

Sustainability ~~Best~~ Worst Practices

What not to do to operate
an eco-friendly facility...
And how to shift to more
sustainable operations.

What you need to know



If sustainability has taken a back seat within your facility operations, now is the time to prioritize more eco-friendly practices. Today, over 90% of CEOs acknowledge that sustainability is fundamental to long-term success.¹ That statistic serves as a rude awakening to facility professionals who haven't yet considered the benefits of green practices. In fact, facilities management is the second-worst industry when it comes to negatively affecting the environment.² With more and more talent and tenants preferring green buildings, facilities will need to pick up the pace to satisfy increasing sustainability demands.

This guide covers common mistakes operations make (both in overall eco-friendly strategy and more granular tactics), the consequences that can follow—and corresponding solutions that can lead your facility operation's green program to success. Keep reading to see if your facilities are committing any of these environmental oversights.

01

Bad strategy

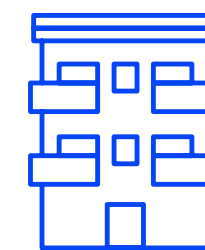
Mistakes in overall vision for sustainability can put your facility at a significant disadvantage when it comes to overall success. This section covers several consequences of subpar environmental strategies and the solutions that can put your facilities on a more sustainable path.

Avoiding the transition to more eco-friendly operations may sustain your facility in the short-term, but the long-term effects may be detrimental to the success of your building and satisfaction of your occupants. Even if delaying a transition to more sustainable operations hasn't cost you yet, your facility could begin to experience the repercussions in the near future. Ignoring the rapidly developing sustainability industry and increasing environmental regulations poses risks: local and state fines, poor facility image, unsatisfied occupants, and more.

Choosing to pursue more sustainable operations doesn't have to mean an immediate, dramatic overhaul. Taking small steps, like implementing a recycling program or switching to eco-friendly cleaning materials, can lead to big improvements down the road.



The problem with ignoring sustainability overall



A report on the Los Angeles market indicated that while traditional (non-LEED certified) buildings receive an average of \$2.16/sq. ft., tenants were willing to pay \$2.91/sq. ft. for LEED certified space.³



More than 70% of employees at large U.S. companies said they are more likely to want to work for a company with a robust environmental agenda.⁴

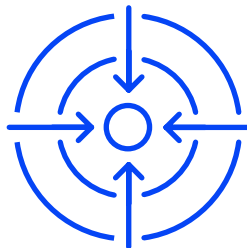


No benchmarking

When it comes to your sustainability program, progress can't happen without preparation. Jumping into an eco-friendly program without benchmarks can cause confusion and lack of direction for your occupants and staff. Conducting energy and waste audits prior to any sustainability investment decision allows your team to decide what goals are in reach and what aspects of your operations need improvement. Developing a successful green program means starting at square one with a sustainability audit that can clarify what steps you need to take to improve your future environmental performance.



Sustainability benchmarking allows an organization to assess its impact on the environment at both an individual building and portfolio level, improves asset value, and enables the comparison of buildings and portfolios between peer groups.⁵



Goal setting tools like S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) can help plan out sustainability initiatives.⁶

Lack of team and occupant communication

With no instructions and a lack of internal awareness, creating an impactful sustainability program would be close to impossible. A lack of education and personal responsibility surrounding sustainability can result in preventable issues like landfill-bound trash being put in recycling bins, occupants letting water run in restrooms, and more.

In order for your sustainability campaign to be successful, encouraging and empowering building occupants to contribute is key. An internal campaign associated with personal responsibility is vital in bridging the gap between predicted and actual building performance. In fact, a sustainability roundtable found that occupant sustainability engagement can lead to energy and other savings averaging 9-10%.⁷

A short term sustainability vision

Big changes can't happen overnight, and your sustainability program is no exception. While small steps towards an eco-friendlier facility are crucial in the beginning of your sustainability journey, a successful green program is an ongoing operation that requires years to make a noticeable impact.

Without a long-term vision, implementing short-term practices can result in wasted resources and low morale, bringing your facility's sustainability status (or lack thereof) back to square one. Your facility's sustainability plan requires a knowledgeable director to guide your program to long-term success. Hiring a sustainability program coordinator can ensure that your facility is meeting and exceeding goals to reduce your carbon footprint.

The sustainability coordinator career field is expected to grow 7% by 2028.⁹

Sustainability coordinators provide benefits like:

Improving the bottom line by instituting practices that maximize efficiency and minimize waste and energy consumption.⁸

Helping to ensure companies mitigate risks and adverse legal actions, such as fines.

Enhancing company public image by demonstrating that your organization truly cares about the environment and actively seeks to be responsible.



02

Worst practices

Unsustainable practices, like leaving lights on in an empty warehouse or using toxic chemicals to clean surfaces, can add up. This section covers the granular, day-to-day environmental mistakes your facility operations team could be making, and what steps you can take toward more sustainable operations.



Toxic cleaning

If your janitorial staff is still using generic cleaning chemicals, it might be time to rethink your product lineup. Many cleaning supplies (like aerosol spray products, bleach, and floor polish) contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that can result in throat irritation, headaches, and even chronic respiratory issues.¹⁰ Even scented products, like air fresheners, can be a major contributor to indoor toxin exposure, with an average of 16 different VOCs released from one fragrance product.¹¹

Transitioning to certified eco-friendly cleaning products provides benefits to both your occupants and the environment, like higher biodegradability levels, lower toxicity and VOCs, and minimized packaging (such as in the case of concentrated chemicals compared to ready-to-use).¹²

Poor energy conservation

You're most likely aware of the ways in which energy conservation can significantly benefit your facility's budget. But are you aware of the environmental impact energy over-consumption can have on the environment? The consumption of energy alone accounts for about 73% of global greenhouse gas emissions.¹³

Reducing energy usage means reducing power plant emissions, conserving natural resources, and more. So, what steps can you take towards being a more energy-efficient facility? Improving insulation, installing lighting retrofits, and utilizing occupancy sensors are just a few smarter, more eco-friendly options for conserving energy. According to a study conducted by the EPA, occupancy sensors alone can reduce energy waste by as much as 68% and increase energy savings by as much as 60%.¹⁴

Water waste

With only 0.5% of water on Earth being suitable for consumption, doing your part to reduce depletion of this limited resource is crucial.¹⁵ When it comes to saving water, every drop counts. Buildings account for 12% of total water consumed in the U.S., while the average person uses 80–100 gallons of water per day.¹⁶

In addition to saving big on bills, water conservation can benefit the environment by preserving freshwater resources to sustain wildlife, conserving energy needed to pump, heat, and treat fresh water, and more. Tactics to reduce water waste, like installing a rainwater harvesting system, evaluating landscapes to reduce water consumption, and upgrading to water-efficient fixtures can make a substantial impact on conservation efforts.



No laundry system for reusable products

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Waste-to-landfill

Without a recycling program, waste generated by your facility either gets sent to expanding landfills or incinerated at a waste-to-energy plant, generating environmentally hazardous materials in the process. A report conducted by the International Solid Waste Association found that if the current situation continues and we do not take action, landfill sites will account for 10% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2025.¹⁸

Implementing eco-friendly waste management practices—like hosting occupant recycling engagement programs, identifying waste streams, centralizing waste, implementing a composting program, and setting short-term and long-term goals—can be small steps towards finding your sustainability footing.

Poor stormwater management

In addition to consequences like creating unsightly areas of your landscape, increasing insect problems, and forming safety and liability issues for tenants and visitors, poor stormwater drainage takes a hefty toll on the surrounding environment as well. Poorly managed stormwater runoff can endanger animals by carrying debris and pollutants toward nearby habitats, increase flood risk, and pollute drinking water. In the state of Georgia alone, stormwater runoff is identified as the cause of impairment for 98% of all contaminated waters.¹⁹

Investing in a commercial-grade drainage system, installing building gutter systems, and implementing proper grading are all steps your facility can take to ensure the longevity of your building and the surrounding environment.



Going green pays off. Talk to an ABM sustainability expert today.

As demand for sustainable services increases around the world, so does the need for facilities that provide more holistic, eco-friendly environments. Whenever you're ready, our team of sustainability experts are here to help you launch into benefits like increased occupant happiness and health, improved facility image, and much more.

More sustainable facilities are possible. ABM can help.
Visit [ABM.com](https://www.abm.com) or call 866.624.1520 to speak with our experts.

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Driving possibility, together.