



## First Steps to Being More Sustainable

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BLOOMINGTON, IN -- Cleaning professionals in every segment of the industry are looking for ways to make their businesses more sustainable.

Working sustainably means using energy, products, and resources more responsibly and efficiently, which typically provides environmental and social benefits as well as financial savings.

So how can we start to become a more sustainable industry? Stephen Ashkin, President of The Ashkin Group and Sustainable Tools, LLC, offers the following “first steps” suggestions for becoming more sustainable. He says these initial steps “are as easy and practical to implement as they are environmentally responsible and cost effective.” He recommends:

- Reusing packing material and cardboard boxes.
- Making use of double-sided printing whenever possible.
- Going digital when it comes to bill payments, vendor ordering, invoicing, banking, and any other paperwork in order to become as paperless as possible.
- Eliminating disposable cups, plates, and utensils in break rooms

and replacing them with permanent dishware.

- Using Green-certified cleaning products.
- Purchasing energy-efficient PCs, printers, and other equipment that features the Energy Star label.
- Establishing a route-planning schedule so that deliveries, pickups, and service calls in the same geographical area can take place during the same vehicle run, saving on fuel and reducing emissions.
- For distributors, optimizing facility layouts so that best-selling items are stored close to delivery ramps.
- Adjusting thermostats so that heating and cooling machinery run only when areas are actually being used.
- Becoming focused on sustainability.

Ashkin says this last step—becoming focused on sustainability—may actually be the most important of his suggestions. Doing so typically requires employing technologies that collect data about a facility's energy and resource use and carbon footprint. .

“This information helps businesses become aware—often for the first time—of their impact on the environment,” he says. “Then they can look for and implement more environmentally

sustainable business policies and practices, which almost always result in a cost savings as well.”