

How to Grow an Eco -Office

A Guide for Eco Office Champions

Contents

Introduction.....	3.....
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Introduction

The UC Eco Office Guide outlines a range of practical tips and examples of operational changes that UC staff can make

How to create an Eco Office Culture – an action plan

Make the UC Eco Office Guide visible

If possible, keep the UC Eco Office guide somewhere visible or easily available where individuals can look through it in their own time.

Work with the willing

Ideally everybody in your office would take part in the Eco Office project, but that won't always be the case. Start with the people who you think are interested, and maybe other staff will come on board once they have had a chance to learn more about UC Eco Office.

Make a start

Introduce the Eco Office guide and give some reasons why you think it might be a good idea to try some of the actions in it. These could include;

1. Makes good business sense through reduced costs, increased resource efficiency and better performance
2. It helps to reduce UC's impact on the environment
3. Reinforces to students UC's commitment to sustainability
4. Clause in General Staff job descriptions: "University Service" emphasises a responsibility to "contribute to the sustainability efforts of the University through the responsible use of resources and equipment."
5. Improves public profile of UC
6. Opportunity to demonstrate leadership and team work for performance development
7. The satisfaction of making a difference.

If you think there is enough interest, introduce the office assessment, and arrange a time for all or interested staff to be part of that assessment.

Emphasise that staff don't have to tackle everything in the UC Eco Office Guide, which is simply a tool box of a wide range of voluntary activities that staff can pick and choose from, not an onerous

Other tips

Pay attention to and acknowledge any concerns or questions – these can be addressed at the next meeting(s).

It can help to have somebody from outside the office who has already undertaken a range of Eco-Office actions to attend and talk to staff briefly this can help to confidence and motivation.

Conduct an initial assessment

Using the UC Eco Office Assessment Form (contact the Sustainability Office if you need a copy), identify some activities that could be implemented. It might help to focus on a particular section in the Eco Office guide, or pick just one or two actions from different sections.

Include all interested staff. This will help to build an understanding of the extent to which their office is already undertaking a range of Eco Office actions. Make sure that all staff in the office understand the results of the assessment, and most importantly celebrate what you are doing already!

The assessment should help to identify what staff are most enthusiastic about changing. If you are not sure about how colleagues would receive suggestions for change, pick one

small change recommended in the guide that you enjoy, feel confident about, and have control over, and keep at it without making a big deal of it. That way you can send a simple, clear message to the people around you without creating conflict.

Make a plan

New staff

When newcomers enter the office, give them an “Eco Office induction”, with clear messages about any key behaviours and activities you have adopted in your office.

Keep connected with other champions and change agents

Advocates for change need support and networks. Few people can keep going at anything without being in a supportive group of like-minded others. Keep in touch with the Sustainability Office, and come to our monthly Eco Office Network meetings.

Foundations

Learning – we learn by watching others

What we see people doing matters. Visible signals are crucial our brains are highly tuned to noticing others’ behaviours and, when they seem to work as planned, making them our own. Examples include

- x displaying UC Sustainability ‘Fronds’ certification system on your wall or door
- x having a ‘free’ table next to every UC office.
- x stickers reminding people of different key behaviours around an office.

We are very attuned to the goals and aspirations of others, not just how to do things.

Champions quietly (and sometimes not so quietly!) demonstrate practices to those around them. One-on-one close-contact modelling is likely to be much more powerful than the modelling displayed by remote public figures. You don’t need to lecture people, have difficult conversations, or tell people they are wrong.

There are, however, a few ways you can help the process along, and make your own behaviours more contagious

1. ~~Make it visible~~

x

Delayed influence

- x If someone in a group introduces a new idea, we are only slightly receptive at first. But persuasion processes don't stop there.
- x Over time people appear to disassociate the message from the messenger. This allows them to think about the message more clearly, at face value or for its own sake. This process is unconscious and occurs if messages are consistent over time.
- x Do not feel defeated by apparent losses or lack of change. Change will occur over time!

Conflict and Compromise

Conflict may be an inevitable part of a shift. If you want to maintain positive relationships, small forays into these issues and being prepared to retreat is probably best. Delayed influence may eventually work. Asking for change and failing to get what you want, does not mean you have been ineffective.

Success will happen when the individual can manage the task at hand. People are more likely to give of themselves when they perceive a change or task to be within their capabilities.

Small actions can create or change a culture

Many people don't act on the sustainability message is because they are surrounded by examples of unsustainable behaviour and our copying nature makes it difficult for us to stand aside from these and be different. Changing is not easy, because to change sometimes requires us to give up not just material things but also habit, convenience and challenge

However if people are surrounded by others who are undertaking small, visible steps towards change, it is easier for individuals to change what they do. Whilst small actions can seem futile, swamped by the mountain of counter-productive actions, they do send a strong signal that a community is working together to be more sustainable.

The more little actions/steps that people take, the stronger people start to identify with a different set of values.