

FIVE WAYS TO GO GREEN AT YOUR GARAGE FOR FREE

By **Isaiah Mouw, CAPP**

One of the core principles of sustainability is the triple bottom line. You've heard it before: people, profit, and planet. Too often, profit can be undervalued. Spending money without regard for return on investment (ROI) is not truly sustainable in the long term.

Funds (from revenue, government grants, private capital, or tax dollars) should be allocated to sustainability measures, technologies, and product choices that enhance all aspects of the triple bottom line when possible. Buying "green" for the marketing value alone can take funds away from measures and programs with considerable effect. And while ROI may be difficult to calculate in pure dollars and cents, it can be gauged in longer-term ways, such as economic development, or a ripple effect in your organization, such as brand loyalty and customer retention.

Sustainable choices don't always cost more. Case in point: The White House Office of Management and Budget noted in a June 2012 report that energy efficiency investments during the previous four years are expected to save as much as \$18 billion in energy costs over their life cycle. I doubt we can save your organization \$18 billion, but there are five ways to go green at your garage for free.

1. Parking Information Applications

Walk down any aisle at the IPI Conference & Expo and you'll probably find a company wanting to put your parking facility location and information on a website or app. Do it. They can probably take the information from your website anyway, so work with them to direct patrons to your facility. Take it a step further by having them integrate with your parking access and revenue control system to provide real-time parking availability for your facilities. It's green because it helps eliminate cruising for parking, cutting back on fuel costs, emissions, and wasted time.

2. Pay-by-Cell

Most of the major pay-by-cell applications don't cost your organization a thing. Providers charge a small user fee (usually between \$0.25 and \$0.35) to the customer. Most companies generally pay for signage to promote use (providing advertising for them and increasing adoption of their product). This technology decreases driving to locate parking and reduces labor and operational costs to service meters. (Remember that time you didn't have any change so you drove around looking for the cheapest parking garage that took credit cards?)

3. Lighting Upgrades

Lighting for free? One critical sustainable initiative that balances the triple bottom line is the smart lighting upgrade. Smart lighting that uses energy-efficient light bulbs with smart lighting technologies, such as daylight harvesting, light timers, and light sensors, save considerable energy and money. Several companies in the current market will upgrade your lighting for free. The catch is that they get to keep the resulting savings from energy efficiency (your utility bills). They compare lighting bills before and after the upgrade and keep the savings each month. It doesn't cost a thing, and it helps the environment. That said, the potential payback period to recoup your investment for a lighting upgrade can be as short as two years depending on the fixtures, utility rates, and technology selected. Beyond that, you then reap the long-term rewards.

4. Parking Reservation Systems

Parking reservation providers generally charge users a convenience fee or keep a percentage of parking transactions. The latter does take away some of your profit, but keep in mind that many people who reserve a parking space often don't show up to claim it. This allows oversell of parking inventory. These systems prevent people from cruising and emitting pollutants and reduce traffic congestion.

5. Find a Sponsor

Consider what business would like to market to your patrons. Garage patrons are, in a sense, a captive audience from entering the garage until leaving for their destinations and again on the return trip. This is why many area businesses, local restaurants, and entertainment destinations are apt to sponsor sustainable programs, such as bike parking or bike share, mass transit, charging for electric vehicles, recycling, or a pocket park adjacent to the garage. Signage at selected areas and in elevator and stair towers offer advertising opportunities.

Implement the triple bottom line approach in each business and buying decision you make. With a little creativity, achieving the triple bottom line need not have any monetary cost to you at all and will have terrific payback for people, planet, and profit. **P**



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