

# Changing behavior: Designing an Environmental Awareness Program for your Workplace

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The natural environment and climate change are two related topics which have gained significant momentum over the past decade. Particularly in the wake of Covid-19, we have seen evidence of our impact on the natural world and how a change in our actions can positively (and dramatically) environmental benefits. For instance, air pollution levels have dropped significantly in major cities during lockdown periods, and it is estimated that CO2 emissions have reduced by 1600 million tonnes this year which is about 5.5% of global emissions in 2019 (Fedunik-Hofman, 2020).

Admittedly lockdowns are not an appropriate way to manage environmental impacts, but if ever there was a wake-up call to change our actions, perhaps this is it. One way that this can be achieved is through workplace environmental awareness programs.



Times Square New York is quiet during lockdown.  
Photo by Paulo Silva on Unsplash

## Environmental Education

More and more companies are committing to reducing their environmental impacts and increasing their focus on sustainability (The, 2019). This is also becoming an important factor for consumers who are more inclined to support companies with a proven sustainable track record (The, 2019). Developing these eco-friendly and sustainable approaches within a company can only be effective when employees across all levels and functions believe in the overall goals. One of the ways to promote sustainability and reduce environmental impacts is through workplace education.



Education is fundamental to changing behavior; only through knowledge of a topic can people be expected to begin to change their attitudes and actions (Edsand & Broich, 2020). Environmental education and awareness training can help develop and encourage a workplace culture of sustainability within the workplace.

## Considerations for a Workplace Environmental Awareness Program

### 1. Who is the audience?

The first step in developing a workplace environmental awareness program is to identify the target audience (Natoli, 2002). This includes identifying function levels within the organisation and the duties or functions of people within these roles.



## Summary/Quote



Environmental training should be a regular and ongoing activity to truly embed environmental awareness within the workplace.

(Carlton-Smith & Firrell, 2007)



Armed with this information the environmental awareness program can be tailored to the audience to ensure that people across the organisation receive the correct level of training and whether multiple education packages are required (Natoli, 2002).



## 2. Assess the current situation

Before moving towards a more environmentally friendly workplace or implementing an environmental awareness program, it is essential to step back and evaluate the current situation (Alpha Environmental, 2019). This could include identifying areas and activities which are currently being implemented and whether these are successful. Further questions to ask include why is the environmental awareness program being developed? What specific activities are you driving to change? What do you want to gain from the education roll-out?

## 3. Identify areas for improvement

Once the current situation has been assessed the areas for improvement can be clearly identified. The actions and awareness program can then be targeted to drive a broader change in employee behaviour specific to the workplace, company and areas which need improvement.

## 4. Develop and roll-out training / education material

There are a number of methods available to present information. These should be considered in the context of the audience and the key message or behavioural change that is being targeted. One of the primary objectives of any training is that attendees understand, retain and implement the material (Natoli, 2002). Ensuring the mediums used are engaging and appropriate to the message is critical to driving a behaviour change. Environmental training should be a regular and ongoing activity to truly embed environmental awareness within the workplace (Carlton-Smith & Firrell, 2007). This might include a section within an induction, continuous refresher courses, posters and toolbox sessions.



## 5. Implement actions progressively and monitor change

Conducting regular reviews and monitoring environmental and sustainable behaviours in the workplace is a key step to understanding the Environmental Awareness Program's effectiveness. Collecting regular data such as water and power usage or waste management can be an effective way to review employee behaviours post-roll-out of an environmental awareness program. This can also highlight when further training is required or other areas of focus for future training events.

## Ready to develop your workplace Environmental Awareness Program?

Environmental behaviour change can be achieved when employees are aware of environmental issues/policies within their company or workplace and are provided with the practical or procedural knowledge regarding sustainable actions (Young, et al., 2015). Integrate Sustainability has a team of passionate and knowledgeable environmental professionals. If you are looking to develop environmental awareness training modules or are interested in innovative ways to make your team or workplace more environmentally aware, we would love to discuss this with you to see how we can help.

Call or email us at (08) 9368 0338 / [enquiries@integratesustainability.com.au](mailto:enquiries@integratesustainability.com.au).

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