

Why Companies should be Carbon Neutral.

By Amanda Chor and Paul Mackie

Today, we don't have to look far to see the effects climate change has on our world. Extreme weather events, melting glaciers, and rising sea levels have devastating impacts on our environment and our communities. This prompts the question; how can companies take action to combat climate change? A way to act is to become carbon neutral. Being carbon neutral gives your company an opportunity to differentiate itself as a climate leader in your industry.

What does it mean to be carbon neutral?

Companies produce carbon emissions through polluting activities. These activities include producing waste, travelling for business, shipping products to customers, heating your office building, and using electricity. **Companies can become carbon neutral by reducing their emissions to zero.**

The best way to reduce your emissions is to implement initiatives that improve the sustainability of your operations, such as optimizing recycling and saving energy. Still, your company will inevitably produce emissions to operate your business. You can subtract these remaining emissions by investing in carbon offsets. **Carbon offsets** fund projects somewhere else in the world that reduce an equivalent amount of emissions that your company produces. These carbon offset projects can be based locally and internationally and support invaluable advancements in clean renewable energy and forest conservation.

Three steps to make your company carbon neutral

Your company can become carbon neutral in three steps:

1. Measure how many carbon emissions your company produces.
2. Reduce your company's emissions through sustainability initiatives for your operations.
3. Purchase carbon offset credits to reduce your emissions to zero.

To achieve carbon neutrality, you will need to find a vendor who is an expert in delivering carbon offset solutions to businesses. [Planetair](#), [CarbonZero](#), [LivClean](#), and [Offsetters](#) are among the highest ranked Canadian offset vendors as recommended by the [David Suzuki Foundation](#). Quality and transparency of offset vendors can vary considerably so do your research and see what offset vendor is best for you.

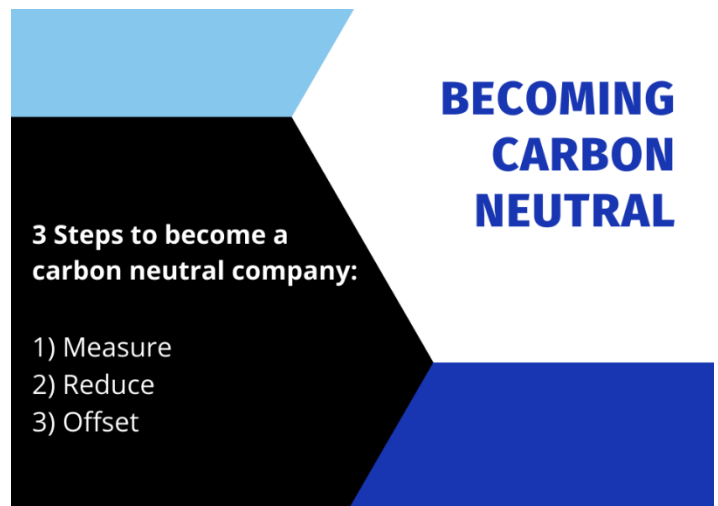


Figure 1 Becoming a carbon neutral company is a three step journey.

It is important to note that step three has received criticism mainly because step two tends to be overlooked. There is a concern that organizations will purchase offsets thinking it excuses them from

doing the hard work of improving the sustainability of their own operations. **Do not skip step two!** Turn off the lights and machinery outside of business hours, source from local suppliers, strengthen waste management practices- do what you can to reduce your own emissions while also purchasing offsets. Completing these three steps on an annual basis is an effective method to being a great carbon neutral company year over year.

Hemlock Printers: Carbon neutral for over a decade

Since 2007, [Hemlock Printers](#) has operated as a carbon neutral company. With the help of Climate Smart and Offsetters, Hemlock measures emissions, reduces emissions and purchases offsets that go toward offset projects located internationally and in British Columbia.

[Climate Smart](#) is a social enterprise that helps small to mid-sized businesses create a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and then devise an emissions reduction plan. To earn and maintain the Climate Smart certification, Hemlock's Sustainability Specialist attends workshops to learn the foundations of identifying, measuring, and reducing emissions and receives guidance from a Climate Smart Advisor who ensures Hemlock has completed their deliverables.



Figure 2 Hemlock's most recently installed Heidelberg presses are certified carbon neutral and reduce waste through sheet-size optimization.

Over the years, Hemlock has implemented initiatives as per their reduction plan. A few examples include procuring two Heidelberg presses that reduce paper waste through sheet-size optimization, switching to LED lighting to conserve electricity and installing EV chargers to encourage employee adoption of electric vehicles.

To reach zero emissions, Hemlock engages with Offsetters to purchase offset credits for forest conservation projects. They chose forest conservation because safeguarding the world's forests is a fundamental company value. Hemlock purchases offset credits which go towards the [Great Bear Rainforest Carbon Project](#) and the [Quadra Island Forestland Conservation Project](#) in British Columbia.

Hemlock Harling: Beginning the Carbon Neutral journey

Hemlock Harling proudly received Climate Smart certification in 2020. They are currently working on their emissions reduction strategy and have developed a Green Team for greater staff engagement on this very important topic. The members of the Green Team represent all areas of Hemlock Harling's operations with several projects actively being worked on. These projects include re-designing recycling station signage and adding motion sensor lighting to all areas of the building. The Hemlock Harling Green Team's largest initiative is the goal to become certified as carbon neutral by the end of 2021. To achieve this goal, they are in discussion with Offsetters to purchase high quality offsets.

What types of offset projects should you invest in?

A good rule of thumb is to **invest in high-quality offset projects that align with your company's values**. There is a diversity of projects you can invest in, including wind farms, solar energy, biogas and forest conservation. Some offset projects create incredible environmental benefits and others are not as effective. The voluntary carbon offset market is largely unregulated which makes the quality of offset projects vary considerably. When selecting an offset project, consider projects that are certified to a strong standard, such as The Gold Standard, and consider the price, offset project location, and level of vendor transparency.



Figure 3 Offsets that contribute to the The Great Bear Rainforest Carbon Project help protect the ancient, intact forests that are essential to climate stability and all forms of life.

The [Great Bear Rainforest](#) Carbon Project illustrates how offsets can greatly benefit our ecosystem. To date, this project has produced \$43 million in revenue for numerous coastal Indigenous nations which will help end destructive logging practices, promote conservation and fund invaluable stewardship programs. When you invest in the right projects, these offsets can bring about a positive change in communities around the world.

Key Takeaways

In your journey to becoming carbon neutral, remember to:

- *Make a financial and operational commitment to reduce your emissions.*
Put effort into implementing operational improvements to reduce your polluting activities and purchase meaningful offsets.
- *Choose your offset vendor and offset projects wisely.*
Not all offset vendors provide the same quality of service and offsets. Choose offset projects that resonate with your company values and are of high quality.
- *Don't be afraid to ask questions!*
Reach out to carbon neutral companies to understand their experience of the carbon neutral process.

Being carbon neutral has several benefits:

- ✓ It combats climate change.
- ✓ It builds an authentic brand around sustainability.
- ✓ It invests in offset projects that make a real difference in the world.

Becoming carbon neutral undoubtedly creates value and demonstrates climate action. If you have any questions about your company becoming carbon neutral, feel free to reach out to Amanda Chor of Hemlock Printers or Paul Mackie of Hemlock Harling.

About the Authors



Amanda Chor is the Sustainability Specialist at Hemlock Printers, one of the largest commercial printers in the Pacific Northwest and designated carbon neutral for over a decade. Amanda joined Hemlock in 2019 and is responsible for managing Hemlock’s environmental portfolio, implementing internal and external initiatives to reduce Hemlock’s carbon footprint, and representing Hemlock as a leader in the sustainability community. You can reach Amanda at achor@hemlock.com or 604-439-5113 and visit Hemlock’s [website](#).



Paul Mackie is the General Manager at Hemlock Harling with 20 years of industry experience. Paul brings a hands-on approach to his role and a customer-focused leadership style to Hemlock’s sister company, Hemlock Harling. Hemlock Harling is a full-service print, mail, e-commerce fulfillment and distribution company and a Canada Post SmartMail Marketing Expert Partner that is planning on becoming a carbon neutral business this year. You can reach Paul at paul.mackie@hemlockharling.com or 604-333-5542 and visit Hemlock Harling’s [website](#).