

How to Save Money & Be Sustainable at the Same Time

Let's face it, you know you have to protect the environment, you know in the back of your mind, it is important to your business to become sustainable; yet, in today's environment, it's all about making money and adding to the bottom-line. Higher profits, mean your jobs are secure. However, you also have a responsibility to your children and grand children, because at some point you will no longer be on this earth; therefore, you owe it to educate yourself on what is possible and provide feedback to your organization to make sure our United States maintains a safe environment to live in.

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, states, "the average American meal has a shockingly large carbon footprint, usually traveling 1,500 miles to the plate and emitting large amounts of CO₂ in the process." It is known through the food industry that on the average, each restaurant contributes no less than 275 pounds of waste a day, making restaurants the worst aggressors of greenhouse gas emissions in the retail industry. It is also known that one of the bigger line items for restaurateurs is waste, that accounts for between 2.3 and 3.6 percent of sales, depending upon the type of operation. In reviewing Zagat's 2007 America's Top Restaurants, 65% of all surveyed, say they would pay more for food that has been sustainably raised or procured; 62% of adults said they would likely choose a restaurant based on its environmental friendliness.

Besides, the benefits include:

- Great Publicity – public relations, media hype and enhanced advertising
- Energy Conservation Programs – water, lighting, air
- Waste/recycling Reduction Programs – high end compaction systems and composting
- Improvement of Staff Productivity and Morale – happier employees
- Increased Customer Loyalty – environmentally more friendly to your existing customers
- Drive in New Customers
- Creation of a Healthier Environment –the air we breath, foods we eat, water we drink

Most people do not understand the word sustainable, since it applies to all aspects of life on Earth, including ecological, social and economic contexts. From an ecological perspective, sustainability is defined, "as the ability of an ecosystem to maintain ecological processes, functions and biodiversity and productivity into the future." Within a social perspective, "sustainability is expressed as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Within an economic framework of your restaurant, "a business is sustainable if it has adapted its practices for the use of renewable resources and is accountable for the environmental impacts of its activities."

The American Public Health Association (APHA) defines a sustainable food system, as one that provides healthy food to meet current food needs...and also encourages local production and distribution infrastructures and makes nutritious food available, accessible, and affordable to all."

Part of the task for sustainability is to find ways of reducing the amount of resource (be it water, energy, or type of food or process of making food) needed for the production, consumption and disposal of the foods you serve to your patrons. In other words the goal of sustainability is to minimize each unit of product or money spent and maximize each unit of resource or money spent consistently.

Energy Savings

Subway – In October 2008 the largest franchise chain in the United States in conjunction with Philips Lighting Company and Specialty Lighting participated in a "Change a Light, Change the World Campaign." The intent was to encourage US citizens "to help change the world, one light – one energy-savings step at a time." Subways participation illustrates how each person can take a little step and be part of a larger and more profound movement to make to help make a positive impact our environment. Because one light bulb was changed in one restaurant energy consumption was reduced by 87.6 Kilowatt hours. A combined total accounted for 1,927,200 Kilowatt hours,

which is equivalent to nearly 3 million pounds of greenhouse gasses or removing more than 275 cars from the road for one year.

Schlitzkys's – chose to work smarter utilizing a new proto type single make up table that controls the preparation of both sandwich and pizza, along with a double-stack convection oven to bake both. Each level of the oven is set at different speeds and at temperatures that accommodate each of the unique foodstuffs. This unique design saved each location where the goods exist a total of \$941.57 in annual energy costs, plus \$7,857 in equipment costs.

In order for your restaurant to be sustainable, and be in the forefront of public consciousness, your facility must use resources at a rate that can be replenished in order to wear the sustainability label.

Wikipedia

Lisa Bertagnoli, Energy Efficiency:WorkingSmart-Chain Leader 3/1/2008

Author: Susan Daywitt, President & CEO, SLM – Facility Solutions Nationwide
5000 Commerce Drive, Green Lane, PA 18054 Phone: 215-258-3822