Maybe you’re a contractor who has a long history of doing great work. You’ve got tons of positive customer testimonials and the quality of your work products speaks for itself. That should be enough to keep you busy year-round, right? Well, not so fast. As it turns out, more and more consumers are factoring the environmental sustainability of the companies they work with into their decision when hiring a contractor.

In fact, three out of four millennials said they would actually pay a premium to work with companies that are eco-friendly. And before you dismiss millennials as being too young to impact the construction industry, they’re now 21-37 years old, so old enough to own homes and make other major purchasing decisions. Additionally, there are 80 million millennials in America alone (a fourth of our population) with $200 billion in annual buying power. If you want to be ahead of the curve and appeal to this huge mass of customers coming your way, it’s time to consider going green.

And sure, if you work with solar panels, for instance, selling yourself as a green business is a piece of cake. But how can you establish that reputation as a builder of pools, a landscaper, or a custom woodworker?

There are a number of simple and inexpensive steps you can take to authentically increase your credibility as an eco-friendly business, while also making some really great strides toward reducing your company’s environmental footprint. You might even save some money along the way! Check out these four strategies to get started.
**Reduce Waste in Your Day-to-Day Operations**

Take a look at what you are discarding every day in your main office, items like old invoices and the junk mail that is constantly coming through. Setting up a simple recycling program in your office for office paper and plastic and cans from employees’ lunches is easy enough and will show customers who visit your office that you are committed to reducing waste.

To demonstrate your commitment to reducing waste throughout your company, don’t neglect opportunities to reduce or reuse waste on the job site. For instance, most packaging is recyclable. Additionally new material scraps, and even old materials and debris are all potentially reusable. If you’re working with a renovation, items like appliances, masonry, doors and windows can all be reused. You may even be able to sell them as building with salvaged materials is very popular now.

**Next, Commit to Using Local Suppliers**

Every stage of the construction process has an impact on the environment and the transportation of materials is one of the biggest culprits. The more miles your materials travel to get to the job site, the more carbon dioxide emissions are produced. Working with local suppliers may give you less opportunity to shop around for a better price, but you may find you get better, more reactive service from local vendors who work face-to-face with you and with whom you can actually build a long term business relationship. Quality relationships with your suppliers can help keep your jobs on-schedule, reduce your labor time, and ensure you get paid on time.

Additionally, while you can promote this choice as a green practice, it’s also good for business to be seen as supporting the local economy, not to mention the potential for referrals thanks to the positive relationships you’re building.
Examine Your Current Marketing Strategy with an Eco-Friendly Lens

It’s tough to sell yourself as a green company if you have paper flyers littering the streets of the neighborhoods you are targeting for business. Most print marketing, be it flyers, direct mail, or even brochures end up in your prospective customers’ recycling bins with the rest of their junk mail. Plus, as soon as you pay to print them, they’re outdated. Get with the times and update your marketing to digital. It may be a sizeable investment to have a nice looking website designed for your company, but once it’s done, it’s simple to make changes as you have new product offerings or sales, and you can use it to connect with customers via social media platforms.

Additionally, consider using your marketing to promote green tips for consumers. For instance, if you specialize in insulation, share an infographic that compares the efficiency of various types of insulation. Because it comes from a third-party, it adds a layer of credibility for your prospective customer and knowing that foam insulation is more energy efficient than fiberglass just may upsell your customer. Sometimes there are even tax incentives for customers that purchase energy efficient options, like with windows and water heaters. Make sure that you are knowledgeable about the incentives that are available in your region so that you can promote that option to customers and help them navigate the filing process.
Make Your Green Commitment Known to the Community

The construction industry is crowded, but the number of plumbers, for instance, touting their business as eco-friendly is a much smaller group. If you take the steps to start reducing your company’s environmental footprint, spread the word! Local civic associations like Rotary, Kiwanis, and the Chamber of Commerce are always looking for speakers. Volunteer to share what you’re doing to set your business apart from the rest of the field.

You may want to also consider building alliances with other more traditionally green businesses. Many cities have green business and even green building groups that meet monthly. Share the steps that you’re taking to make your business green and maybe the next time someone gets solar panels installed or buys a rain barrel, their contractor might refer them to the landscaper (that’s you) who’s an ace at the new low-water xeriscaping trends!

About the Author

Danielle Hegedus is an Atlanta based writer. She is a regular contributor to the home improvement leads experts at Modernize, as well as a variety of lifestyle and home design websites.