses
- Increasing productivity and efficiency

At my firm, we had the opportunity to implement energy efficiency when we moved into our new office. There are multiple sources of light for each room, allowing us to turn off the majority of the lights when the room is not being used, but

still leave a little ambient lighting on.

When it comes to paper, law firms have traditionally been a paper company’s best friend. But you can reduce your paper consumption and costs considerably when incorporating easy modifications as our firm has done:

- Use paperless systems whenever possible
- Print on both sides of the paper when printing drafts
- Scan and distribute documents via email instead of sending hard copies
- Use a shredding system or company to shred and recycle paper



Celebrate Earth Day

April 22 is Earth Day. Why not use it as an opportunity to get staff members thinking of ways to go green? Issue a challenge: every person (or team) comes up with one idea to make the office more energy efficient. Your legal administrator can choose the best one and implement it. The winning person or team gets a prize, and it can become an annual firm activity. It's that easy!

Appoint a green leader

Let your staff take control of the initiative. Most associate attorneys, interns, and young employees have grown up knowing the importance of conserving energy. You'll give them a leadership opportunity and allow them to hone their problem-solving skills. Task them with finding fun ways to help everyone develop good habits like:

- Turning lights off when they leave their offices
- Turning monitors/computers off when they aren't being used
- Using filtered water instead of bottled water
- Using silverware and dishes instead of paper and plastic
- Recycling toner cartridges
- Using refillable pens instead of disposable


Some firms encourage friendly competitions between floors or teams to see who can be the most green and they accumulate points for making good choices or receive "penalties" when they forget.

When your office is not your own

If your firm is a leased property, open a dialogue with building management to discuss opportunities for sustainability. Is there an opportunity to negotiate the lease agreement if you make energy-saving modifications? You can also help identify mutually beneficial opportunities that will help management enhance their offerings and both attract and retain tenants.

Implement some or all of the measures firms across the country have taken:

- Encourage and/or subsidize workers to carpool and/or take public transportation to work
- Use reusable mugs and/or glasses: instead of paper or polystyrene cups, and offer reusable mugs and glasses
- Offer filtered water instead of providing individual-sized bottled water
- Encourage janitorial staff to use environmentally friendly detergents, soaps, and other cleaning products
- Allocate a certain number of pro bono hours to an environmental or sustainability organization
- Provide sustainability education for clients and the public through the firm newsletter or Web site, or sponsor an educational event
- Maintain an office that is located in a LEED-certified building or successfully certify your own office space as a LEED for Commercial Interiors space

You don't need to take your firm green in one fell swoop. Even incremental changes can have a big effect in the long run. Taking small steps will eventually lead to a big change . . . in your organization, your city, and your planet. They are worth it! 

Alice O'Hearn is the Legal Administrator for Bailey Kennedy, LLP. After working nearly fifteen years as a legal secretary at Lionel Sawyer & Collins, she helped John R. Bailey open his law practice in 2001. That solo practice has evolved into Bailey Kennedy, a 12-lawyer firm with 28 employees and three "Best Places To Work" awards. Alice serves on the Board of Directors for the Las Vegas Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators. An avid supporter of racing greyhound rescue, she has been a copy editor for the award winning Celebrating Greyhounds Magazine for nine years. Her own recycled racers are named Bailey and Kennedy.



Jump Start Your Law Firm's Green Transformation April 29 at CCBA's Spring Shred-it Fest!

CCBA and Shred-it Las Vegas are hosting a spring shred event. CCBA Members may bring up to four letter-sized "banker's" boxes of paper to shred during a three-hour period. Shred-It Las Vegas will have a shredding truck on site for prompt, safe destruction of sensitive material. No appointment necessary. First come, first served. Contact Steph Abbott at stephabbott@clarkcountybar.org, or (702) 333-2270.