Yrittäjät



Introduction

Climate change is one of the greatest threats of our time, one that affects us all. It has an impact on food and water supplies and on natural diversity. Changeable, extreme weather will cause costs both at home and abroad. Poorer living conditions increases the flow of environmental refugees, which can affect social order. All of this will affect the economy, entrepreneurship and companies – in other words, you.

Taking the environment into account is not necessarily bad: it can be a competitive advantage and make you stand out. It can also be the road to better, more profitable business.

The decisions of small and medium-sized decisions matter, because small businesses are often more agile than large ones when it comes to tackling climate change. One small solution can yield large streams – even phenomena that change the world. These solutions do not even necessarily require large investments and may even save businesses money.

What can you do?

In this guide, we present simple methods you can use to tackle climate change in your business operations. Choose, for example, ten things you can commit to in the next few months. When they have become routine, chose the next ten. Daily choices matter both at home and at work!

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Energy consumption

Moving from fossil fuels to low or zero-emission energy forms slows the advance of climate change. The use of fossil fuels, such as coal and oil, releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which speeds up the warming of the environment. Energy efficiency is another way to reduce the amount of energy needed and thus reduce the consumption of fossil fuels.

- Reduce energy consumption by lowering the indoor temperature in your workplace. A difference of three degrees Celsius can yield reductions of up to 20% in energy consumption.
- Reduce your company's carbon footprint by choosing electricity contracts for clean or low-emission electricity. If your business rents its premises, contact the owner and suggest alternative energy forms.
- Consider small, clean localized energy production, such as solar panels or heat pumps. Even if they don't cover all your energy needs, they will still provide clean electricity or heat. You will thus reduce the amount of energy you need to buy. You can find out about support for projects like this on the Business Finland Energy Aid webpages.
- Keep windows closed if the air conditioning or heating is on. Otherwise you will consume energy pointlessly.
- Avoid air conditioning and heating in spaces that are rarely or never used.



- Consider smart heating systems. Smart, affordable thermostats that can be connected to an existing system are already available on the market. A smart thermostat can increase the temperature in a space when it is in use and reduce it at night and at weekends. Such a system does not require large investments when you buy it as a service and pay for it monthly. It is an easy, efficient way of managing heating to reduce waste heat.
- Switch from fluorescent lamps to more sustainable LED lighting. This reduces the energy consumed by lighting to almost zero.
- Use natural light. There is no need to keep the lights on in daylight hours.
- Be aware of your consumption. Many electricity providers offer customers a service that allows you to track your electricity consumption by the hour. This can show you faults in the heating system, allowing you to take immediate action on them. You may be able to reduce your annual electricity consumption by 30%.

- Get better with each round of investment. With each new investment, think about the possible environmental impact both in the short and long term.
- Do an energy audit. An energy audit is a thorough examination of the building's energy and water use and the opportunities for efficiencies. You can use it to find the most significant ways to save energy and money. The Finnish state supports SMEs in obtaining Motiva-modelled energy audits.
- Use online tools or a consultant. The internet offers many meters you can use to work out your business's carbon footprint or energy consumption. They can also provide inspiration or ideas you had not previously paid attention to. A consultant uses professional expertise to assess the special characteristics of your company and calculate not just carbon dioxide emissions and kilowatt hours, but also the financial benefit for you.

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Waste sorting, recycling and the circular economy

You can reduce your burden on the environment by using existing materials, consuming materials more efficiently and by sorting waste. With waste sorting, you can start small and then progress towards a more detailed sorting system. Waste is the only natural resource that is increasing instead of vanishing. Small players' combined efforts allow rubbish to become a resource instead of mere waste. That is a requirement for the circular economy. A central tenet of the circular economy is extending products' service life and thus reducing the amount of raw materials and energy consumed in manufacturing.

- Buy separate bins for different types of rubbish. Dispose of compost, mixed waste, cardboard and plastic separately. Label each bin clearly and display sorting instructions.
- Recycle such waste as paper, cardboard, plastic, glass and metal. Put your paper recycling bin in a visible location, for example, next to the printer.
- Order waste disposal from a responsible provider. This means one who, for example, invests in logistical efficiency and reduces its transport emissions.

- Don't throw out useful stuff. Recycle furniture and serviceable equipment or donate them to organizations or schools.
- Make your products and services more material-efficient. That way you can make a direct impact on your own costs, competitiveness and harmful environmental effects. Motiva offers SMEs a material efficiency audit that can help you steer your business towards improved material efficiency.

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- Actively search for alternatives. If a raw material is transported from the other side of the planet, find out whether you can find it from closer to you, or whether the material can be manufactured in your own country.
- Cooperate with other businesspeople. When you share storage spaces or tools, for example, they do not stand empty. A good example of a functional sharing economy of this kind are libraries.
- Invest in product design. Design your products to be as durable as possible, easy to repair, and, at the end of their service life, easy to recycle or to be reused as parts.

- Extend your products' service life. Offer repair or maintenance, for example.
- Move to selling services. Instead of selling individual products, sell services, such as machine hire or clothing hire.



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Transport, travel and logistics

A large share of a business's emissions comes from transport and travel. Using environmentally friendly options doesn't have to mean huge efforts. You can reduce savings and increase energy efficiency and work welfare by revisiting mileage compensation, for example.

Establish sustainable transport principles for your workplace. Encourage your employees to commute on foot, bicycle, carpool or public transport instead of using their own cars.

If you offer your employees company cars, choose the options with the lowest emissions. Consider leasing electric or gas cars, for example.

Avoid unnecessary car travel. Carpooling is a good option when several people are travelling to the same meeting or training session.

In goods transport, actively search for environmentally friendly transport companies and environmentally friendly transport modes.

Avoid empty transports. Combine orders and order large amounts rather than small ones at a time.

Use email rather than post.



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Purchases

The purchases your business makes have a significant impact on how responsible it is. Materially efficient products and services consume as little material and natural resources as possible over their entire service life. You can reduce the consumption of natural resources by investing in products and services of this kind. Investments in energy efficient equipment and technology can be recouped in the form of lower usage costs.

- Buy intelligently. Don't fixate on the investment costs at the time of buying; with each new investment, think about the possible environmental impact in the short and long term.
- Don't buy extra. Make only necessary purchases. Set minimum requirements for purchases, such as energy efficiency, low emissions, environmental friend-liness and recyclability.
- Invest in durable, quality work clothes. When equipment is durable, it serves for a long time and is easy to clean, nor does it need to be constantly replaced. Choose environmentally friendly and durable materials, manufacturing methods and manufacturers.

- Avoid disposable products. For example, stop using disposable cutlery and dishes altogether and replace paper hand towels with cloth ones.
- Recycle and hire. You can get many products and goods used or on lease. Not all your office furniture needs to be new, for example.
- Find out the environmental impact of your product or service over its life cycle. For example, where and in what conditions are the raw materials you use produced? How are they transported? What emissions does product manufacturing cause and can the product be recycled?

- Choose quality. Choose products that are manufactured nearby and that are environmentally certified. Examples of environmental labels are the Nordic Swan Ecolabel, the EU Ecolabel and energy labels.
- Pay attention to packaging and how it is recycled. Large packages cause lest packaging waste.
- Consider certified products and services. For example, you could start with the certificates recommended by the WWF.
- Make your production chain as transparent as possible. Find out where the raw materials for your products come from, who produces them and in what conditions. Demand transparency from external cooperation partners.

Office work

A paperless office is both nature-friendly and space-saving, as documents are processed digitally and archives are not needed. Working digitally and using cloud services makes environmentally friendly working easier and faster.

- Ask if customers need receipts. Instead of printing the customer copy of receipts automatically, ask them specifically if they need it.
- Go digital. Reduce printing or give it up completely.
- Set double-sided printing as the default setting for your printer. Use smaller fonts, spacing and margins when printing to fit more text onto each page.
- Do all possible edits on the computer. Only print the last version of the file instead of printing several versions of the same document.

- Use recycled paper. To maximise the proportion of recycled paper that you use, you may have to reassess the quality requirements for your paper. How white does the paper you use really need to be? Can you design your products and packaging to incorporate more recycled paper?
- Set up a paper purchase and use policy. Examine your office and manufacturing facilities' ways of working with a view to reducing paper consumption. Design your products and packaging to include as little wood fibre as possible. However, do not switch to less sustainable material options. Choose paper that is as light as possible but still suits your needs.

- Switch to laptops when investing in new IT devices. They consume less electricity than desktops.
- Do not keep electronic devices charging unnecessarily. Unplug chargers when the device's battery is full.
- Turn devices off overnight. If computers do not need to be updated at night, switch them off. The energy that printers and computers consume on standby can be between 3 and 13% of a household's electricity consumption. The energy used on standby without you noticing it is called "vampire power".
- Avoid screensavers. Set up your office computers to go to sleep or switch off after a certain period of not being used. This consumes less energy than a screensaver.

- Choose video and telephone meetings. It is also possible to participate in many training sessions and seminars from your desk.
- Make remote working possible if the nature of work makes it possible. One remote day a week reduces emissions from commuting.
- Get plants. The right plants improve both comfort and air quality in the office. Easy, air-cleansing office plants include the snowflower, spider plant and weeping fig.

- Lower the blinds on sunny days. This keeps the room cool and means the air conditioning or fans do not need to be on at a high setting.
- Choose easily cleaned surfaces. This means less cleaning agent, electricity and water is used when cleaning.



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Marketing

Environmentally friendly choices send a message to your customers about your and your business's values. You show that the state of the environment interests your business and that you are taking steps. People are increasingly more climate aware and for many, responsible, environmentally beneficial choices and actions are significant criteria when choosing products and services.

- Move to digital marketing. It is more environmentally friendly than traditional marketing.
- Switch to lighter paper. Switching from 100 gm/m2 paper to a sort that is 20 g/m2 lighter reduces consumption by up to 20%.
- Use your climate actions in your marketing. Your clients are paying ever more attention to companies' climate responsibility. When you make changes to reduce your environmental impact, tell your clients about it.

Consider environmental certification. A certificate is a sign that that your products' or services' raw materials, production and distribution are sustainable and kind to the environment. It can also provide good criteria for assessing your operations and comparing it to what the best companies are able to do.

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Staff

When there are commonly agreed ground rules in the workplace, following them becomes a normal part of everyday life. Even small, everyday actions matter. In an environmentally positive environment, correct actions happen without noticing.



- Draw up ground rules. Agree with your staff, for example, that lights are turned off in spaces that are not being used, or that the dishwasher is only turned on when it is fully loaded.
- Analyse and brainstorm with your employees about what you can do. Have a meeting and gather ideas by email beforehand. Make environmental thinking a part of your business identity. When it becomes a part of everyday life, environmental thinking is visible in all your actions and communications.
- Engage your staff in taking and monitoring action. Encourage them to be less burdensome on the environment by providing bike racks instead of several parking spaces, or reward electric bike use with coffee vouchers, for example.

- Nominate an environmental officer in your company. He or she is the one who drives the company's environmental efforts forward. If you do not delegate as an entrepreneur, many good ideas remain thoughts. Tell your clients, too, that your company has its own environmental officer.
- Be good to your heart. Use stairs instead of lifts and cycle instead of driving. You'll get into better shape, boost your mood, and help save the environment.
- Learn new things. When you are searching for and sharing information on environmentally friendly options and service providers with your staff, learn something new and usable that you can take advantage of in your business. Accrue new competence in the whole company. If new hires are not possible, learn more and ac-

quire new skills both as a business-owner and as a company. New competence creates innovations and ways of doing things.

- Get to grips with the basics. The internet offers a vast array of free guides, instructions and webinars on with extensive basic information on exploiting the circular economy and green, sustainable business.
- Regularly analyse your company's situation. What environmentally friendly actions can you reinforce further, what can you highlight in communications and marketing, what could you update and what are the clear development areas?

Attitudes

Be steadfast. Making changes sometimes takes time and requires commitment to the long term. Start with small changes and work towards bigger ones.

Lead with your own style. What works for another business may not necessarily be the best solution for you. You can always look for inspiration but be sure to find your own way to make an impact.

Remember that the individual's actions have significance. If a million people printed one A4 sheet less than usual every day for a month, we would save over 100,000 kg of paper. And that's before we think of toner and other printer consumption.

Decide what you want. Do you use environmentally burdensome solutions out of sheer habit? You can change your attitude and habits. Make choices for more sustainable operations and make conscious efforts to give up habits which burden the environment.



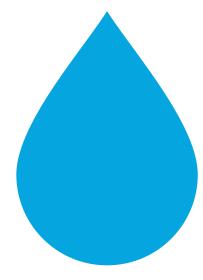
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Water use

Finland, for example, has a large supply of water in relation to its population, and this supply is used amply. However, pumping, heating and cleansing water consumes large amounts of energy. We also easily forget about "hidden consumption", that is, the amount of water used in manufacturing products. For example, producing the ground coffee to make one cup can consume up to 140 litres, some of which is used outside your country. Everyday choices are an easy way to influence water consumption.

- Use hot water sparingly, as heating water consumes energy.
- Don't leave the tap running. Do not run the dishwasher when it is less than full.
- Make potable tap water available. The fewer individual water bottles, the less plastic waste produced. If tap water is not possible, water coolers are a good option. Instead of disposable glasses, acquire real ones.

Beware of dripping. A tap that drips every second can leak over 25 litres of water a day. Turn off taps firmly and repair dripping taps quickly.



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Food

Food is accountable for about 20% of a person's carbon dioxide emissions, that is, just as much as transport. The environmental impact of plant-based food is almost without exception smaller than meat and dairy. For example, between 400 and 500 million kg of edible food is thrown away in Finland annually, and the figure is probably similar in other countries.

- Serve more plant-based food when offering refreshments, at events and in break rooms.
- Brew filter coffee instead of disposable coffee capsules. Use recycled and unbleached filters.
- Choose locally produced food. Buy seasonal products.
- Have your fridge serviced regularly. For example, cleaning it and replacing the seals ensures the fridge is more energy efficient and has a longer service life.
- Minimize food waste. This reduces your environmental impact significantly.

Emissions offsets

Emissions, or carbon offsetting, means monetary compensation that is invested in projects for emissions reduction or growing carbon sinks elsewhere. Thus, you can offset the greenhouse gases caused by your operations.

Offset the emissions your business cannot make an impact on.

Sources:

TIP 11:

[https://www.motiva.fi/yritykset/energia- ja materiaalikatselmus/energiakatselmus]

TIP 44:

[Source: WWF, https://wwf.fi/mediabank/5959.pdf]

TIP 74:

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WATER USE:

Motiva.fi

FOOD:

Estimate of annual food refuse according to Luke, the Natural Resources Institute Finland.

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Promoting enterprise.

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THANKS FOR READING THIS GUIDE!

This guide was written by Suomen Yrittäjät (SY), also known as Entrepreneurs in Finland, the national, non-governmental organization for Finnish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their owners. SY exists to defend the interests of SME owners and improve the conditions for doing business in Finland. It is also aware of its role as an international player, which is why it has written this guide, which can be used by anyone around the world. The aim is to empower SMEs and their owners to take action on climate change in their own countries and with the resources they have to hand. We hope you find it useful.

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