Sustainability is creating and maintaining conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony that permit fulfilling social and economic requirements.

Purchasing Pup e-News

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TRUE COST VS PRICE

When purchasing supplies we often look for the lowest price in order to save money. However, the price tag does not show the true cost of an item. It doesn't account for how the product is made, how much energy is needed to use the product, how much waste is created or how much it costs to dispose of the product. If you incorporated all of these costs into the price of a product it would be much more expensive.

For real savings—buy products that are more durable, refillable, energy efficient and can be reused,

Make a difference—use products efficiently

A lot of energy and materials go into manufacturing a product and each step in a product's life cycle has an impact on the environment. Products that are truly green or sustainable have minimal effect on the earth from extraction of raw materials to end-of-life disposal. Many companies conduct a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) to look at ways to reduce energy use, materials, and waste at each stage. With many products, consumer use has the most impact on the environment and on the total cost of the product. For example, most of the environmental impact of a t-shirt comes after purchase because of the detergents, water and energy used to wash and dry it. Many office products, like printers and toner cartridges, have similar LCA profiles showing highest impact at the consumer use stage. You can help by using products wisely, turning off and unplugging electronics when not in use, reusing office products multiple times, and using less paper, printer ink and other supplies.



EXTRACTION OF RAW MATERIALS

How are raw materials mined or harvested? What are the impacts of extracting the raw materials on the environment–species or habitat loss, water contamination, etc.? Are the materials made from renewable resources?

MANUFACTURING

How much water, energy and fuel is used to make the product? Does the plant or manufacturing process create waste? Where does the waste end up? Are workers in the production process treated fairly?

DISTRIBUTION

What type of packaging is used to transport the product? Is it consistent with the size of the product? How far does the product have to travel? What type of vehicles and fuel are used to ship the product?

CONSUMER USE

Does it require a lot of water, energy, or chemicals to use and maintain the product? Is the product durable? Can it be used more than once or is it disposed of right away?

DISPOSAL

Can the product be easily recycled or reused? Does the product break down or degrade naturally? Is the product hazardous? Do you have to pay for disposal?

5 STAGES OF PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE

When you purchase supplies, look for these logos to identify products that are sustainable at every stage of their life cycle.

cradle to cradle · EcoLogo · Green Seal Certified · Design for the Environment U.S. EPA · epeat

CONGRATULATIONS!
You are becoming a green purchasing expert. Now you can help your coworkers make better purchases.

Send us your feedback
jwaters@unomaha.edu