



Greening Your Office

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While the idea of greening one's travel agency may simply seem like a P.C. public relations tactic, green measures can in fact save an agency money, as well as draw in younger clientele who are attracted to environmentally-conscious businesses.

Since April 2008, when ASTA launched its Green Member program, to 80 ASTA agencies have made the decision to revamp their offices to qualify for Green member status.

Colpitts World Travel, an agency of some 100 agents, made the decision to go green back in July 2008, said the agency's vice president Jeanne Johnston.

"We thought it was a good time to take a proactive approach," to going green, she said, adding that what they are doing at Colpitts "makes sense for any and every size company."

According to Johnston ASTA's Green Member program provided Colpitts with "the tools, education and resources needed to incorporate the reduce, reuse and recycle mantra into our everyday operations."

Among the changes the agency made, Colpitts reconfigured its office design to reduce its dependence on air conditioning and heaters – saving the company money and reducing the fossil fuel consumption that many believe is contributing to global warming.

Along the same lines, Colpitts installed more than 100 energy efficient windows in its main building to maximize the air conditioning and heat that is being used.

Office lights were switched to energy-efficient models, and the company's copying machines have all been replaced with new more efficient ink-jet models. Each quarter, Colpitts recycles

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computer monitors and similar equipment, as well as ink cartridges, donating them to companies who are able to reuse them.

Another office change, Johnston said, was the creation of a “green room” where all recyclable materials are picked up at the end of each month by a recycling company. Every employee has been issued a recycling bin, and there are designated bins in the break room for plastics, paper and glass.

To help keep the office green after hours, the agency enlisted the help of a cleaning company that uses environmentally-friendly cleaning products.

In its work with clients and suppliers, Colpitts offers its entire agency brochure online and works closely with companies that have online booking tools. According to Johnston, the most of Colpitts’ corporate clients have joined the agency in eliminating paper invoices and now communicate electronically.

Agencies aren’t the only ones choosing to go green. ASTA also practices what it preaches. The Society’s Green Team formed back in October 2007 and has since implemented numerous environmentally-friendly practices throughout the office.

Employees are actively involved with recycling, using green printing products, energy conservation, and telecommuting when possible – all offshoots of the reduce, reuse, recycle philosophy.

Additionally ASTA prints all marketing on recycled paper, uses non-disposable silverware and cups around the office, and utilizes electronic timesheets.

To become an ASTA Green Member, agencies must first purchase the Society’s Green Guide, which offers instructional information on how to tweak internal operations to both save money and leave a more beneficial footprint on the planet.



Using criteria outlined in the Green Guide, agencies must assess their company's green agenda to ensure compliance with the program's standards. If an agency passes the assessment, it is given Green Member status and access to ASTA's green logo, which it can use to promote its new expertise. Additionally, Green Members receive a customizable press release to use in promoting their new designation to their local media and community.

"With the recent downturn in the economy, it's the perfect time to assess your internal operations and make environmentally friendly changes to your operations that can positively impact your bottom line," said ASTA president and chair Chris Russo. "By taking the time now to learn about environmentally responsible travel, you'll be ready later to jump into a new niche once the economy picks up."