



10 tips for making your small business resourceSmart

If you are a small business starting out on the sustainability journey, here are ten tips to help you on your way.

Building a resourceSmart business is about using resources (energy, materials and water) in a more efficient manner - which is good for your bottom line and good for the environment. And while it is easy to do, it does require commitment.

The key to becoming resourceSmart is to involve your team; understand and measure your resource use; set a plan in place and take action.

Continue to improve your action plan, keep it up to date, and don't be afraid to tell people about it.

Being resourceSmart can be as simple changing a light bulb, putting up a poster or implementing an environmental policy statement and in time, it will become business as usual.

1. Make a plan that's achievable.
2. Inspire your staff and get them involved.
3. Be informed.
4. Measure, measure, measure. Record your improvements.
5. Reduce, reuse and recycle waste.
6. Be energy efficient.
7. Use outside light to your advantage.
8. Reduce water consumption.
9. Be a good housekeeper – keep your business organised and tidy
10. Keep up the good work!

Make a plan

The first step to making your business resourceSmart is to formulate a plan and the best way to ensure the plan is effective, it to base it on your current energy, water and materials usage, so you have something to work from. If you are struggling to set a plan in place, often the best place to start is to look at your biggest resource consumers.

Develop the plan in conjunction with your team to ensure the goals are realistic and achievable. Share the plan with them allowing you to get their support and buy-in along the way.

Aim to take little steps and implement small measures. This approach can be a more effective than an overly ambitious plan with little impact.

Inspire your staff and get them involved

Once you have your plan in place, encourage your team to be proud of the commitment your business is making to the environment. Put up signs in your workplace, put a banner on your website or join forces with a local community group to spread the resourceSmart message.

Make sure everyone involved in your business, including employees, suppliers and customers are aware of the commitment you have made - you will inspire those closest to your business to come up with new ideas you might not have considered.



Acknowledge that the changes required to make your business resourceSmart will require extra effort. Whether it's a free lunch or movie tickets – make sure you reward your staff for the commitment they show to becoming resourceSmart.

Be informed

Keep up to date with best practice resource efficiency in your sector. This may involve regular contact with your industry association or working with environmental service providers. There may be an environmental network in your region that you can also become involved with.

Keeping up-to-date with environmental legislation will help you successfully shape your resourceSmart business. In Victoria, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) administers acts, policies, regulations and legislation relating to environmental protection.

[Check the Sustainability Victoria website for tips and hints around efficient use of equipment such as compressed air, boilers, motors and lighting](#)

[A register of environmental service providers](#) is also available on the Sustainability Victoria website.

Measure, measure, measure and record your improvements

You can only improve on what you know, so get to know absolutely everything about your resource consumption and waste generation.

- Accurately monitor your use of electricity, gas, materials and water, where you can.
- Make sure your waste records are calculated in weight. Your waste contractors should help you do this so you know exactly how much you're paying in waste management.
- Always check and confirm records to make sure they reflect the true consumption on the shop floor, and include things that you handle, store or dispose of.

Use this information to help you find out where you're wasting resources, how much it costs you and what actions can be put in place to save resources and cut costs.

And don't forget, you can always get a professional to assess your company's resource consumption and waste generation and opportunities for improvement. Sustainability Victoria offers grants for these types of assessments through the [Resource Efficiency Assessment Program](#).

Reduce, reuse and recycle waste

Don't just throw out your waste, think about whether you can reduce your consumption of certain products first. If you can't eliminate waste then investigate your recycling options. Recycling cuts your waste management costs and you may even present extra cash flow to your business. Remember that almost anything can be recycled!

Typical materials recycled include:

- Paper & cardboard
- Metals
- Plastics including shrink wrap and polystyrene
- Timber pallets
- Food waste
- Water
- Food waste
- Printer toner or ink cartridges
- Computer and IT equipment



Make sure you have different bins for different types of waste. There should be at least one bin for recycling and one for general waste. And if your business has a garden remember that a compost or worm farm is a cheap way to reduce your organic waste and keep your garden healthy.

Get your printer or printers to print double-sided. You'll not only save some trees but you'll dramatically reduce your monthly spend on paper.

Sustainability Victoria's [Waste Wise program](#) is a good way to kick start your waste reduction program, or alternately you can [search for your local recycler](#). And for your computer recycling needs, check out Sustainability Victoria's [Byteback](#) program.

Be energy efficient

Losses of air, steam and heat are inefficient, sucking money from your bottom line.

Eliminate these losses by following these key steps:

At the factory:

- Use a maintenance program to prolong the life of the equipment and make sure it's running efficiently.
- Replace or update old inefficient equipment.
- Turn equipment off when not in use, or install controls and timers to do it for you.
- Choose the right size equipment for the job. Buying oversized equipment is generally more expensive up front, increases your energy bills and may not improve business productivity.
- Check for leaks in your air compressor lines because just one leak with a hole of only 3.2mm wastes over 8500 kWh of electricity per year, costing you \$850 (at 10c per kWh).
- Run your compressed air at a reduced pressure. Running at 650 kPa instead of 700 kPa will save 4 per cent of your energy.

For your office or workspace:

- Be prudent when heating your office or workspace; every degree above 22 degrees will add 10 per cent to the heating bill.
- Use the natural air ventilation for cooling instead of using the air conditioner.
- Turn off office equipment at its source when it's not being used. Install timers to shut off non-essential equipment after hours. Another amazing fact: a computer and monitor left on for a year has the same environmental impacts as traveling by car from Sydney to Perth.

For more detail on energy saving techniques go to:

Moreland Energy Foundation - [Energy Saving Information Kit for Business](#)
Origin Energy – Business Efficiency Tips – [Heating & Cooling](#) for your office
Sustainability Victoria - [Sustainability in the Office](#)



Use outside light to your advantage

Lighting is expensive for your business but luckily it's easy to make changes in order to reduce your energy bills.

Simple steps can lead to big savings both for your bottom line and the atmosphere:

- Turn off some lights and make use of natural lighting. Easy!
- Have separate switches for different areas so that different zones can be turned on or off depending on who's working where.
- Don't use incandescent lights, but opt for more efficient fluorescent lamps.
- Make sure your factory high bay lights use efficient lamps (such as metal halide or high pressure sodium types).
- Install sensors and timers for lighting control so that lights are used only when they're needed.

For more information on [lighting](#) check the Sustainability Victoria website.

Reduce water consumption

Water has become a precious asset and can often be wasted in the work place through carelessness. Help stop our [water levels](#) from diminishing by following these vital tips:

- Do regular audits to help find out where you can save it.
- Develop a Water Management Plan with your local water authority. Download a template [here](#).
- Install efficient and low flow equipment.
- Install a rainwater harvesting system.
- Recycle water where possible.
- Use grey water for gardens.
- Reduce your hot water use if you can – this saves water AND energy.

Check out the business resources from your water authority below:

[Yarra Valley Water](#)

[South East Water](#)

[City West Water](#)

Be a good housekeeper

You always feel better when your home is clean and tidy. The same should go for your business.

If documents are always filed away, you will use less paper because you'll always know where your documents are and won't need to print them out twice.

Be sure to store items properly. Put programs in place to wipe out mishandling and programs to notify staff when time-sensitive materials expire.

You can minimise waste and emissions by avoiding leaks from equipment and spills. Be sure to keep hazardous and non-hazardous materials separate, to avoid possible contamination and wastage.

Allocate waste treatment and disposal costs appropriately within your business. Make sure waste generators within your business are of the cost of waste and bottom line impacts. This will help keep waste minimisation at the forefront.



Keep up the good work!

Follow up all of your hard work and continue to monitor the steps you have implemented along your resourceSmart journey. It's great to put good practices in place, but you do need to revisit them and make sure they are working for your business. Reinforce the practices by recognising and rewarding staff.

And remember being resourceSmart is an ongoing process, but one that's saves you money and most importantly is good for our environment, that is certainly worth the effort.