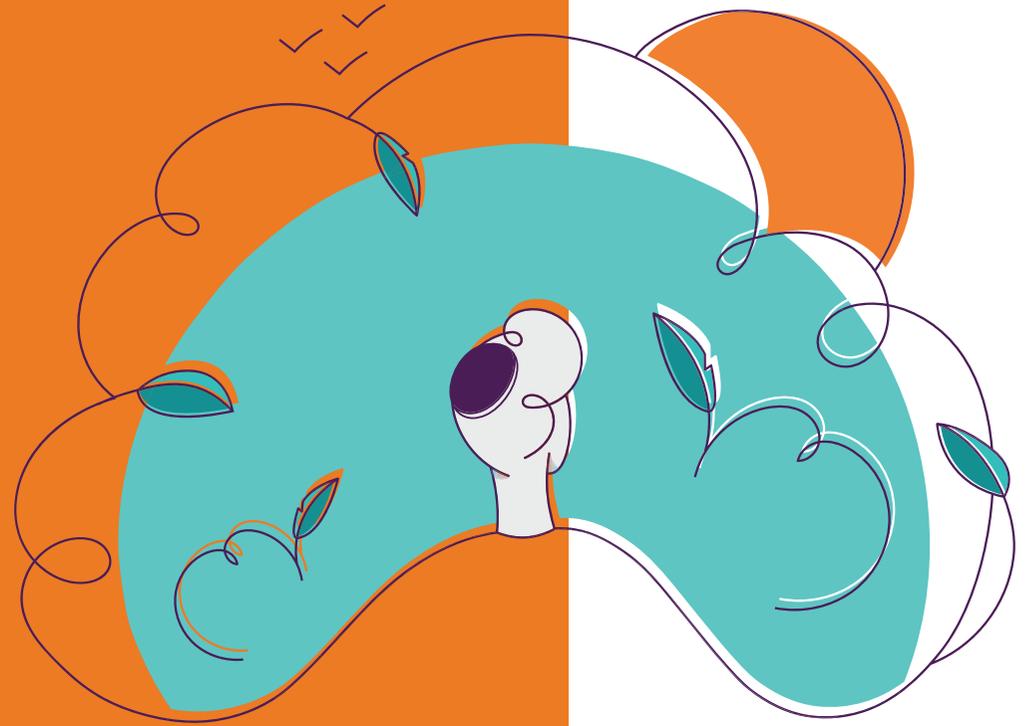




# TOP TIPS AND COMMON MISTAKES



# TOP TIPS AND COMMON MISTAKES

We caught up with Jessica Hardy, Studio Manager at Heart of the City member [David Miller Architects](#) about the steps she's taking to make the practice net zero.

She kindly shared some of her top tips and the common mistakes businesses often make when they're embarking on this new journey.



*Every business can be a force for good  
Updated in October 2021*

## Measuring your company's baseline can often seem overwhelming. What were the first steps you took to working it out?

“ The first step we took was to look at what other companies were measuring and reporting on - we found that some businesses are tracking more than others. We felt that we could confidently report on electricity, gas, waste disposal and recycling, business travel and employee commuting.”

## Did you use a carbon calculator to measure your carbon footprint?

“ I didn't use an online calculator to measure our carbon footprint as you still need to track and log all of the Kilowatt hours (KWh) produced and miles travelled. Instead, I calculated the tonnes of CO2 generated in spreadsheets using the UK government greenhouse gas (GHG) conversion figures. This allows me to explain what conversion figures I've used and know that they're in date.”



*Every business can be a force for good  
Updated in October 2021*

## What were some of the mistakes you made and what tips would you give to others to avoid them?

“ One thing I didn’t consider when calculating working from home hours was annual leave allowance. This could be shown as an average or a person’s actual time off could be included if it’s practical. As we’re a small business, I can run a report and input individuals’ actual time off.”

## As more businesses have employees working from home, they need to consider this in their baseline calculations. How did you approach this as a business?

“ I created a spreadsheet to help us track our carbon footprint for electricity and gas consumption whilst working at home. The first thing we needed to consider was people’s working hours across the year, as without this data we can’t accurately measure the impact of working from home. Things to consider are part time hours and furlough periods.

To find the electricity consumed I first researched the average estimation of how many KWh it takes to power a desktop and large display screen and light one room. I did this by using Google, comparing what different sources estimated and then finding the average. All sources had very



similar estimations, so I felt confident with this data.

I then created and embedded this sum:

*KWh to power desktop, 2 screens and lighting for 1 hour x hours worked that month x UK government GHG conversion factor for electricity.*

This calculated the kg of CO2 generated that month. If you were going to input KWh used to enter into a carbon calculator, then you only need to use this sum:

*KWh to power desktop, 2 screens and lighting for 1 hour x hours worked that month.*

Then I wanted to find the gas usage whilst working at home, so again I researched the average agreed estimation of how many KWh it takes to heat a home for an hour. I also looked into which months people don't heat their homes on average and didn't include the sum from those. I created this sum:

*KWh to heat home for 1 hour x hours worked that month x UK government GHG conversion factor for natural gas = kg of CO2 generated that month."*



*Every business can be a force for good  
Updated in October 2021*

## How did you get your colleagues on board with changes?

“ Telling employees that we have a higher energy usage when people work from home has encouraged them to think about their personal impact. Our monthly newsletter regularly highlights ways people can reduce their personal impact.

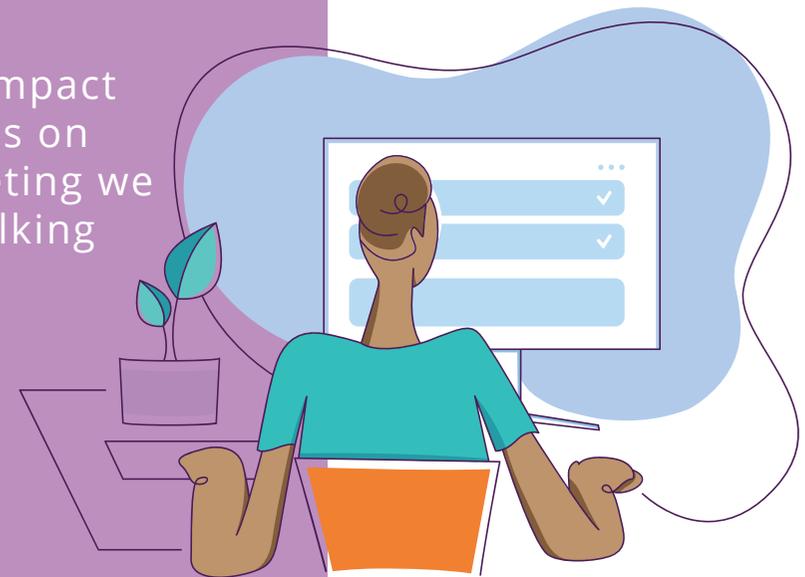
This includes habit changing ideas, plant-based recipes and positive impact activities which have had good feedback.

We've also held quizzes on sustainability on awareness days such as World Environment Day which trigger conversations about our personal impact.

We share personal carbon footprint calculation tools so people can understand their impact and where they're above average. This gives them focus areas to improve on.

We aim to make sure our team activities have a positive impact on the environment or serve as a chance to educate teams on environmental issues. At our recently quarterly team meeting we had a terrarium making class which allowed us to keep talking about carbon as we crafted our terrariums.

The feedback from achieving carbon neutral status has been really positive and the team is really proud. It's also



*Every business can be a force for good  
Updated in October 2021*

meant that sustainability is a permanent feature in our general communications.”

## **Businesses can measure their Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions through this process. What scopes did David Miller Architects take into consideration?**

// For Scope 1, we took into consideration:

- Office - gas purchased (direct and through building landlord)

For Scope 2, we took into consideration:

- Office - electricity purchased (direct and through building landlord)

For Scope 3, we took into consideration:

- Waste disposal and recycling
- Commuting
- Business travel
- Working from home - electricity purchased (direct and through building landlord)
- Working from home - gas purchased (direct and through building landlord)



*Every business can be a force for good  
Updated in October 2021*

We included Scopes 2 and 3 as we're keen to track and offset as much as possible. I think as a starting point capturing this information has helped us understand what creates most of our carbon footprint. We want to build upon this when we offset next year.

I've recently seen that paper and ink could be tracked and offset under Scope 3, so this is something I'll be looking into as we return to the office. Our aim is to go paperless, but if needed, we'll push to keep paper use to a minimum and offset the sheets used throughout the year.

We want to offset water under Scope 3, but unfortunately Thames Water can't find our meter. Instead, I'm trying to get an estimate of average annual usage so I can offset in 2022. To capture carbon produced from water, I've always offset additional tonnes to make sure it's all captured until I get better data."

### **Do you have ambitions to achieve net zero and if so, what steps will you take to get there?**

// We have ambitions to achieve net zero, and the first thing we need to do to kickstart this journey is to create a strategy to make sure we maintain our carbon neutral status. Then we need to set carbon negative and emission reducing targets. One target



*Every business can be a force for good  
Updated in October 2021*

will be to remove more carbon than we emit each year whilst also reducing our emissions by an agreed percentage.”

## Your business has now achieved carbon neutral status. What top tips would you give to other SMEs just starting out on their journey?

“ Think about what you want to include in your measuring and how you’ll get this information. For example, if you’re including commuting travel, you could ask new starters their travel method during their inductions, so you’ll know before your offsetting calculations.

Think about how you want to offset. Make sure you’re using legitimate offsetting companies and then put options to the team to see where their personal interests lie. This’ll help introduce what you’re trying to do and involve people in the process.

Add data to the trackers throughout the year and set quarterly reminders to update them, so when the time to offset comes it’s a lot easier.”



*Every business can be a force for good  
Updated in October 2021*

## How has this work benefited your business commercially?

“ As more questions around sustainability appear in tenders it’s so valuable to highlight that we measure our carbon footprint and have plans in place to improve it. To be able to state that we’re carbon neutral is really beneficial as tender assessors will recognise this and understand what it means. Clients are also looking for us to support them as they’ve signed up to take action towards the climate emergency.

It’s made us conscious about how much we spend on energy, making us look at the cost it has on running the practice and where we can make savings.

It helps employees feel positive about working for the practice - when we engaged with the team about offsetting, it had a great response. We believe this improves staff retention, as during interviews we’re noticing people are interested in our efforts regarding sustainability more and more.

Finally, it’s spurred on a practice-wide focus on sustainability, so we’ve looked into upskilling employees to give us a commercial advantage. We’ve budgeted for two technical team members to do Passivhaus training and are looking into training for our Studio Manager to develop her role in sustainability.”



Every business can be a force for good  
Updated in October 2021



*Climate for SMEs: 4 Steps to Action is funded by the City of London Corporation in support of its Climate Action Strategy targets for a net zero and resilient Square Mile*