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“Lean and mean” means green

At their best, sound corporate energy and environmental sustainability strategies contribute to a triple bottom line of people, planet and profit. But as turmoil continues to shake the world's economy, pressure increases on CRE teams to drive efficiencies and reduce costs right now. Many worthy sustainable initiatives promise an eventual payback on investment; but how soon? Is it time to put green initiatives on the back-burner?

In a word, no. Though some sustainability measures may seem unrealistic in these uncertain times, many green programs can generate immediate benefits that can actually reduce your costs in the short-term. You will also likely find that employees are ready to rally around initiatives that were previously met with indifference or resistance.

Jones Lang LaSalle has identified several green initiatives that can drive prompt savings with minimal up-front expenses, as well as strategic ideas to consider for the long-term.

1. Do what you can for free

Many cost-saving measures do not cost a cent, and can be implemented immediately. You can instantly slash facility operating expenses by up to 10 percent by cumulatively adopting these practices and others like them:

- Switch off office lights when employees leave for the day, or when areas such as conference or copy rooms are not being used. Make “last one out turns off the lights” a standard procedure.
- Use window shades to best advantage, letting in natural light and helping keep offices cooler in summer and warmer in winter.
- Adjust your thermostats one degree warmer in summer and one degree cooler in winter. This imperceptible difference can save 10 percent on your energy bills while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Also, lower temperature set points in rooms that can be closed off when not in use.

- Have employees turn off computers, monitors and other office equipment when not in use. Office equipment alone typically accounts for 20 to 70 percent of a building's energy expense, and computers use up to two-thirds less power if they're turned off overnight. Shut off group copiers and printers as well.
- Schedule building cleanings during daytime hours instead of at night, when crews require lighting. Improved equipment such as near-noiseless vacuum cleaners enable janitorial services to perform in less expensive daylight hours without disturbing workers. Some property managers have reported overall facility utility savings of about 80 cents per square foot just by switching cleaning crews to daytime hours.

2. Consider low-cost, quick-payoff improvements

Another five to 10 percent of energy costs can be saved immediately through low-cost upgrades such as:

- Motion sensors that automatically turn off lights in unoccupied rooms
- Programmable thermostats that automatically modify building or floor HVAC settings during non-work periods
- Task lighting that provides adequate illumination while using less energy. Some light bulbs alone have become 50 percent more efficient in the past five years.

More no-and low-cost ideas that sustainably reduce energy expenses immediately can be found in Jones Lang LaSalle's [Green Office Guide](#).

3. Look ahead to longer-term, big payoff strategies

Even though budgets are constrained, it's important to consider longer-term strategies that might require greater capital investment, but multiplied savings. A comprehensive energy and sustainability management program can generally pay for itself in one to two years, and save tens of millions of dollars in utility expenses annually after that. Consider reinvesting the savings from green behavioral “freebies”

into capital improvements for energy-efficient lighting, heating and cooling.

Retrocommissioning, a systematic, holistic process for optimizing building performance, is another investment that is recouped quickly, then provides years of savings. Retrocommissioning looks at how your building systems currently operate, how they could perform, and how to bridge the gaps between the two. Performed by a qualified building systems advisor, retrocommissioning typically saves five to 20 percent in annual energy costs while providing occupants a greener, more comfortable work environment.

And while you're planning ahead, investigate workplace strategies that reduce energy bills and environmental impact by shrinking your overall corporate occupancy footprint. Savings from eliminating unneeded space can run into the millions, while building flexibility into your portfolio.

Keys to operating lean and green

Whatever short- and long-term initiatives you choose, be sure to follow these guiding principles:

- Establish accountability for implementation among CRE, facility management, business unit and other stakeholders. Do not assume that "someone is doing it."
- To promote sustainable behaviors, enlist a "green team" of environmentally-minded employees as champions to help manage efforts and suggest energy-saving improvements.
- Set clear quantitative sustainability goals including financial savings, and develop ways to reliably measure and evaluate your progress.
- Communicate results to all corporate levels from general employees to the C-suite.
- Establish a long-term strategy for continuous sustainable improvement and savings that is revisited for new opportunities each year.

To learn more about sustainability and how to tailor a program that is right for your company, please contact:

Dan Probst
Jones Lang LaSalle
+1 312 228 2859
dan.probst@am.jll.com