

Case study – Coleman Greig



Leading law firm makes a case for greener business

Coleman Greig is a law firm based in Parramatta. With 70 staff and a focus on commercial law, the firm's size and practice make it unique for the western Sydney region – the third largest contributor to GDP in Australia after the Sydney and Melbourne CBDs.

General Manager Warrick McLean says initially, Coleman Greig wanted to improve its sustainability performance for pure business reasons. He convinced senior colleagues it was an opportunity to save money, and to strengthen the firm's recruitment and retention.

Although highly regarded in legal circles, the firm wanted to continue to attract good people by proving it was more than a well run business. The Sustainability Advantage Program allowed the firm to promote its sustainability credentials.

Coleman Greig acts for many publicly-listed companies and subsidiaries of multinationals – firms that encourage their supply chains to also take a sustainable approach to business. Ten years ago clients cared only about a law firm's legal expertise. Today, Coleman Greig needs to develop and promote its own green initiatives to win and keep business. ▶

In brief

As Australia's largest businesses slowly turn a deeper shade of green, professional services firms such as Coleman Greig need to nurture and display their own sustainability credentials in order to win and retain business.

Through the Sustainability Advantage Program, Coleman Greig has been able to:

- strengthen the firm's recruitment and retention
- cut electricity use by six per cent through energy efficient IT upgrades and behavioural changes
- cut paper consumption in the past 12 months by 25 per cent
- become the catalyst in helping its landlord get a \$500,000 Australian Government grant to retro-fit the building's air conditioning
- build new relationships with like minded organisations – some of whom are now clients.



- ▶ 'A firm our size cannot have a dedicated person to deal with environmental initiatives,' says McLean. 'Sustainability Advantage gives us a framework. It is a wonderful tool and it has made us look at how we can grow and improve. Sustainability is not done as an add on anymore. It has simply become part of everything we do.'

For example, Coleman Greig now investigates the green benefits of all its capital purchases. The firm recently bought new computer equipment which consumes much less power – and saves money. Coleman Greig has cut its electricity use by six per cent as a result of such energy efficient IT upgrades and behavioural changes.

Paper is another big resource for Coleman Greig. The firm switched to a more environmentally friendly stock and reduced consumption by 25 per cent just by doing what McLean calls 'the simple things' – setting the firm's copiers to double-sided; encouraging clients to receive information via email; and making it easier for people to pay accounts electronically.

'More than 85 per cent of our revenue is now taken by EFT or credit card,' says McLean. 'That means fewer cheques through the mail, which is good for the environment and better cash flow because we get paid faster.'

The other benefit for Coleman Greig has been the opportunity to spread the sustainability story within its professional circle. Located in a multi-storey building more than 30 years old, Coleman Greig met with the Office of Environment and Heritage, Parramatta City Council and the building owner to highlight the government funding available to improve resource efficiency. Coleman Greig's involvement in Sustainability Advantage provided the insight to help its landlord get a \$500,000 grant from the Australian Government to retro-fit the building's air conditioning.

Some of Coleman Greig's other sustainable initiatives include bathrooms with dual flush toilets; heat reducing film on windows; new energy efficient light fittings; and switching off all appliances at day's end.

Sustainability is now part of Coleman Greig's culture. The firm advises clients on green legal issues, such as the ACCC Green Marketing Guidelines, and its property team conducts education in green leasing and mandatory disclosure of energy efficiency in buildings.

'Sustainability Advantage has taught us that sustainability is a culture, and we can be a conduit for better practices with suppliers and partners,' says McLean. 'It has also helped us build relationships with other organisations. We get the chance to meet businesses we had not dealt with before, and some of them are now clients.'

McLean says that in the dark reaches of some professional services firms there are still people who believe sustainability is nonsense.

'I can assure them it is much more. It is part of what good businesses do, whether you believe in climate change or not. We have shown that it makes a direct difference to the bottom line. What more evidence do you need?'

Your next step

To find out how your business can join the Sustainability Advantage Program, contact the team:

Email sustainbus@environment.nsw.gov.au
Call 02 8837 6000
Visit environment.nsw.gov.au/sustainbus/sustainabilityadvantage.htm