

ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE

What is being Environmentally Responsible?

Environmentally responsibility refers to the consistent demonstration and follow through accountability of the understanding of your impact on the environment, including the commitment to easing the burden mankind has created on Mother Nature.

Why is it important to be environmentally responsible?

We have one planet with finite resources, and we have exponential growth in the global population, along with ever increasing life expectancy. When this is combined with the voracious en masse appetite we currently have for consumables, and incessant 'throwing away and upgrading', it becomes clear that we have set up an unsustainable way of life on planet earth. There is a very real need to take action to move over to sustainable management and care of our resources.

Although scientists, governments and quite a few private and not-for-profit groups from around the world are working toward numerous solutions to this shared global crisis, we have an obligation to each take individual responsibility for our actions, with the goal of alleviating the strain that each of us individually puts on the environment.

As business professionals, we often have the added responsibility of being role models. And that's what High Ideals is looking for in our members, and also why we have made "Environmentally Responsible" a special category within our 30 overall benchmark criteria. Excelling in this category earns the member the Environmentally Responsible Distinction and an additional special High Ideals logo to celebrate this achievement.

What's our inspiration for this?

It is all too easy in the current world conditions to criticise, blame and be negative about the environment. What we need is more people standing up to inspire and guide us to improve the situation. One could say that there is enough information available now for the majority of the world to understand there is a problem. The switch that needs to happen is to increase people's awareness about what they can do, about innovations for being environmentally responsible, and to create a call to action to get change happening at a faster pace than it has been.

It is neither practical nor realistic to wait for scientists to come up with the solutions; for governments and corporations to dramatically change their courses; or for us to simply ignore environmental problems.

We are, therefore, encouraging individuals to change their behaviour, to think critically, to be mindful of the impact of their decisions, to look for new ways of doing things, and to help others find the most suitable ways for them to do the same.

We are looking for professional people to be role models by:

- Implementing innovative ways of raising awareness in others about the benefits of being environmentally responsible
- Taking action in powerful and positive ways to make a positive environmental impact

Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of being environmentally responsible?

There are a number of variables which could 'get in the way' of someone not being environmentally responsible:

- Feeling like they're not empowered to take action
- Feeling like they don't know what to do, or how to do it
- Feeling like their contribution won't make any difference
- Accepting that limitations claimed by local councils, governments, businesses, etc are 'just the way it is' and that nothing can be changed
- Ignoring the problems
- Ignoring the information, warnings etc
- Believing that short term financial business gains excuse long term negative environmental impacts
- Thinking that the only way to make a difference will be by spending money
- Believing the planet can simply look after itself without any effort from the human family (it may well be that the planet can look after itself, however, that could well mean that it drastically reduces human population or even wipes our species out!)
- Believing we deserve what we've created

Tips for being environmentally responsible

- Increase your knowledge: Know what's happening with the environment, be informed about the various theories about how it has been caused, know what the consequences are for inaction or acting too slow. Find out as much as you can so that you're knowledge backs up your decisions.
- Start with the basics: Investigate recycling options for everything from paper and plastic to printer toner cartridges to old mobile phones and computer equipment. Investigate buying recycled products and/or only recyclable products. Investigate how to lower energy and water consumption.
- Create policies, procedures, rules etc: Whether at the office or at home, or both, create transparent policies to address environmental responsibility. Ensure everyone is aware of his or her individual responsibility. Measure the effectiveness of the policy and improve it over time in ways that are practical and relevant to you and your business. Post your policy

and your performances results where others can see them, and encourage them to ask questions about your decisions, behaviours and outcomes. Freely share what you've learned. You may wish to include your "Environmental Vision" as part of your Vision, Mission and Values Statements.

- Move beyond the basics: Seek out the next level of information and involvement for you, your home and/or your business. Look for innovations such as solar panels, water collection tanks, and more advanced technology to make a bigger positive impact.
- Engage an environmental consultant to look at your business (and/or your home) and get recommendations about current best practice that fits your budget now, and also consider your future plans and budget. The consultant may also be able to help redesign business practices to have a much lower negative environmental impact.
- Get involved with both small and large conversations about the environment: By small we mean those individual one-on-one and small group conversations about the environment that many of us are having more often these days; and large conversations means getting involved with communicating with your government representative as well as business leaders about future policy, strategies and actual actions/behaviours.

Characteristics and/or behaviours of a person who is environmentally responsible

- Environmentally aware
- Backs up statements with knowledge and experience
- Accountable for their own environmental impact
- Solution-focused
- Takes action
- Inspires others to act
- Challenges others when there seems to be no positive action

Evaluate your own perspective on being environmentally responsible

- What does 'environmentally responsible' mean to you? How do you recognise the attitude AND behaviours when you see them in yourself and/or others?
- What are your strengths in terms of being environmentally responsible? How do you leverage these and for what purpose?
- What are your opportunities for improvement in terms of being environmentally responsible? What specifically could change and who would benefit from the change and how?

- What reputation do you have in terms of being environmentally responsible? How did you earn this reputation, regardless of whether it's positive or negative? How do you feel about this reputation?
- What feedback have you received from others about whether you are environmentally responsible or not? What have you done with that feedback?
- What's the greatest lesson, personally and/or professionally, you've learnt regarding being environmentally responsible? What did do with, or how did you apply that lesson?

Improve your degree of being environmentally responsible

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- Consider the 'Tips for being environmentally-responsible' section of this document, and evaluate yourself and/or your business against those tips. Create a development plan related to your answers and the desired situation you would like to develop.
- Ask for feedback from your colleagues, staff, vendors, partners and customers about how they could see you and/or your business becoming more environmentally responsible. Remember that if you ask for their feedback and ideas, they will expect that you acknowledge their comments, and will expect a response about how you're implementing the feedback. Consider now how you'll project plan the improvements and communicate them to the people who helped you identify them.
- Consider getting coached or mentored on this area (or any other area you'd like to develop) and work with the coach to determine the actual habits that are effective and those which are negatively impacting your performance at being environmentally-responsible. If you're not sure where to start to look for a coach or mentor, the High Ideals member directory includes members who offer these services, which may be a good place to begin your search as you'll know that those practitioners have also achieved the High Ideals credentials.

Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of being environmentally responsible, the following resources may be worth considering.

Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources, the list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- <http://www.environment.gov.au/index.html> - This is the Australian Government environmental portal website for the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. There is very useful information here to help understand the current governments policies, positions, strategies and actions regarding environmental responsibility.
- <http://www.greenatwork.com/> and <http://www.greenatworktoday.com/> - This website runs a magazine to help businesses be more environmentally responsible and the Green@WorkToday page is a collection of environmental news from around the world.
- <http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/environment/> - This is an excellent article from Time Magazine online called **51 Things We Can Do to Save the Environment**. It covers everything from what individuals can do through to small, medium and large business, scientists and governments. Very comprehensive.
- **Green to Gold: How Smart Companies Use Environmental Strategy to Innovate, Create Value and Build Competitive Advantage** by Daniel Esty and Andrew Winston. This book is often referred to as the “must read” book for any business leader who wants to be more than just socially and environmentally responsible, but to also do it in such a way that distinguishes them professionally and commercially in a positive way.
- **Aiming Higher: 25 stories of how companies prosper by combining sound management and social vision** by David Bollier
- <http://www.high-ideals.com> – Check out the Member Directory section for High Ideals members who offer services which could support you, such as coaching, mentoring or consulting on High Ideals criteria/values.

Author and editor acknowledgement

High Ideals would like to acknowledge and thank Noel Posus for his work on this document. Noel Posus is the Director of Training, Research and Development for High Ideals as well as a professional coach, educator and author. To find out more about Noel, please visit his profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

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