More sustainable motoring

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Four Ways Drivers Can Be More Sustainable.

Drive a lot for work? How often do you worry about how that’s affecting your carbon footprint?

Note to our readers: This article incorporates commercial links.

It is primarily aimed at salespeople but the techniques and tips can be applied by any driver.

The modern driver (particularly those who drive for work) is a very different beast to what they were even 30 years ago.

Driving, and vehicles themselves, have evolved so significantly in the last few years that if, like for many people, the car is your equivalent of a desk, it's impossible to not notice the pollution being at work every day is causing.

If you're looking for a way to make your daily commutes and business trips more sustainable you've come to the right place. In this article, we'll outline a few ways drivers can change their daily habits and outlook on driving for a greener future.

What is sustainability (and why is it important)?

Sustainability is perhaps *the* trend in the world today. From second-hand clothes to personal water bottles made from recycled plastic cups, everyone is looking for new ways to be more sustainable.

Sustainability is about being more mindful of the resources you use to protect and maintain both them and the environment for future generations. Cars, in particular, have been noted as a major cause of climate change for a number of popularised reasons.

So, unfortunately for drivers, sustainability and cars don't seem like a natural mix. But is that really the case and what can be done to make a positive impact?

How to be more sustainable:

Now that we understand the movement towards sustainability, how exactly can salespeople look to introduce these ideas into their daily commutes?

Re-think your fuel consumption

As City Population stats from 2016 and 2017 show, a significant amount of petrol is consumed every day across the world.

To become a more sustainable driver and do your bit to drive down statistics like this, you need to rethink how much fuel you consume and how you consume it.

There are two particular ways you can make an immediate impact on your fuel consumption habits — monitoring the amount of fuel you use and slowing down.

By keeping an eye on your fuel consumption you can begin to assess where you're overusing petrol and where improvements to your driving habits can be made (which we'll touch upon later).

It's worth looking to fuel cards here.

While they each have unique and different features (refer to a fuel card comparison site for more details), in short, all fuel cards provide drivers with comprehensive data regarding how frequently they're purchasing fuel and how much of it they're buying. This can be used to measure efforts to reduce consumption and provide evidence of more sustainable driving practices

With the cold hard facts of how much fuel you use you can start to apply efforts to be more sustainable. Experts at the RAC suggest that a slower, smoother drive (or at least, avoiding rapid speed changes) can reduce the amount of fuel consumed in a drive (a theory backed up by numerous studies).

And if you think premier fuel might be the answer to a more eco-friendly drive, it's not necessarily the case. Even vehicles designed specifically for the use of premium fuel won't see a more sustainable output by using the stuff, in the U.S.A. at least, although they may need it in order to run as designed. All the same in the U.K, in general higher grade fuels

(both petrol and diesel) are developed to be cleaner-burning and often provide a bit more power while at the same time producing lower emissions and better fuel consumption.

Plan each and every route

Sustainability doesn't just mean buying new products — it requires a complete change in attitudes.

Changing your attitude towards driving means less leaving things up to chance and a more thoughtful approach to the road.

It's best practice to start planning your route in-depth before departing for a meeting. That doesn't mean you have to have the journey timed to the minute, but it is becoming an increasingly popular form of sustainability to research the most eco-friendly routes and install technology that gives you more reflective results on your driving experience.

This way you can avoid uneven road surfaces, high congestion areas and longer routes, all significant causes of pollution when driving.

Keep your car in great condition

While we often view pristine sports cars as the enemy of sustainable driving, it's equally important to realise a poorly-maintained beaten-up old banger is hardly the model green vehicle.

Car maintenance is a crucial element of sustainable driving. If your car isn't in the state to reach optimum performance, how can it hope to achieve your lofty green goals? A car that's chugging away barely able to keep itself mobile is not one that can manage fuel levels thoughtfully or contend with sustainable driving methods.

Simple things you can do to improve the condition of your car and make its performance more fuel-efficient include:

- Removing any unnecessary excess weight
- Keeping tyres inflated to the recommended levels and replacing old ones
- Ensuring the radiator and cooling system is kept at a steady and operational temperature
- Avoiding overuse of the air conditioning
- Have your vehicle serviced at least as often as recommended by the manufacturer.

Extra weight and poor tyre pressure alone can massively increase driving time and demand more of your engine, both major causes of increased fuel emissions. All of these are quick-fix methods that can be checked before every drive. Jot down a checklist and ensure each trip is as eco-friendly as the last.

Drive a more sustainable vehicle

If you want a quick fix to unsustainable driving, you could always try switching to an entirely new vehicle.

It might be difficult to convince your employers to finance a more eco-friendly company car, and it will mean giving up that reliable old gas-guzzler that's helped you close many a deal, but switching to an all-electric vehicle might just be the best way to become more environmentally conscious if you're frequently out on the road.

There are a range of high-quality electric cars available now. However, be aware of some hybrid options that may be just as polluting or models that are not produced sustainably. In particular, note that in order to get the lowest emissions and optimum fuel consumption from plug-in hybrid models, they need to be recharged frequently to be able to cover as many miles as possible on electric power, rather than using petrol or diesel fuel.

Some studies suggest that the production of certain electric vehicles and batteries can be higher and more harmful than that of traditional cars.

Sustainable driving is by no means impossible, even if you're whizzing up and down the country making sales every day.

Following these tips will make an immediate impact on the performance of your work car, lessons that can be applied to personal driving and used as an example to make your company (where applicable) more sustainable overall.