

## Workstyles and the Greener Workplace

### How to instil green behaviours



Green issues are now a core consideration in business strategy and operations. Most companies try to 'think green' across every aspect of their operations – procurement, service delivery and, of course, the design and management of their office facilities and property portfolio. One of the hardest aspects to control, however, is ensuring that employees 'act green' in the workplace

#### The Challenge

- Whilst the general public claim to be increasingly concerned about environmental issues, this concern often fails to translate into action. There is a disparity between Green Attitudes and Green Actions
- This disparity is greater in the office than at home, e.g. In a recent Gallup survey 94% of people claimed to switch off lights when not in use at home, compared to only 66% when in the office (taking account of motion sensitive lights)
- The difficulty of translating attitudes into actions is a frustration to real estate professionals around the globe – it potentially undermines their wider efforts to improve the environmental performance of the workplace portfolio
- In addition, "green behaviours" can also have significant impact on a company's cost base, brand equity, recruitment strategy and employee satisfaction

#### Why are green behaviours rare?

- It is not due to a lack of information or advice on "acting green". Many workplaces are cluttered with countless communication materials advising employees on how to reduce the environmental impact of the workplace – so why doesn't it have a bigger impact?

- If anything, employees find there is too much information on the subject and that it is often conflicting or confusing
- Secondly, employees cannot see the impact of their behaviours
- And thirdly, employees lack a sense of ownership. Managing the environmental impact of the company is the responsibility of "the business", not each of them as an individual

### 5 ways to instil green behaviours



#### 1 Specificity

- Focus on the few (most valuable) behaviours which must be changed, rather than inundate employees with a raft of directions
- Avoid only communicating "good news" which is remote to employees. These issues won't necessarily change the way employees behave in the workplace
- Communications must be clear. This means action-specific direction e.g. "turn off the lights" rather than "save the planet", preferably with some reminder at the point of action

#### 2 Social norms

- Research shows that one of the strongest influences on our behaviour is "what everyone else is doing"
- Imply that a certain desired, in this case 'green', behaviour is 'normal'

#### 3 Reward and recognition - the carrot

- Recognise and reward green behaviours – failing to do so suggests that they are not important to the business
- Reward programmes must be easily understood and have a low environmental footprint

#### 4 Coercion – the stick

- Large environmental gains can sometimes be achieved quickly through ambitious moves which coerce employees to change behaviour e.g. removing all parking spaces
- Such bold moves must be supported with good communication to employees, including a persuasive rationale for change
- Any major workplace changes to coerce behavioural change should be applied equitably (including managers)
- A clear understanding of wider business implications is needed

## 5 **Measurement and transparency**

- Work towards making the financial and environmental impact of behaviours clear to employees
- Translate financial and environmental impacts to a personal level where possible and isolate the impact of behaviours from technology
- Be prepared to publish bad news to prompt change
- And leverage employees' innate competitiveness! Knowing that one team is outperforming another on green issues appears to instigate a positive rivalry!

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*The Workplace Intelligence Unit was founded by forward thinking inc. and Herman Miller*

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