

How Going Green Draws Talent, Cuts Costs
Wall Street Journal
November 13, 2007

More corporations are going "green" and discovering that helping the environment isn't the only payoff. Eco-friendly policies can also help companies attract young talent, increase productivity and reduce costs.

"Students are looking to work for companies that care about the environment," says Lindsey Pollak, author of "Getting From College to Career." "They are almost expecting greenness like they expect work-life balance, ethnic diversity and globalization."

A recent poll on green employment by MonsterTRAK.com, a job Web site geared toward students and entry-level hires, found that 80% of young professionals are interested in securing a job that has a positive impact on the environment, and 92% would be more inclined to work for a company that is environmentally friendly.

It is getting easier for young people to do so. The U.S. Green Building Council, a nonprofit organization that awards Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, ratings to buildings that meet a variety of environmental standards, says 2.2 billion square feet of commercial construction have been registered in just seven months. That is much less time than the seven years it took the council to register the first one billion square feet.

To attract job hunters, corporations are touting their environmental efforts in recruiting materials and on campuses. Merrill Lynch & Co. outlines its environmental efforts on the back of every brochure for its campus recruiting. Sarah Quarterman, who heads Merrill's campus recruiting, says some students ask about the firm's environmental policies, whereas 10 years ago greenness never came up.

Paper maker NewPage Corp. also distributes a brochure highlighting the company's commitment to environmental responsibility when it recruits on campuses. The literature showcases the company's new corporate headquarters, in Miamisburg, Ohio, that uses 28% to 30% less energy than a standard office building and is furnished with environmentally friendly materials.

"At the end of the day, we are competing with everyone else for the best talent, and this is a generation that is very concerned with the environment," NewPage Chief Executive Mark Suwyn says.

Last month, to meet the demand of students to work for green companies, MonsterTRAK, in alliance with ecoAmerica, a nonprofit environmental group, started GreenCareers. The site lists positions in companies that reduce their impact on the environment, making it easier for students to connect with businesses that support their environmental goals.

Ron Albright, a senior majoring in legal studies at the University of Central Florida, says he has noticed that companies he wants to work for lay out their environmental policies on their Web sites. "I don't want to be part of something that contributes to the problem," he says. "I want to be part of a company that may not necessarily be the solution but will lessen its impact on the environment."

Preliminary studies, including one conducted by the Canada Green Building Council, have linked eco-friendly indoor environments to higher productivity and less absenteeism. Green workplaces tend to focus on natural lighting, which may improve the mood of employees, and many green workplaces use advanced air-filtration systems, offering better air quality.

Since December, when her employer moved into a new headquarters that is certified "LEED platinum" for commercial interiors, the top rating, Jill Kasza says she has noticed an improvement in both her health and her productivity. Ms. Kasza, a compensation manager at Exelon Corp., the electric utility and power-generating company based in Chicago, says she hasn't had a single sinus infection there, after suffering two or three full-blown infections a year and frequent symptoms at the company's old site. The new building's improvements include a better air-filtration system and eco-friendly paint and carpeting. For companies, going green has another compelling benefit: the possibility of reducing operating costs. "I think the trend may have started for public relations and branding purposes, but there is pretty good evidence now that this is profitable," says Seymour Garte, author of "Where We Stand: A Surprising Look at the Real State of Our Planet."

Pelican Products Inc., a Torrance, Calif., designer and producer of protective equipment cases and lighting systems, expects to save \$130,000 on energy this year at its California facility. The company adopted measures such as high-efficiency fluorescent lights and equipment.

By installing lighting sensors, dimmers and a reflective roof, semiconductor maker Texas Instruments Inc. cut lighting energy at its office building in Richardson, Texas, by 80%. "In the first year alone, we should see \$1 million in electricity and water savings, and [the savings] will continue to grow until we see \$4 million a year," says Paul Westbrook, sustainable-development manager.

There are also incentives making the transition more affordable, and with proper planning, a green building doesn't have to cost much more than a standard one. "There was a myth that it would cost you a pound of flesh to do something good for the environment," says Michelle Moore, vice president of policy and public affairs for the U.S. Green Building Council. **On average, the cost to go green is a 1% premium that is usually paid back within 12 months on energy savings alone,** she says.

William Tauber, chief executive officer of Progressive Lighting & Energy Solutions Inc., a lighting retrofitting company based in Tustin, Calif., says his clients even have seen

their insurance rates lowered after making changes. Going green is good for the bottom line, Mr. Tauber says. "It's far easier than increasing your sales."