

Bulletin Board: Going green helps companies flourish

by Amy Winter

Going green not only helps the environment, but it may also benefit companies in recruiting new employees. Eco-friendly businesses will most likely have an advantage over their competition when it comes to hiring the intelligent young people in today's market.

A survey completed by Harris Poll discovered 33 percent of Americans would rather work for a green company compared to a business that does not try to encourage socially and environmentally friendly methods, according to Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc., a global outplacement organization. The survey also found that 52 percent of employed adults believe their companies should do more to help the environment.

"High oil prices, instability in the Middle East, and the threat of global warming have made the environment the cause celebre of the new millennium, particularly among younger generations X and Y," said John A. Challenger, the chief executive officer of Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

"As employers struggle to fill positions amid rock-bottom unemployment, those who underestimate the recruiting power of being green could be making a serious mistake, especially considering that recent surveys indicated a growing number of Americans want to work for an environmentally conscious company."

In a 2006 poll by Mortgage Lenders Network USA, 72 percent of working women and 64 percent of men were found to have a strong fondness for green employers.

"A decade ago, a workplace was eco-friendly if it simply kept a recycling bin in the break room," said Challenger. "Today's environmentally conscious workers are more demanding. A company is not even considered green unless it makes a significant commitment to reducing its impact on the environment, from the products and services it offers to the way it heats and cools its offices."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offers the green power partnership to persuade organizations to purchase green power. According to the EPA Web site, green power is a way to decrease environmental impacts from conventional electronic use. Green power sources produce electricity with zero anthropogenic emissions, according to the site.

Fortune 500 Companies such as Starbucks, Wells Fargo and Johnson & Johnson are buying into the green power partnership.

The EPA lists a few positive features of the partnership:

- Reduces air pollution.
- Meets environmental objectives for organizations.
- Distinguishes your organization's brand in the marketplace.
- Produces positive publicity.

Companies can even save money on their bills by going green. A Florida-based manufacturer, Lighting Components and Design, saved \$10,300 on its annual utility bill, according to Challenger, Gray & Christmas. The company switched to a more resourceful heating, ventilation and air conditioning system by using ceiling fans, putting in low-flow toilets, using water-saving taps on the faucets and more.

Green companies may be able to draw more environmentally friendly investors. The National Venture Capital Association found that funds for companies that used alternative energy and conservation added up to \$203 million in 2005, according to Challenger, Gray & Christmas. This total increased 80 percent from the statistics in 2004.

Several companies have decided to go green.

Yahoo! has reduced its carbon emissions, and invests in emissions-fighting projects. It plans to purchase green power as well as give discounts for employees who use public transportation to get to work. Bank of America purchased a smaller cooling system to save electricity, and gives money to employees who buy hybrid cars.

Some tips for companies to become greener:

- Start employee car pools.

- Organize a recycling program in the office.

- To lower heating and cooling costs, keep the office temperature a little cooler in the winter and a little warmer in the summer.

- Use both sides of paper when printing or faxing.

Employees can do their part in the green movement by:

- Putting the sleep function on computers and monitors.

- Bringing water bottles instead of using paper cups.

- Having a real plant on desks: they produce oxygen as well as look pretty.

- Unplugging cords when not in use.

"Companies that can offer current and prospective employees environmentally friendly programs such as telecommuting, car pooling and public transportation subsidies will have an advantage over companies that ignore the environment," said Challenger.

For more information, visit www.epa.gov and www.challengergray.com.

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