

Companies can save some green by going green

Employees can save energy at work, just like they do at home

By **STEVE MacNAULL**
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Going green is easier than you think.

Sure, there are expensive and complicated ways such as geothermal, LEED and solar.

But it can also be as easy as catching a ride to work, putting some extra insulation in the attic, using compact florescent lightbulbs and turning the lights and your computer off when you leave work for the day.

"Businesses are bombarded with sustainability information," said Joanne de Vries, the CEO of the Fresh Outlook Foundation.

"This session (the second annual Working Greener workshop held recently at the Delta Grand hotel) was designed to show businesses how to get started.

"Businesses should save energy not just because it's the right thing to do, but to save themselves time and money."

The seminar broke sustainability into quadrants – waste, energy, transportation and water – and in each category examples of beginner, intermediate and advanced efforts were given.

For instance, a beginner effort energy saver is using the stairs instead of the elevator.

An intermediate transportation suggestion was for businesses to install secure bike racks and showers so employees can cycle to work.

An advanced water saver is meter-monitored zero waste water in a manufacturing facility.

"We've outlined them all so businesses can make an action plan depending on what they can do right now and what they can work toward in the future," said Michelle Kam from the City of Kelowna.



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At the Working Greener conference recently at Kelowna's Delta Grand hotel are, from left, Michelle Kam of the City of Kelowna, Joanne de Vries of Fresh Outlook Foundation and Lindsay Eason of GreenStep Coaching.

One of the best ways for businesses to get on the energy-saving bandwagon is to engage employees.

"A survey showed that 94 per cent of people turned off the lights at home, but only 66 per cent do at work," said Lindsay Eason of GreenStep Coaching.

"Part of it is employees feel there is no personal gain to do it at work, but there's also the fact that a lot of people don't feel they can make that decision at work. Companies have to empower workers and come up with ways jointly to save energy."

Restaurant food and supplies distributor Sysco in Kelowna has installed skylights with sensors at its warehouse and offices.

When there's enough natural light streaming through them, the sensors keep the electric lights off.

Sysco has also reorganized its delivery truck schedules into so-called green routing to reduce miles and save fuel.

Other local corporate green champions include plastic fabricator FormaShape, Summerhill and Quails' Gate wineries and Best Western Inn.