

SRI World Group, Inc.
Environmental Assessment
May 2002

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Company Profile

SRI World Group, Inc. was founded in 1998 by social investing veteran Jay Falk. The company's seminal product was SocialFunds.com, which today is the most comprehensive personal finance site on the Internet devoted to socially responsible investing. In November 2000, the company moved from a restored garage to office space in an old cotton mill building. SRI World Group expanded its services to encompass the institutional investing market with the launch of InstitutionalShareowner.com. The company seeks to promote corporate social responsibility through its newswire service, CSRwire.com. SRI World Group also develops websites for other social investment industry companies and organizations. Currently there are eight full time employees and one part time news writer on staff.

This report outlines the current environmental impact of SRI World Group and examines company policies and the everyday practices of employees.

SRI World Group is located at:

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Environmental Policies

Page 8 of the SRI World Group Employee Manual states:

“As part of our effort to make SRI World Group a socially responsible business, employees are requested to be aware that their individual actions make a difference in our immediate environment as well as the rest of the world. As such, SRI World Group strives to maximize recycling, reduce energy use, and increase purchases of recycled, nontoxic, responsibly made products. We also attempt to be active members of our community and to support its local institutions. Employees are encouraged to make a personal effort in becoming socially responsible and contribute to our efforts in promoting social responsibility.”

Environmental Practices

SRI World Group holds an annual Earth Day environmental assessment meeting.

SRI World Group subscribes to a number of publications to stay abreast of environmental issues and to garner new ideas regarding waste reduction and environmental initiatives. These publications include [Green@Work](#) Magazine, Greenbiz newsletter, the Lohas Journal, and Winslow.

SRI World Group employs a number of environmentally responsible practices in an effort to reduce generated waste and to recycle waste when appropriate.

- All work stations are equipped with paper recycling receptacles.
- The company recycles paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, aluminum, and boxboard. Each month a staff member is assigned the responsibility of transporting the recyclables to a town recycling center. Funds from bottles that generate a refund are used for office supplies.
- All employees are on direct deposit payroll so that less paper is generated. Pay stub envelopes are reused each pay period.
- Printer cartridges are recycled to minimize the use of plastic.
- Weekly staff meeting agendas are printed on recycled paper, but all other company wide information is typically distributed electronically.
- Communal information files minimize photocopying of archived materials.
- Scrap paper is used in printers whenever available and appropriate.
- Most food waste is composted and used as chicken feed.

Purchasing and Supplies

The company strives to use environmentally benign supplies wherever possible. Most of the cleaning supplies purchased are biodegradable. Office supplies are purchased online from Staples. Although Staples is not generally considered an environmentally responsible company, it does offer recycled products. Almost all office supplies are made

from recycled materials. Office supplies that do not contain recycled content include post-it notes, pens, paper clips and staples.

Almost all kitchenware is reusable. Utensils used for office functions are technically disposable, but they are often washed and reused. Coffee filters are typically nonbleached, and food items are often organic (milk, sugar, and coffee). Food items are typically purchased from the local cooperative, ensuring that the company both buys quality, environmentally friendly food and supports the Brattleboro community.

Carbon Neutrality Statement

In 2001, SRI World Group, Inc. made a commitment to become a carbon neutral company. As a carbon neutral company, the firm offsets the carbon dioxide emissions that it generates through energy consumption during normal business operations. This commitment to being carbon neutral demonstrates how small service companies can minimize their global environmental impact.

It is nearly impossible to operate a business without creating carbon dioxide emissions. Any activity that consumes energy, including driving a car, flying in an airplane, or heating a building, produces carbon dioxide. Active engagement in the economy requires such activities and necessitates measures to mitigate the environmental impact. According to the U.S. Global Change Research Information Office, scientists generally agree that an increase in greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO₂), in the atmosphere will result in a 2.5 degree rise in global temperatures by 2050. SRI World Group believes that every company should take measures to mitigate the CO₂ emissions generated by its business operations. SRI World Group's experience shows that this can be accomplished at a very modest financial cost.

Carbon emission reduction strategies employed by SRI World Group

- Turning off computers, monitors, and printers each night
- Use of ceiling fans
- Use of reflective window shades
- Use of phone conferences in lieu of traveling
- Encouraging use of public transportation
- Periodic use of telecommuting
- Encouraging use of fuel efficient rental cars

Becoming a Carbon Neutral Company

Essentially there are two ways to be a carbon neutral company. The first is to produce no carbon dioxide emissions. While this is unrealistic, companies can lower their carbon dioxide emissions, which reduces the burden of implementing mitigation strategies. SRI World Group has actively employed these carbon dioxide reduction strategies wherever possible. For example, the company frequently uses phone conferencing and encourages the use of public transportation. In addition, reflective shades and fans are used in the office to avoid using air conditioners even though heat and electricity are included in the office lease.

The second way a company can become carbon neutral is by taking an inventory of emissions and mitigating the effects of these emissions. SRI World Group collects the staff's combined weekly transportation mileage and adds up the total transportation mileage for the year. In addition, the company estimates its electricity and oil use based on the square footage of the office. Heat and electricity must be estimated because both are supplied as part of the office lease.

Once a company's carbon dioxide emissions have been inventoried, the company must then decide on a method for counteracting them. SRI World Group identified two options for accomplishing this. Because companies cannot always use renewable energy directly, one option is to support enough renewable energy to compensate for the company's use of fossil fuels. Native Energy is a Vermont firm that allows companies and individuals to support renewable energy as part of a carbon dioxide mitigation plan. The other option the company has identified to counteract carbon dioxide emissions is planting trees. Because growing trees pull carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, they effectively act as a carbon sink. SRI World Group has chosen to plant trees to mitigate the firm's carbon dioxide production. This is done through the nonprofit organization American Forests.

American Forests provides a calculator on its website that easily converts energy consumption to carbon dioxide emissions to the number of trees that need to be planted to dollars that need to be donated in order to offset the CO₂ emissions. Although the calculator was designed for individuals, it can be easily utilized by businesses for the same purpose.

SRI World Group Report

Approximately 65 percent of SRI World Group's carbon dioxide generation comes from transportation-related activities. The 89,424 miles traveled in 2001 by SRI World Group employees is approximately 44.7 miles per day per employee. This travel resulted in the generation of 62,959 pounds of carbon dioxide, or 31 pounds per day per employee. A large percentage of this travel was the result of daily commuting, which SRI World Group includes in its calculations.

The remaining 35 percent (34,190 pounds) of SRI World Group's carbon dioxide generation comes from general office operations. This is approximately 17 pounds per day per employee. These generation rates are estimated based on averages supplied by American Forests within the calculator.

To offset the total 97,149 pounds of carbon emissions in 2001, SRI World Group will commission American Forests to plant 146 trees. Over their lifetime, these trees will absorb all of the carbon dioxide generated by SRI World Group in 2001. The cost to plant these trees will be \$146, which SRI World Group will donate to American Forests.

SRI World Group believe the resources required to calculate the company's carbon dioxide emissions and the \$146 donated to American Forests are quite reasonable expenditures for fulfilling its commitment to being a sustainable company.

2001 Estimated Carbon Emissions and Mitigation

	Quantity	Unit	Quantity	Energy unit	Pounds of CO ₂ produced	Trees required to offset CO ₂
Electricity			11,826	kWh	16,520	24.7
Oil			800	gallons	17,600	26.4
Garbage	532	lbs			51	0.0
Recycling	198	lbs			19	0.0
Automobile (Avg 24 mpg)	61,376	miles	2,577	gallons	50,499	75.7
Airplane	27,218	miles			11,962	17.9
Rail	830	miles			498	0.7
Total					97,149	145.7

Office Design

SRI World Group is headquartered in a restored cotton mill. The space has high ceilings, original wood floors, large windows, and the only walled divisions are the president's office and the conference room. Because the building faces west, natural lighting can suffice some of the time. Many environmental initiatives are limited by the lease agreement. For example, the maintenance personnel for the building provide office light bulbs. The bulbs are better than incandescent, but they are not the most energy efficient.

The partitions that separate individual workstations were made by a local carpenter using recycled windows from Dartmouth College. Almost all of the employee desks (7 out of 9) and the conference table were handmade by a local carpenter using FSC certified wood. The other two desks in the office are recycled from the company that occupied the space previously.

The office is decorated with plants and nothing else.

Employees unanimously voted for fans rather than air conditioning. The work environment can sometimes be challenging for this reason, but large windows, ceiling fans, floor fans, and specialized window shades help to control the temperature.

The walls were painted prior to the lease with standard paint rather than nontoxic.

The office contains a small kitchen area with a recycled countertop, small refrigerator, coffee maker, microwave, and water cooler.

Memberships and Affiliations

SRI World Group demonstrates its environmental commitment through participation in several membership organizations.

Business for Social Responsibility is a global partner for responsible business leaders. With more than 1,400 member and affiliated companies worldwide, BSR helps businesses achieve commercial success in ways that respect ethical values, people, communities, and the environment.

Coalition of Environmentally Responsible Economies is the leading U.S. coalition of environmental, investor, and advocacy groups working together for a sustainable future.

The *United Nations Global Compact* encompasses nine principles drawn from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ILO's Fundamental Principles on Rights at Work and the Rio Principles on Environment and Development. The Global Compact asks companies to act on these principles in their own corporate domains.

American Forests is a world leader in planting trees for environmental restoration and is a pioneer in the science and practice of urban forestry. The organization is a primary communicator of the benefits of trees and forests.

Employee Commitment

The employees of SRI World Group make conscious efforts to make use of environmental responsibility initiatives in their personal lives as well as at the office. All of the staff engage in some of the following: recycle in their homes, generate as little waste as possible, make attempts to live simply, support local initiatives, compost food waste, have home gardens, and donate to environmental causes.

While a personal commitment to environmental issues is not a requirement of employment, SRI World Group has made every effort to employ people whose personal values match those of the company.

Conclusion and Goals

Although SRI World Group does not attempt to personify environmental responsibility, overall the company does attempt to “walk its talk” regarding environmental practices. The process of assessing the company’s environmental policies and practices helped to identify some areas of improvement.

Minimizing commuting impact—Weather is a big consideration regarding employee transportation. Staff are not always able to use alternative transportation. However, employees that live close to the office have expressed that they could walk or bike to the office more often. Likewise, staff members that live further away can take better advantage of carpooling opportunities.

Reduction of food packaging—Generally, there is little waste produced in the office, but the majority of waste that is produced is from food packaging. Meals that are brought into the office are usually in reusable containers, but meals purchased often include excessive packaging. Employees can make more of a conscious effort to purchase food with less packaging and bring their own containers for bulk food purchases.

Quantification and measurement of environmental footprint—This being the first SRI World Group environmental report, it is mostly anecdotal. In subsequent years, the company will work toward quantifying the use of paper, the recycling of materials, and the generation of waste.

Communication of environmental commitment—In its three-year history, SRI World Group has produced two press releases that communicate the company's commitment to environmental issues. Some staff footnote all emails with a statement articulating SRI World Group's relationship with American Forests. By better communicating our commitment, SRI World Group can do more to lead by example.