



Managing your power use

Tips for small businesses

Electricity is essential in any small business, but often also carries a significant cost. Taking control of your power use can result in positive changes in your ongoing cost base and help you run a more environmentally friendly business.

QUICK TIPS

Time your use

For those appliances and devices that aren't needed 24/7, use in-built or installed timers to have them start up only when needed, or have staff make the switching on and off part of their daily routine.

Reduce your fridge numbers

Consolidating refrigerated stock can allow you to turn off extra fridges.

Suit the season

Set your thermostats to suit the weather. Most people will be comfortable at a temperature between 21°C and 25°C in summer and 18°C to 20°C in winter. Every degree makes a difference so set the gauge warmer in summer and cooler in winter.

WATCH THE BILLS

The power bill might not come around for a while, so seeing the difference on the bottom line may take a while. Bills will fluctuate over the year to suit the season and trading periods, so comparing to the same time the year before could help you see the savings you are making.

LOOKING TO DO MORE?

There are a range of different measures small businesses can take to reduce power use and costs. Spending some time or making an upfront investment can make large differences to your bill.

Review your power use

Take the time to understand how much power you use and when you use it. There are professionals available to help you work this out, systems that can be installed to monitor use and maintain safety and there are monitoring tools and apps available online.

You can get a sense of how much power you are using by adding up the power use for all of your devices. Look at the label on the electrical device which indicates the number of watts the device uses. Convert watts to kW by dividing by 1,000. Multiply that by the number of hours it runs in a day to get an indication of the total power used in kWh (the unit of power used on your bill) and track when you are using the devices throughout the day and night.

The review will let you see which devices are costing you money, so you can change how you operate or consider upgrading to a more efficient appliance.



Upgrade appliances

The efficiency of each appliance in your business makes a big difference to the amount of power you use and modern appliances make it easy to schedule energy use. Upgrading these items to more efficient appliances may have a greater up-front cost but have the potential to reduce your energy use over their lifetime.

Upgrade your lights

One of the easiest upgrades can be to check the lights in your premises and change all globes to the lowest wattage globes that are suitable for your needs.

Motion sensors can also be used on lights in areas that are used infrequently, so you don't need to rely on your customers or staff switching them off.

Check the seals

Fridges, ovens and doors all have seals to keep the hot or cold air in. Checking their condition regularly can help you catch an emerging power waster.

Insulate

Installing insulation in ceilings or applying reflective coatings to external surfaces can really cut down the amount of energy needed to keep a premises comfortable. If you can't change the building you are in, insulating any heat producing or cooling appliances can make them more efficient and reduce their impact on the surrounding areas. Professional assistance is likely to be required for most changes, but some simple ways to achieve similar outcomes can be to shift a fridge away from direct sunlight or to close doors that create draughts.

Monitoring Technology

Doing a one off assessment of your power use is helpful, but there are many products on the market designed to make managing power use easy for small businesses. As technology evolves, so will the options for energy use monitoring. Keep an eye out for one that suits your business.

Check you are getting the best deal

Small businesses can be supplied power in a number of different ways. You might have an account with a electricity retailer, or your power could form part of your rental agreement.

Electricity Retailers

Small businesses in WA that use more than 50 megawatts of electricity in a year (that's roughly \$14,000 worth of power) can shop around between different retailers to find the best deal.

If you use less power than that and your account is with Synergy, there are alternative pricing options if you use a lot of power overnight or on the weekends.

Rental agreements

Power is a material ongoing cost for businesses and should be one of the key points you bargain on when setting up your rental agreement. If you have found your power bills to be unexpectedly high after you have entered into a rental agreement, you could consider negotiating with your landlord to have the rates reviewed.

Your rental arrangements could also impact how you access solar or other alternative energy sources.

Alternative power options

There are now many different ways to source renewable energy for your business. Installing solar panels is one way to look for lower cost power. You can also consider other arrangements where you don't own the panels (or battery) but you pay for the power they produce – often at a lower rate.



Think outside the box

Challenge yourself to think of ways to reduce your power bills. Do you need all of that space for staff or can they work remotely? Do you need a large meeting room that gets used once a month? Do your automatic doors open regularly and for long periods, letting conditioned air out and putting your air conditioner under more stress?

The answer to saving on power use in your business might not just be about turning an appliance off at the switch and could lead to other ways of saving, or even other ways of going about your business.

Spruik your green credentials

Saving money on power often means that you are also doing your bit for the environment – either using renewable energy or cutting down in general. Share your story with your customers, suppliers and partners to show what you are doing for them, the environment and for the community.

For more information contact:

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