

Demystifying Going Green

The momentum of the green movement continually increases. Almost every day you can turn on the TV and see images of our environment in distress. Our perceptions of our world have changed and we are learning to behave in a more environmentally responsible way. As an individual, the actions needed to support a healthier environment are clearly presented to us by our government, educators and media. As an additional motivation, most of the easy actions have the added benefit of maintaining or reducing costs, like turning down the thermostat, driving less or using less paper.

The right choices for organizations do not seem to be as clear, and are often perceived as increasing cost and reducing quality. Sometimes opinions differ, and combined with the current financial realities, progress toward greener buildings and greener organizations is often limited. One thing we can all agree on is that “going green” is an “ongoing process,” where a group of small successes make a large impact. Beginning the green process does not require a master plan, or even a special budget, just a commitment.

It seemed to us that the best way to help the organizational greening process was to outline a few steps that would have a significant impact, be easily accomplished and be cost-neutral, or better yet, save a few dollars. Our products were developed and chosen with these steps and their objectives in mind. We borrowed heavily from the U.S. Green Building Council and the experiences of some of our pioneering green organizations and universities, to create our recommendations:



Go Green Now – 7 Easy Steps to 7 LEED points

The list that follows is a guide to beginning a process that is tangible and visible. Most organizations that successfully implement Green Cleaning programs begin by acting on changes that have the highest likelihood of success with the lowest amount of financial risk. Your goals may range from certifying your buildings as green through the U.S. Green Building Council LEED program, to simply wanting to make the effort to buy and use more environmentally intelligent products, either way you can get the process started with just seven easy steps:

Step 1: Use Green Cleaning and Floor Care Products

Many of our familiar cleaning products are on the endangered species list; traditional glass cleaners, multi-purpose cleaners, floor care products, etc. have already been outlawed in several states for use in schools and public buildings. Next time you need some cleaning supplies, make a change, the cost to switch is minimal and you will have successfully begun the process. Native Green cleaners are a complete line of certified green products that are as effective, more convenient and less costly than traditional cleaners. The mobile dispensing system cleaners allow you to try the products in a simple, hassle-free manner. Take a moment to view the video <http://gonativegreen.com/sometimes-less-is-more>.



Step 2: Use Green Paper and Plastic Products

Choosing green paper and plastic helps protect the environment, and our health strongly depends on a healthy environment. By requesting and using environmentally preferable paper and plastic products, you help create the demand which builds capacity to produce more green products. Native Green provides the core paper and plastic products used by most institutions; the plastic trash bag, paper tissue and towels. Native Green Progress PCR trash can liners perform better than standard bags while using 70% post consumer recycled plastic and as you can expect from Native Green, are very cost competitive. If you are a recycler of plastic and film, our closed loop recycling program allows you to convert your own plastic waste into new plastic bags. This way, doing the right thing for the environment can also translate into the right thing for your bottom line.



Step 3: Use Green Cleaning Tools and Supplies

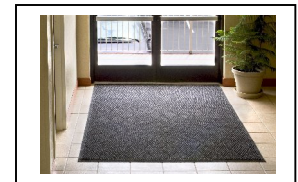


For a return on investment it is hard to beat microfiber cleaning tools. They are lighter, clean 3 times as well, are reusable 100's of times, are healthier and are color coded to reflect the physical area of use, eliminating cross contamination. Virgin paper and cotton are some of the least earth friendly cleaning products by virtue of how they are made, and are far less effective. A simple substitution of microfiber cleaning cloths, mops, dispensing mops (the cleaner is attached to the handle), dusters, cleaning mittens are just some of the tools available that will make your custodians day happier and leave your environment healthier. If you can spare a little money for more automated tools, look into back-pack vacuums with filters and touch-less restroom cleaning equipment. They contribute to more efficiency and

better results with less environmental impact. Native Green cleaning tools meet many of the needs of your team and can be purchased in small increments.

Step 4: Use Effective Entrance Matting

Soil is everywhere. It is a part of the earth we live on and managing it is a vital part of our everyday existence. In a Green Building, an entrance mat is the first line of defense against contaminants and particles entering the building. The task of an entrance system is prevention of contaminants from entering a building. 85% of all soil enters a building on the feet of people entering the building. As such, there are two things an entrance mat should do:



1. Minimize tracking of stored soil and water into the building. Storing means that a high performance mat contains soil in a place where it will remain until removed or cleaned at the end of the day protecting your floor finish. Use a mat with bi-level construction to store soil and water below shoe level to prevent it from being transferred into the building.

2. Provide a safe surface for traffic. Entrance mats should contain wet contaminants within the structure of the mat and not allow them to seep onto the floor causing a potential slip/fall accident.

Look to Native Green to find the right partner in the quest for the perfect mat. Our partnership with Andersen Company allows us to provide mats that really pay for themselves, the Eco-Line of Waterhog mats are made from recycled materials. The ROI on these mats is very quick, not to mention the increased cleanliness and reduced cleaning labor. In this case, green cleaning is literally a step-by-step process.

Step 5: Use Low Mercury Energy Star Lighting Products



Fluorescent lights are still the way to go for most applications, whether they are the incandescent bulb replacement (CFL compact fluorescent) or traditional linear tube lighting, like the T8 or the newer T5. The well documented dangers of mercury are more than outweighed by the energy saved. In fact, the largest producer of environmental mercury is our coal burning electric companies, so energy reduction has a much greater impact. For most commercial buildings, a reasonable lighting choice is a low mercury, highly efficient fluorescent light. The energy savings are substantial, and with a little planning, the risks are almost non-existent. Simply replace your bulbs or your ballasts when they no longer work with a more efficient bulb or unit. The impact can be as large as a 40% reduction in your lighting bill. Native Green has the Energy Star rated low mercury, high efficiency lighting solutions you can trust for your building.

Step 6: Adopt Green Procurement and Cleaning Policy

The federal government, through Executive Order 13101 has defined environmentally preferable or “green” as: “...products and services that reduce the health and environmental impacts compared to similar products and services used for the same purpose.” Based on this definition green cleaning is defined as “cleaning that protects health without harming the environment.”

Adopting a green policy doesn’t need to be complicated or wordy (see purchasing policy [Duke University Store](#)). It simply states that when possible and practical every effort will be made to purchase and behave green. A Green Procurement and Cleaning Policy express the organization’s support for green initiatives and formalize the commitment. Although it may appear to be “window dressing” a policy puts the effort out front and helps include all the stakeholders. Check out our sample green policy overview in the [GoNativeGreen.com](#) website section [How-To-Guides](#) for a more nuts and bolts plan.

Step 7: Communicate Your Efforts and Values

Everyone can contribute to a green program, not just the custodians and administrators. They only need to be given the tools to contribute. It takes very little effort to set-up recycling bins for paper and plastic, encourage energy reduction (turn off computers and lights), incent car pooling and educate your constituents on what your organization is doing (remember the green policies). Use posters (recycled paper of course), stickers and environmental events to promote your efforts and use the positive response to feed your momentum, “success breeds success”. These inexpensive promotional ideas will raise the level of awareness and will make you a more attractive employer, organization, school or government agency. Native Green has marketing materials available to begin this campaign, just call or email and we will gladly send these templates to help you “make a difference.” Please remember, everyone will want to support this effort, your community is your biggest ally.

