

## OPINION

# Climate Action

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## Get workplace on sustainability track

**S**ustainability is the inescapable challenge of our time, affecting all aspects of our lives; but how can we help our workplaces rise to this challenge and operate in a more sustainable way?

I work in a university library and knew that the university had strategic objectives for sustainability, but they didn't translate into my day job. So, I set up an informal 'Green Network', to bring together like-minded staff and together we are starting to form an action plan for the library. Here are six things I have learned along the way.

### Allies

Unless you are the boss of the company, you won't get far without gaining some traction with the movers and shakers. This doesn't mean you have to convince everyone. Think carefully about whose

support you need in order to introduce changes. Be prepared to get a dialogue going between staff at different levels across the company.

### Come together

People don't always talk about sustainability, but this doesn't mean that no-one cares about it. I knew of only two interested colleagues when I launched the Green Network, but giving people a way to come together and discuss these issues helps to amplify your voices and give visibility to your cause. The group continues to gain new members every month, increasing our influence and ability to tackle more complex activities. This also encourages those not in the group to see sustainability as a valid consideration in their roles.

### Raise your awareness

You can expect to face challenges and competing priori-

ties, but having the knowledge to back-up your actions can help you overcome these obstacles. I was fortunate to be able to attend a Carbon Literacy course through my workplace (carbonliteracy.com/), but there are lots of free resources available out there too that can help you to plug gaps in your knowledge (check out this article from the WWF as a starting point: [www.wwf.org.uk/updates/top-20-tips-workplaces-sustainable](http://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/top-20-tips-workplaces-sustainable)).

Equally, don't wait to be an expert before you act. Bringing people together will instantly allow you to share ideas and widen your collective expertise.

### Benchmarking

One of the most helpful things you can do as an individual is measure your carbon footprint. There are several free apps and websites that can help you to calculate this

(such as this one from Giki: <https://zero.giki.earth/>), and the outcome gives you an idea of the carbon you generate, and how you can reduce this. Likewise, finding a way to measure where you're starting from as a company allows you to demonstrate how changes can improve this position, and show the results of the work you are doing. If calculating the carbon footprint is challenging, consider other ways to measure progress, such as staff engagement.

### Choose your priorities

Tackling sustainability in the workplace can be overwhelming. Don't try to do everything at once. Consider what you and your group have the time and expertise to take on; which actions could you take that would best align with the organisation's objectives? Which have the most support from the al-

lies you have on-side? In the early days particularly, make sure your actions are achievable, as the momentum you gain from completing them will help propel you on to the more difficult tasks.

### Be part of a bigger conversation

What are other companies, trade unions, and professional bodies in your sector doing on the sustainability front? Look for opportunities to share best practice, attend training or conference events if they are available to you, and do your own research to find out how these issues are being tackled in your field. This provides valuable insight to feedback to strategic leaders, and helps you be prepared for some of the more difficult challenges ahead in the company's journey to a more sustainable future.