



## Environmental Behavior Change

### **Eight top tips for developing an environmental behavior change program in your workplace.**

Educating and engaging colleagues to adopt more environmentally friendly behaviors can save natural resources, unlock energy reductions, improve morale, and boost the bottom line.

**Here are eight tips to get you started. >**



## 1. Develop an achievable goal

Simply asking people to switch off the lights or report dripping taps isn't enough to encourage behavior change. Start your behavior change program by developing a team or company wide goal.

The goal needs to be achievable within a specified period. You're not going to win hearts and minds by encouraging people to reduce energy by 90% (it would certainly save you money but it's simply not achievable!) To really motivate people, develop an ambitious but achievable goal and define the period within which it is to be achieved.

Remember to also be mindful about what can be reduced by office behavior change versus the changes that really need to be made at a systems level. Ultimately your colleagues will have to be able to feel like their behavior can make a meaningful difference in reaching the goal.

To inform your goal, a natural resource monitoring system like Buddy Ohm can be invaluable in helping you determine your baseline consumption figures as well as an achievable goal.

## 2. Lead from the top

Internal support for your behavior change program is critical, particularly from the leaders within your organization.

Align the behavior change program to some of the other broader strategies within the organization, whether they are finance, environmental or HR related. If you can, present the plan and secure the support of the leaders and influencers within the organization. Ask them to play a part by making their own commitments, which you can promote internally.

Using a tool like Buddy Ohm can help you quantify and measure the financial or environmental impact of the behavior change program. This context helps people to understand why things need to change.

## 3. Start by educating and inspiring

Start your behavior change program by educating your colleagues around the issue you're trying to fix. Do people know how much energy is being consumed by your business, or how much water costs the company over the course of a year? By starting with the magnitude of the challenge helps people to understand why things need to change.

Promote your shared goal and use inspiring language. Make people feel like they want to be part of the solution!

## 4. Make it fun – turn behavior change into a game or competition

Human beings respond well to programs that are fun. We also love a bit of competition!

If you have access to granular data, like the resource consumption data generated by Buddy Ohm, then you can easily develop internal competitions or games that position floor against floor, team against team for some light-hearted competition. Again, Buddy Ohm can provide regular updates to ensure you can communicate and sustain a competition over a period of time.



Unplug electronics such as cell phones and laptops once they're charged. Adapters plugged into outlets use energy even if they're not charging.

## 5. Ask your colleagues to shape the program

Ensure you're running a program that has internal support by asking your colleagues for their behavior change ideas. If this isn't possible, then perhaps people could provide ideas around how to best reward and celebrate the achievement. Could be a donation to a charity of choice or a celebratory party. People are more likely to support a program that they have helped to design.

## 6. Make it easy and convenient for people to change

No matter how committed we might be to environmental issues, ultimately human beings will opt for convenience and ease when faced with a choice. So, if you're asking people to walk 24 flights to their office than taking the lift, you might be facing an uphill battle!

Try to break behaviors down to smaller steps, if you think this might be easier for people to start. You may be able to ask people to increase these behaviors over time.

Make sure you spend a bit of time understanding what the barriers might be to changing behavior and try to remove these where possible.

## 7. Communicate throughout the journey, not just the start and the end

Make sure that you're communicating updates throughout the program period. It's not enough to start and finish, especially if this program is running over a longer period of time.

Buddy Ohm's dashboards can be configured to provide regular updates to track progress over time.

Using appropriate social norms can be powerful tools to encourage people to change behavior and stick to it. For example "we have reached half of our energy target – are you joining your colleagues to reduce energy?" or "Floor 6 have reduced their energy use by 13% and Floor 7 is 5%. Join colleagues on Floor 7 to switch off..." Data from Buddy Ohm can be used in a variety of ways to support this approach.

## 8. Reward and recognize

Remember to reward your colleagues and recognize their achievements at the end of the program. There are a lot of great ways to recognize good behavior, whether or not the goal has been achieved.

Document what you've learned and apply your learnings the next time you run a behavior change program. Good luck!

**If Buddy Ohm can help, or if you are already using Buddy Ohm to support your behavior change programs, we'd love to hear from you. Drop us a line at: [info@buddy.com](mailto:info@buddy.com)**