



As more and more people are becoming aware of the impact that global warming will have on their lives and the lives of future generations, there's been an increase in demand for environmentally-friendly products: solar panels, locally-grown produce, free range eggs and accessible recycling resources are just some examples.

If you own a small business or work as a freelancer, there are benefits to being green that go beyond simply knowing you're doing the best by the planet.

You're meeting the needs of consumers who want what they're buying to be socially and environmentally responsible, and leading the way for other companies to set up more sustainable models.

And whether you're in the hospitality industry or you're a tradesman, there are plenty of ways to tailor your services to the burgeoning green client base.

Find ways to adapt

For instance, in recent years, more and more people have been trying to buy local produce; at the same time, more and more people are at work from nine to five, when smaller local shops are open for business.

If you are a grocer or a butcher, staying open for a couple of hours in the evening or offering a

door-to-door delivery service will require organisation and some initial outlay. But you're providing a niche service for people who want good, fresh food conveniently.□□

In the UK, the National Skills Academy of Environmental Technology offers 'up-skill' courses for tradesmen, builders and electricians who want to take courses on becoming a green deal adviser and discovering ways to apply environmental technology.

Giving just one of your staff some background and training in green tech will give you a foundation for offering greener services, and moreover a greater insight into how everything can be done more conscientiously.

Have a company ethos

Deciding to buy Fairtrade, low-packaging snacks and beverages can make a big difference when it comes to the attitudes of your staff. It's a gesture towards establishing a company ethos that you can roll out to other areas of your business by encouraging your staff not to print out e-mails, trying to use public transport for out-of-town trips and turning off computers and equipment when you're not in the office.

Use technology

Another way you can reduce the paper you use is by focusing on advertising online. Dropping leaflets in your local area may be a tried and tested way to drum up business, but fewer flyers in opportune spots directing people to your website will allow you to provide so much more information about yourself and what you do.□□

The more people who visit your website, and the more you promote yourself as a niche local business, the more you'll crop up when people are looking for 'carpenter/butcher/etc in __sville' online – and increasingly, that's the way most people are looking for services. It's less paper, less outlay on printing, and more potential clients: a win-win-win for you, your business and the environment.