HR INSIGHTS

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Creating a Green Working Environment

"Going green" in the workplace does not just involve recycling paper or putting computers on sleep mode to conserve electricity; the movement also concerns the overall working environment. In fact, creating a green working atmosphere increases the overall health condition of the office and has been shown to reduce costs and heighten employee productivity.

According to a study by Office Depot, 51 percent of businesses plan on going green in 2016. These expectations follow the trend of businesses' increasing interest in green building.

By working in a green building, you are not only making a positive impact on the environment, you are benefiting your employees as well. With increased sunlight in an office setting as opposed to unnatural lighting, workers can be less depressed and able to refocus more quickly and easily.

Various studies—including those conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles, Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, Rocky Mountain Institute and the U.S. Department of Energy—have demonstrated that green practices and work environments lead to reduced absenteeism, depression and stress, as well as increased employee productivity.

To increase workforce productivity, try these earth-friendly tips:
- Avoid using noxious plastics, paints and adhesives while doing design and construction.
- Place indoor gardens and/or lots of natural foliage around the office. This will also increase air quality.
- Use window blinds that capture and reflect light into office spaces.
- Place mirrors or heliostats on the roof that follow the path of the sun and reflect it into the building.
- Situate workstations near windows so most, if not all, employees have at least some exposure to natural light.

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- Increase air flow throughout the office and make sure you are providing good ventilation for your employees. This will also help to prevent the spread of illnesses through the office.
- Use nontoxic cleaning products in the bathrooms and on work surfaces.
- Send digital files in place of paper handouts. This will eliminate clutter as well as waste.
- Encourage employees to take the stairs rather than the elevator. It saves energy and increases physical activity.