

Environmental Policies – how honest are yours?

Tuesday 23 July, 2013

When it comes to an Environmental Policy you may think you've heard it all before; helping to stop climate change, reducing energy usage, lowering consumption, using alternative fuels – the list goes on; but as there is no legal requirement for your company to have an environmental policy then can you honestly say, commercially, that you are doing your bit and adhering to your current policy?

Online there are guidelines by various organisations on how to prepare and construct your company's environmental policy and most cover all the aspects you need. From paper usage, transportation, recycling, improving efficiency to continuous enhancement and minimising waste, these guidelines offer a wealth of starting points, giving you a good grounding to begin writing your own policy.

It's important to set a date to get your policy completed. Don't let this date waver as it's important that your policy doesn't fall foul of the "cobbled together" format of using parts or all of others policies that you've inherited or adopted. Take the time to list your efforts and be proud to tell the industrial world about them. If you recycle 80% of your paper, say so. If you use [eco-friendly cleaning chemicals](#), make a point of saying that's what you do. Your policy can speak volumes about how your company operates on the whole as much as it does about the statements it lists.

For example our company's policy states that we have recycling bins in every office, that we have dedicated industrial collection bins for certain waste types outside, and that we use less energy by ensuring non-essential electrical items are turned off before leaving at the end of the day and the weekend. Just recently we have enquired about solar panels being fitted to our office roof and we have several contractors quoting for the work. These may all sound obvious but it's only when you get them listed in your own policy that it gains "true meaning" and gives your company value.

One company I worked for, who didn't have an environmental policy, was asked for theirs from a potential customer who had a large environmental concern and they made it essential when choosing new suppliers. Can you imagine the ensuing panic?

A quick merging of adopted companies policies followed, where a few bits were added and taken away. The outcome was a clumsy attempt that was doomed. After a few hours the result was presented and we were caught out very early on, thus resulting in us losing the client. The thing is, if people ask for your policy it's because they are concerned and they want to know how serious you are as a company and about your commitment to the environment. A badly put together policy can be picked to shreds in minutes. This inevitably leads to awkward questions and even more awkward answers.

Even though I no longer work for that company, I have endeavoured to keep my current company's environmental policy up-to-date. Not every week, granted, but every quarter I make it a task. I review our waste collection; monitor our [consumable](#) usage by going over our stationery and washroom product orders for the last three months. I also make sure all our staff are aware of our policy and are committed to reducing energy usage. This check not only ensures our policy is current but it also helps reduce costs and that's always good news.

So if you do have or are going to get an environmental policy, please put in the effort it truly deserves. Who knows, one day your business may depend on it.

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