

Mitigating your carbon footprint in the workplace

Last month, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [released a major report](#) on the state of climate change across the globe. It was bleak. The panel, composed of scientists tapped to guide world leaders, concluded that catastrophic natural events caused by climate change would begin occurring with more frequency and severity much sooner than previously anticipated. The report predicted that by 2040, food shortages and wildfires—among other disasters—would exact a devastating cost on nations around the world. The main instigator of these disasters? Greenhouse gas emissions.

The report's prescription for damage-control was (as it has always been) simple: reduce our reliance on greenhouse gases immediately. The report concedes that while this is politically unlikely, it *is* technically possible. And while the lion's share of carbon emissions are from just [a handful of companies](#), that doesn't negate the importance of smaller-scale changes in combating climate change. After all, the persistence of greenhouse gases and our global reliance on them is driven by profits. If the demand for these materials begins to decline, carbon-emitting juggernauts will be forced to explore greener alternatives.

Though baby steps towards better consumption practices can feel futile in the face of such daunting circumstances, implementing these changes is vital—especially if, as scientists predict, we are going to be forced to radically shift our ways of life to adapt to the threats we face. Getting ahead of this shift isn't just ethically sound, it's smart business practice. Here are a few tips for preparing yourself and your office to reduce your carbon footprints.

Encourage Meatless Mondays

The name is sure to prompt a chuckle, but the practice is sound: switching to one vegetarian meal a week is a gentle transition to rely less on [industrial farming operations that use an incredible amount of natural resources and generate huge carbon outputs](#). Try implementing Meatless Mondays at the office to get people on board with the idea. This can be a fun one, too; perhaps each employee brings in a veggie dish for an herbivorous buffet. Incentivizing positive behaviours is always a useful tool, so consider offering a small prize for the best meal. This will also drive your colleagues to get more creative with their meatless meals—chances are once they see how simple, affordable, and delicious vegetarian dishes can be, they'll want to make more. Progress begets progress!

Reduce waste in the office

This seems like a no-brainer, and great strides have likely been made in this department over the past few decades. Plastic cups and unsorted garbage and recycling have thankfully gone out of vogue, but if you take a step back to observe your office's practices, you'll likely find wasteful practices that could be eliminated. Basic waste-reduction strategies are easy to implement: stock reusable mugs and dishware in the office to discourage folks from using disposable ones.

Remove bottled water in favour of a Brita-filter jug. Make sure your office has a green bin for compost and food waste. Use paper products with high post-consumer waste content.

Cut down on business trips

This might be the toughest challenge for workplaces, but it's also the most crucial. Transportation accounts for [roughly 27% of greenhouse gas emissions](#) in the United States. In 2017, [Americans took 462 million one-person business trips](#). Cutting down on travel means cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions. Business trips are an engrained and normalized part of most workplaces, even though technology has advanced such that the majority of these trips are unnecessary. Take a hard-line on these: unless it is absolutely critical that someone be present at an event, replace trips with video calls. [Strides in virtual reality](#) are making video calls even more immersive, so consider investing in those alternatives to save both money and emissions.