

Preparing for 2017 – Going Green in '17!

How do you feel about the environment? Are you a diehard greenie with a compost bin in your home and an electric car in your garage? Maybe you are the budding environmentalist. You recycle everything you can and constrict your use of harmful chemicals. Or perhaps you fall into the “I should do more” category. You recognize the problem, you just haven’t done much towards solving it. Wherever you fall on the green spectrum, with just a few simple changes, you can turn your law practice into an environmentally friendly machine in 2017. (Rhyme not intentional)

Here are some steps to move your office in the green direction.

1. **Make a Plan** – Any good initiative starts with a well thought out plan. First, think about your goals. What environmental changes would you like to see within the firm. If you’re having a hard time coming up with some objectives, a walk around the office may give you some inspiration. Is the trash can overflowing with plastic bottles? Are lights on in areas where no one is working? Is there a stack of paper memos on the copy machine? All of these issues provide potential opportunities for improvement. Once you create your goals, break them down into actionable items.
2. **Reduce** – Reducing your firm’s environmental footprint requires a reduction in the use of resources. From paper to electricity, most law firms remain on usage overload. Two of the biggest culprits in this area are unnecessary lights and constantly powered computers. Encourage employees to turn off lights when leaving a room. Even better, opt for motion sensor lighting that automatically turns off if no movement is sensed within the space. This will effectively end the energy zapping practice of lighting empty conference rooms and copy areas.

For the computers, I understand that it is the norm to leave computers running overnight for update purposes, but I bet you and IT specialist can create an environmentally friendly pathway around this problem. Set the systems to go to sleep after a specified period of inactivity. Bonus – you may even notice a decrease in the firm’s electricity bill.

3. **Recycle** – You probably recycle at home. Why not bring the practice into your practice. Offices offer numerous opportunities for recycling, from the massive amounts of bottled water consumed daily to the pile of wasted paper copies with a typo. Designate specific recycling bins and place them in locations that make it easy for your employees to comply. Don’t forget to ensure that the waste services staff is disposing of these items appropriately. You can also support this effort by making an effort to purchase recycled materials for common office uses.

Are you ready to take your law practice green in the new year? Yes, it will take a bit of effort on your part, but remember that a collection of small changes can have a huge impact. There’s no need to declare an all out green war in the office... unless you just want to... Just implement the changes you feel comfortable making. The earth will appreciate it.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a Virginia based writer with a passion for all things legal. As a former domestic relations attorney, she understands the challenge of determining the best fee structure for your practice. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.