

Choose a Different Spa Cover, Save the Earth

As of 2005 there were approximately 5,166,999 hot tubs in the USA. (Pkdata - US Residential Hot Tub Market 2005 Edition, 3675 Crestwood Parkway, Suite 220 Duluth, GA 30096) Canada has approximately 833,001 installed hot tubs.

In North America there are approximately 6 million homes with hot tubs with each of these homes owning a typical hot tub cover that is 7 x7 and 4" thick. With covers being replaced every 5 years due to water saturation, ripping and general wear and tear that would mean there are 2.4 million covers going to the landfill every 2 years. Now we are talking 8,400,000 feet which translates into 3182 miles of covers. In the USA that would be San Diego, CA to Minneapolis, MN and back again and in Canada you would have covers stretching from Victoria to Montreal!

Another way of looking at it is a football field which is 172,800 square feet and a cover is 7x7 which equals 49 square feet. Forty nine (49) square feet of cover multiplied by 1,200,000 covers per year could equal 58,000,000 divided by a 172,800 square foot football field equals **340 football fields** filled with covers per year. If these football fields were to be stacked (assuming the covers are 4" thick) this would equal **1 football field 11 stories high!**

The Covana is designed and built to last 20 years. The testing below translates into the 20 year life expectancy:

- In testing the unit ran non-stop for 72 hours
- One cycle takes 50 seconds to test
- The unit made 5184 cycles, fully extended and fully retracted
- We estimate the unit to be used 250 times per year

The Covana has many parts that can be recycled

- Aluminum – all the extrusions and posts
- Plastic – the cover

The foam that is sprayed in the roof of the Covana is a recycled product

10 Business Practices that Reduce Your Footprint

Starting a green business (or making an existing one greener) can often seem like a daunting task. As business owners, we are compiling a mental checklist of all small, simple things we can do in our day-to-day operations to lighten our footprint on the planet. By building environmentally conscious practices into our work flow from the start, we hope to start off on the right foot and keep taking steps toward sustainability.

There's always more you can do, but the most important thing is to do something! Baby steps in the right direction are certainly better than going backwards or not moving at all. Thankfully, many green business practices are not only eco-friendly, but they're friendly on the company budget as well. So even if the benefits to the planet are hard to see, benefits to your bottom line may be more visible.

Here's a handy list of ten simple things you can do to make your business a bit more sustainable every day.

1. Printing Less Stuff = Using Less Paper

Paper makes up about 35% of our waste stream – even though it's one of the easiest materials to re-use and recycle! You can help reduce this waste by using as little paper as possible, and being smart about the paper you do use. First of all, you don't need to print every e-mail. Just organize your inbox to make e-mails easier to find and reference. You can **encourage others not to print** your e-mails as well. Make back-up copies of important files and e-mails and keep them on an external drive, instead of storing boxes of paper files. When you do need to print important documents, make sure you use a **sustainable paper**, and set your printer or copier to print on both sides of the page.

2. Go Digital with Your Documents

A great way to reduce paper use and get contracts and documents signed more quickly is to use electronic signatures. **Adobe Acrobat** Professional allows you to sign PDF files digitally, as well as create PDF documents with signature fields for clients to sign. Or you could use software such as **DocuSign** or **e-signature** to securely sign documents and get signatures from clients and vendors. We can send proposals, contracts, and invoices entirely through e-mail as PDF attachments. Clients can then e-sign the documents and send them back, and we both have a signed copy without having to print anything.

3. Pull that Plug

You aren't working all hours of the night (at least we hope not), so why does your computer need to be on? Turn off everything you possibly can before you leave the

office each day. We plug our computer, printer, external hard drive, and other office gadgets into one power strip, so I can just turn it off to make sure none of my appliances are secretly pilfering energy. We also program our computers to turn off automatically at a certain time each night, just in case we forget. You can also set your monitor to turn off after a few minutes of inactivity. And never leave things like cell phone chargers plugged in when you're not using them. They still draw energy, regardless of whether there's anything plugged into them. Speaking of energy efficiency, make sure you stock your office with energy-saving appliances and compact florescent light bulbs.

4. Get Waste Wise

Recycling is never a chore when it's easier than throwing something away. Place paper recycling bins in convenient locations all over the office, like right next to copiers and mail boxes. Keep clearly labeled bins in several central locations such as break rooms. Everywhere there is a trash can, there should be a recycling bin. If you have a cafeteria or break room in your office, consider adding a compost bin. An employee or neighbor with a garden wouldn't mind the free plant food, and **worm bins** are compact with very little odor.

5. Work With Like-Minded Companies

Chances are there are businesses in your area that are also going green or certified green. Network with them and use their services when you need them. Part of being a green business is making sure that you do your best to ensure that your supply chain is green, too. Seek out **green vendors** for your business needs, whether it is printing business cards, **hosting your web site**, or cleaning your office building.

6. One Word: Freecycle!

Need some shelves for your office and don't have a budget for new furnishings? You never know what you might find on www.freecycle.org. One person's junk is definitely another's treasure. If you have a large company, you could even organize an office-wide barter party, where everyone brings items they don't use any more to swap for things they might need from others. When you upgrade your office equipment after years of use, pass it on if it's still useful. List it on freecycle or donate it to a charity that may need it.

7. Institute a Company Recycling Program for Electronics

In addition to recycling the usual paper, cans, and bottles in the office, don't forget about the e-waste that is so essential to businesses and so toxic to the environment. When old electronic equipment finally bites the dust, don't just toss it, but make it company policy to recycle everything you can. **Recycling for Charities** makes recycling e-waste like cell phones, cameras, and palm pilots a breeze – and you can choose which charity

gets the proceeds from your recycled electronics! Many computer manufacturers offer take-back programs for old computers, so make use of them.

8. Slow the Flow of Junk Mail

Junk mail may be one of the most wasteful things known to man. When the plague of unwanted mailings seems to never end, there is something you can do about it. There are free services out there that will remove you from mailing lists, and you can also **remove your name** from the Direct Marketing Association's member prospect list.

9. Build Your Office Green from the Floor Up

If you're lucky enough to be able to afford an office remodel, go green from the floor to the skylights. Use eco-friendly flooring options made from renewable or recycled materials. Use sustainable fabrics made from hemp or bamboo for window coverings, or get them second hand. Lengths of bamboo make great curtain rods, too. Get lots of green building ideas at **Green Building Elements**.

10. Educate Yourself

There is always more you can do to make your business more sustainable. And the only way to make progress is to know where you're headed. Keep up with environmental news and green business trends to identify areas you can improve on. Make your own checklist of green business practices to implement and set deadlines for crossing them off your list. Share green news and tips with your co-workers, employees, and clients. Making yourself an "expert" on sustainability will not only build your green brand, but it will earn respect from potential clients, customers, and your peers.