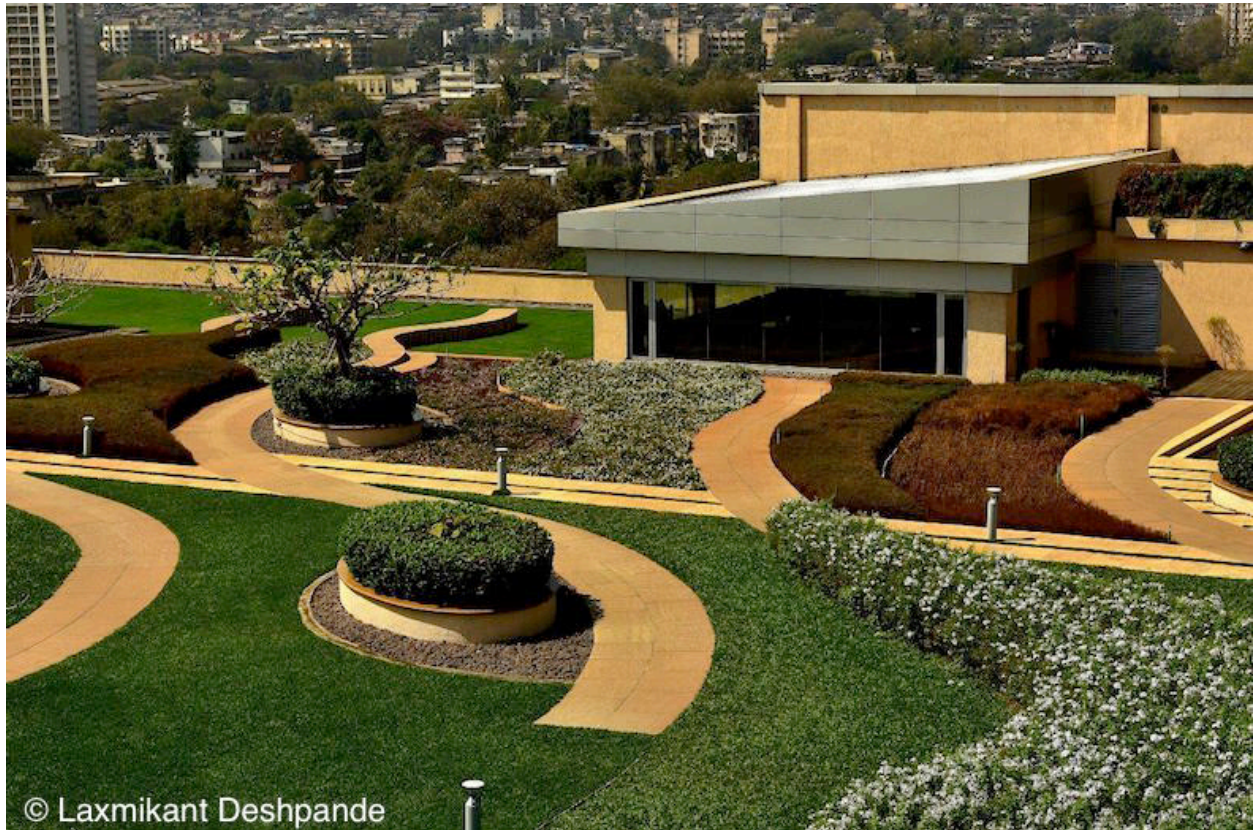


Green Office: Protect Biodiversity and Environment of Your Organisation

by- Laxmikant Deshpande



An example of a green office, a terrace garden at Godrej

Today, scientific evidence has proved that human beings are responsible for climate change and global warming. The most obvious effect is increasing temperature; however there are several other direct and indirect impacts adversely affecting personal, community and professional aspects of our life.

Tackling this global challenge is responsibility of every individual and group; business community having a greater share with its widespread environmental impact in and beyond work place. Offices can play an effective 'multiplier' role to spread environmental management practices and values.

What is Green Office?

A Green Office is workplace designed and operated on environmentally responsible principles and systems. Infrastructure and practices (behavior) are two important aspects of a green office. It includes efficient management of physical, social and economic aspects in an office environment.

Why Green Office?

A Green Office is a SMART (Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Timely) step in conducting and encouraging environmentally responsible business. A Green Office

- Is effective showcase of your company's commitment to the environment
- Is effective tool to improve working environment (efficiency, health and safety)



- Is effective tool to reuse, recycle, recover resources (energy and material) thereby offering financial benefit to the business

I am Interested! What next?

Of the current office management practices, identifying gaps between policy and action, identifying resources to implement green practices, setting targets to benchmark the achievements, measures to reduce bottlenecks are few key steps. Broadly following steps can be followed.

- Ensure commitment of senior management to Green Office activity
- Identify interested, influential and skilled staff-members to form a core committee which should have representatives of key departments
- Identify and quantify required resources (time, equipments, service providers etc.)
- Conduct a baseline survey of each department to assess present practices of consumption and usage
- Quantify the survey result into 'numbers' to set targets
- Set up systems for efficient use and recovery of resources with help of subject experts and service providers
- Regularly monitor the systems to ensure its implementation and to obtain users' feedback for necessary modification
- Conduct awareness activities for effective involvement of all employees
- Acknowledge and if possible, incentivize select effective initiatives by departments and individuals
- Set up department wise targets to be reviewed periodically (monthly or quarterly)
- Promote Green Purchase and Procurement which is key aspect of Green Office
- Encourage the Green Office activity with green events relevant to office issues and systems

Everyday Tips for Green Office

A number of practices can be followed towards making our office green. Here are select few.

Green Purchase:

- Try to find service providers that supply commodities free from hazardous, banned components
- Order in bulk to reduce packaging waste
- Identify and enlist office supplies to be replaced with safer and better alternatives in phase wise manner

Solid Waste Management:

- Follow 3R Principle strictly in every department (Reduce, Reuse & Recycle).
- Ensure reduction in waste like packaging material, left-over food, discarded paper, electronic waste, discarded stationery etc.
- Avoid disposable and one-time use items like plastic cups, disposable ball pens, mineral water bottles etc.

- Upgrade equipments and furniture than outright discarding whenever possible
- Donate usable old items to charities and NGOs
- Organise segregation and composting of wet waste and sending dry waste for recycling

Water Management:

- Use low-flow plumbing fixtures
- Provide option of half-flush in toilets

Paper & Printing:

- Install intranet to set up office administrative and knowledge management systems to reduce paper use
- Use recycled, unbleached or non-wood based paper
- Always print double sided and share documents to avoid unnecessary printing
- Send waste papers for recycling
- Install toner and ink saving settings on your printer
- Refill ink-cartridges or send discarded cartridges to sellers for buy-back
- Reduce your margin settings so that printer uses less paper
- Printers and photocopiers should be on stand-by mode when not in use
- Printers and photocopiers must be shut down at the end of the day

Computers:

- Laptops are energy efficient than desktops; so preferable.
- Buy computers with smaller screen to reduce energy use
- All computers should have standby mode installed and in use

Lighting:

- Use of LED is most preferable for non-reading purpose; otherwise CFL is better. Incandescent tube lights and bulbs are least efficient
- Try to use natural lights; arrange cleaning of windows to encourage staff to open blinds
- Plan optimum placement of lights for reduction in use of their numbers

Air Conditioners:

- Use of BEE rated and ISO certified electrical equipments is advisable
- Keep the AC at 23-24 C with the help of timers and temperature control sensors
- Install reflective window tint to reduce the amount of heat absorbed
- Shade your AC from direct sunlight and in cooler months, use fans instead of AC if the option is inbuilt
- Regular maintenance of AC can reduce electricity consumption by 10%

**Stationery:**

- Do department wise audit of office supplies to initiate system that encourage reuse and sharing
- Use paper clips instead of staplers whenever possible
- Reuse envelopes for inter and intra office use

Pantry:

- Use local food items instead of imported stuff; as it reduces carbon footprint
- Encourage use of certified organic raw material
- Manage left-over food by donating it to charities or composting

Traffic:

- Provide incentives for employees to use public transport
- Encourage car-pooling or share-taxi schemes
- Encourage web-conference and avoid travel when possible

Employee Awareness:

- Engage employees in awareness activities like slide shows, films, lectures, nature trails, demonstrations, field trips etc for their effective participation the Green Office activity
- Arrange programs and material for family members of employees to spread the impact beyond office.

Online Resources:

- <http://www.greenoffice.org.nz/greenoffice.html> : How to Transform your Office into one that's Kinder to the environment
- <http://www.energyrating.gov.au/library/pubs/greenofficeguide.pdf>: A guide to help you buy use environmentally friendly office equipment
- <http://www.cere-india.org/green-office-manual.html>: Green Office Manual by CERE

About The author:

Laxmikant is M. Sc with Environment Science and recognized as Darwin Scholar on Biodiversity Monitoring and Education by Field Studies Council, UK. Biodiversity, waste management and environment education are his interest areas. He has worked with NEERI, BNHS, CEE and pursued independent consultancy since 2000. Currently he works with Godrej & Boyce Mfg Co Ltd as Manager: Wetland Management and Sustainability for its mangrove ecosystem, environment and CSR division.