

# THE EXPERTS

## ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

# Zero Waste to Landfill is the new color green

Everywhere you look today, companies are talking about being green, or going green or just how green they are.

At INIT, we have always been very earth-conscious, but recently we took a long hard look at what we were doing and got busy implementing new ideas to sharpen our shade of green.

At first glance, we definitely had a bold green look. Some of the initiatives already established included the smart design of the INIT building on Kristina Way.



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With floor to ceiling windows and skylights, the building draws natural light and heat from outdoors, which contributes to a huge annual savings on energy.

In addition, we installed fluorescent light bulbs which use 70 to 75 percent less energy than incandescent light bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.

To eliminate the need for extra energy used to cool or heat the building, the thermostat is kept at a constant and steady temperature.

Other methods in place include:

- Doing business with other "green" companies.
- Use of recycled paper products – paper towels, bath tissue and copy paper.
- Use of a company bike for short trips to nearby restaurants and shopping during lunch.
- Use of a print-friendly font and double-sided printing to save ink and paper.

### What is Zero Waste to Landfill?

Zero Waste to Landfill is a philosophy that encourages the redesign of resource life cycles so that all products are reused. Any trash sent to landfills is minimal. The process recommended is one similar to the way that resources are reused in nature.

- Paper shredding and recycling. Once we realized how much more we could do, we implemented a plan and began to execute our new ideas immediately.

Our first step was to partner with TFC, a local recycling company that taught us how to use the "single stream" recycling process.

Next, our employees started brainstorming new ideas for "greening up" the office. Within a matter of weeks, we went from wanting to become a greener company to a full-fledged plan to become a "Zero Waste to Landfill" company.

With our plan in place, our official kick-off day was held on March 17 with an employee luncheon and costume contest. (What's St. Patrick's Day without a little green?)

There was a comical demonstration by the marketing manager, who had secretly done some in-house trash diving and brought her results to the group for analysis. She offered light-hearted instructions on what could be recycled or reused with the "single stream" process.

From there, we solidified our goals and implemented the following initiatives:

- Personal trash cans were immediately replaced with personal recycle bins.
- We eliminated the use of paper or plastic altogether in our kitchen by purchasing glass dishes, silverware, ceramic coffee mugs and glasses.
- We distributed personal reusable water bottles to each employee and use an in-house water system eliminating the need for store-bought plastic water bottles.
- We use dish towels and wash cloths to reduce the use of paper towels in kitchen.

• We recycle or reuse cardboard, bubble wrap, batteries, metal and electronic equipment.

• We partnered with an electronics recycler that ensures 100 percent zero waste to landfill and zero export of electronics and cables.

• We composted our coffee grounds for use in employee gardens. (We have a more comprehensive compost system in the works.)

• We encouraged employees to use cloth bags when shopping to reduce the number of plastic bags that go to our landfills.

• We use paperless transactions to reduce paper usage and waste.

The best part of our "getting greener" efforts was the excitement and support of our employees.

Through email and face to face, many ideas and initiatives were shared and subsequently put in place.

The encouragement from our leadership team also facilitated a smooth process, putting us well on our way to our final goal of becoming

a "Zero Waste to Landfill" company.

Today, we are definitely a much darker shade of green on the earth's color wheel, but we are not finished yet.

Plans are in place to complete the process and implement further changes.

For instance, we plan to:

- Further our paperless administration transactions.
- Change our print publications and subscribe to online publications instead.
- Install hand dryers in the bathrooms, saving the use of paper towels.
- Install occupancy sensors – motion and sound – in all offices, restrooms and conference rooms.
- Utilize commuting service for employees.
- Conduct "green" meetings – we've already started with online meetings and webinars reducing travel and lodging resources.

After only a few weeks from our initial kick-off, we find ourselves celebrating major milestones and proposing new ideas for future implementation.

We have made it our goal to conduct business in a more environmentally responsible manner and we believe the initiatives we have put in place will help carry us and our children into a bright sustainable future.

What is your company doing to be green? Share your ideas with us on Facebook.

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At the INIT building on Kristina Way in Chesapeake, floor-to-ceiling windows and skylights draw natural light and heat from outdoors. The building is also lit with fluorescent light bulbs, which use less energy than incandescent light bulbs and last up to 10 times longer, and the thermostat is kept at a constant temperature.

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