

A Green Workplace



*As citizens of the planet, it is obligatory for us to make smart decisions to slow down global warming. Along with design modifications and simple practices, we can bring about changes at the place of work that will create a long-lasting impact on the environment. **Bindu Gopal Rao** shares the ways companies are creating a sustainable workspace*

Even as offices largely continue to remain shut, a key aspect in the new age workspaces is the element of sustainability. After all, the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many lessons on conservation and sustainability, and the workplace can hardly be forgotten in this equation.

Making the Switch

Sustainability is about the processes put in place, which involves people, communities and the entire ecosystem. In order to incorporate sustainable practices at a workplace, it is important that organisations look at their value creation process, supply chain and office space to see how it can be made more ecological. Dr Prashanth Reddy, Managing Director, Fundermax India, leader in sustainable architectural products for interior and exterior applications, headquartered in Austria says, “We need to constantly look for factors that affect our holistic development as an organisation in the long run. This growth should not

have any negative impact on the environment, community, or society. Some of the key steps towards achieving this are by aligning organisational strategy with sustainability efforts, transparency with stakeholders, 100% compliance, and engaging the entire organisation.”

Do It Right

There are several specific measures that can be taken to add sustainability in the workplace. Tarun Lala, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Fanzart, manufacturers of energy efficient luxury fans, says, “We have installed a solar panel and have tied up with a third-party recycling unit; and the stationery that we use is created from recycled output. We have reduced travel and made



most of our interactions remote. Most of all, beyond the workplace, our products speak for themselves. We have 45 designs of fans that are powered by BLDC motors that absorb 22 to 25W of power, which is 70 percent lesser power than a conventional fan. The day when all fans in India are powered by BLDC motors, India will save over 3MW of power every hour. These are basically the answers to India's power inadequacies."

Minol Ajekar, Head, Corporate Communications, CSR and Business Processes, Puravankara Limited, explains, "Our offices have been free of single-use plastic for the past three years and we encourage all our employees to opt for alternative eco-friendly materials. We do not store any disposable utensils in the cafeteria and practice a use-and-wash policy. Our in-house R.O. device makes us self-sufficient in terms of drinking water and minimises our dependence on bottled mineral water. We do not include balloons in any of our celebrations since balloons are non-biodegradable. Additionally, we have replaced chewing gums with mint and chew toffees across the building."

Practice What You Preach

While employees are an important part of the workplace, the office can also become a place where they practice eco-conscious behaviour. Among the simple steps are reducing usage of paper and making all communication materials digital, virtual



meetings and, of course, ensuring that lights/fans/ACs are switched off when not in use. It also comes down to educating employees on the long-term benefits of these measures. "We have limited the use of plastic and moved to LED at our office. We are also launching a programme to encourage employees to live more sustainably by segregating waste and plastic, participating in beach cleanups and shifting to vegan or organic food. It starts with implementing changes at the workplace," says Kunal Mutha, Founder, Only Earth.

Minol Ajekar of Puravankara believes that simple daily practices contribute greatly to the green initiative. "To promote green workspaces, most employees have at least one plant on their desk. We also maintain several medians and a large public park near our office. In addition to benefiting the office environment, these green landscapes act as recreational spaces for the neighbouring community. Our Human Resources team took the initiative to map employees staying in the same localities and connected them. This exercise helped the latter to carpool to the office rather than commuting in separate vehicles. We also have a reward and recognition programme for employees who are contributing to our mission by using public transport such as the Metro and even electric bike services," She adds.

Apart from controlling many surrounding challenges, sustainability can potentially help businesses grow. It is behind every vision, mission and strategy. Sustainability is not an overnight journey. It is a work in progress, starting today.

