

We've gone to great lengths to preserve our environment. Imagine what we can do for your company.

For the past 10 years, Envision Technology Marketing Group, Inc. (ETMG) has been driven by a basic tenant: that a team of people, connected by technology, can operate as a unit and produce great work. With that belief, we have built a virtual agency made up of over one hundred employees and independent contractors, who have proven that this flexible model works—both for our firm, and for our clients.

At the same time, we have found that our virtual model offers some unique benefits—ETMG has grown up as an environmentally friendly agency that produces almost no waste. We rely on PDFs, not paper; email rather than overnight mail; and teleconferencing instead of conference rooms as the foundations of our communications.

With a nationally distributed workforce and client base, we have never needed to establish a central office, which also means we have no central air conditioning, electricity bills, or data centers. Each of our employees turns off their computers and desk lights each night, and uses no gas to get to their office; which is likely down the hallway, instead of off the freeway.

After a decade of operation, ETMG has achieved a major milestone—one that isn't tied to new business or revenues. We are officially a carbon neutral company. We'd like to share some insights about carbon neutrality and what it means to work with a green agency. There are benefits to be had for all—including our clients—who we believe ultimately deserve credit for embracing an unconventional business model that has allowed us to support their marketing needs as well as the needs of the planet.

ETMG: a carbon neutral company.

ETMG had its carbon production calculated by Carbonfund.org—a non-profit organization devoted to promoting the use of clean energy. Carbon output is measured by a variety of factors, such as office energy, paper use, business or industrial processes, shipping, travel, and commuting. Based on this calculation ETMG had a small carbon footprint, thanks to the virtual model. ETMG has now offset its carbon emissions by purchasing renewable carbon credits that will go towards a variety of energy conservation measures.

The credits might go towards the production of renewable energy, such as solar, thermal or biomass, or the reforestation of critical areas of our planet. The ultimate goal for the green energy movement is that organizations like Carbonfund.org will drive down the costs of renewable energy supplies below the costs of "dirty" energy—such as fossil fuels.

We feel this is an important step to take as an agency, and one that is supported by many other large organizations. Dell Computer, JetBlue Airways, Discovery Communications, and Amtrak have all partnered with Carbonfund.org with the goal of halting climate change and being part of the solution towards a clean energy, low carbon world.

What's in it for you? A bunch of carbon credits.

As a carbon neutral company, our clients get the benefits of our energy savings and leveraged overhead. Our virtual model has some built-in efficiencies over traditional brick and mortar firms, where conference rooms and office spaces must be kept warm, cool, and well lit. Our meetings are more likely to be held at the local coffee shop, or as a teleconference, thus eliminating the cost of maintaining a centralized facility.

You may never receive a paper document from ETMG, unless you specifically ask for it. We are well versed in all aspects of virtual operations, and are deeply reliant on current communications and collaborations solutions both for cost savings and efficiency. We are users of the very technology our clients produce, and can speak to its effectiveness in all aspects of our business operations. We keep air travel, commuting, and the ubiquitous staff meeting to a minimum, under the belief that technology can truly bridge the gaps of almost any distance or communications challenge.

These savings, in both carbon consumption and costs, reduce our overhead and cost of operation. ETMG passes these efficiencies and savings on to you, our clients, in the form of lower projects costs.

In addition, ETMG has taken carbon neutrality a step further—and involved our clients in our crusade for a greener earth.

For every new purchase order our clients open, ETMG will purchase five hundred pounds of carbon credits.

This purchase will support green energy efforts, ranging from the building of a new wind farm, the creation of new solar sources, methane capture, or simply planting a new tree.

At ETMG, we hope that if you're in the market for marketing services, you'll choose the vendor that chooses to be green.

For your information.

Check out Carbonfund.org for more information on the clean energy movement.

A word about carbon.

The truth about carbon neutrality is that even the most environmentally conscious companies and individuals produce some amount of carbon. Only 40 percent of the average American's carbon footprint is due to their direct energy use—the rest comes from the creation of goods and services we buy and use.¹ That means that businesses are responsible for about 60 percent of the world's carbon production.¹ Carbon production is an inherent part of business operations, created by the buildings, services, equipment, and consumables required to run a company.

Carbon production can be broken down into three categories:

- **Consumption:** We are a nation of individuals that can't stop consuming. In fact, the average U.S. individual consumes twice as much as they did 50 years ago.² This is in part by design—products today are planned and produced for obsolescence. Ninety-nine percent of what we acquire today is consumed or discarded within six months.² For businesses, the cycle of consumption is constant—computers, desks, chairs, pens, paper—even carpet and light bulbs are constantly used, replaced, and upgraded.
- **Emissions:** Everything from flipping on a light, to commuting, to airline travel contributes to a companies' carbon output. Fossil fuels burned to run cars, trucks, and planes, heat buildings, and power factories are responsible for about 98 percent of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, 24 percent of methane emissions, and 18 percent of nitrous oxide emission.³
- **Disposal:** Each individual in the U.S. creates 4.5 pounds of waste a day, double our waste of 30 years ago.³ And, for every single garbage can of waste created by individuals, companies produce 70 garbage cans. For businesses, everything from DVDs, to the coffee cups in the break room, and trash bag liners are disposable parts of everyday operations. Between the methane gas produced by landfills, and the dioxin created by incineration, waste disposal has become a huge contributor to the greenhouse problem.

The disposal of electronics is particularly harmful to the environment—and businesses are the largest users of small electronic devices. By the end of 2008, there will be approximately 550 million unused mobile and wireless phones stockpiled in the United States, awaiting proper disposal. That number is expected to grow by upward of 175 million in each of the following years. Of all the phones that go out of service, less than 8 percent are recycled or refurbished.⁴

The goal: making clean cheaper than dirty.

Many businesses have taken steps to offset their carbon consumption by purchasing units of clean energy from green sources. This energy, generated by alternative methods, such as wind, solar, or geothermal, is fed onto the grid, offsetting the "dirty" energy that would normally be used.

Companies who want to buy this clean energy purchase renewable energy certificates (RECs), also known as Green Tags, each of which represents that 1 megawatt per hour of electricity was generated from a renewable source.⁵ These RECs can fluctuate in price depending up on supply and demand for green energy. The hope is that the income provided by RECs, and a long-term stabilized market for green energy, can generate the additional incentive needed to build renewable energy plants.

The Bonneville Environmental Foundation, a non-profit organization that sells green energy credits, has been instrumental in starting the market for RECs, with their Green Tag product. Bonneville uses the profits from Green Tags to build community solar and wind projects, and to fund watershed restoration. The Conservation Services group, another non-profit, sells ClimateSAVE RECs that support wind, solar, and hydropower energy sources.⁶

Major companies, including Apple Computer, PepsiCo, Whole Foods, and The World Bank are supporting this green energy effort. According to the EPA, these companies, and hundreds of others, report that 100 percent of their energy is made up of green power purchases.⁷ With this kind of support, organizations can reduce the environmental impacts of electricity use and support the development of new renewable generation capacity, nationwide.

Sources

1. Carbonfund.org
2. The Story of Stuff
3. Carbonfund.org
4. The Story of Stuff
5. Recycling Charities
6. Wikipedia: Renewable Energy Certificates
7. EPA Climate Change site

