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Sustainability is a 'critical' issue

Sustainability is a critical issue which needs to be addressed now, warns a director of an environmental consultancy.

"In 2010, we still only have one planet, but we consume its resources at an ever-increasing pace every year, so greening is not just important - sustainability is critical, otherwise future generations will be left with few resources," says John Herbert, director of Kelcroft.

The environmental consultancy helps businesses assess, inventory and find avenues to reduce their environmental impact.

One example of precious resources being squandered is using petroleum products for disposable cutlery which ends up in landfills.

According to Herbert, in a business or customer context, it is important to support your brand and demonstrate green credentials. "Customers prefer to do business with environmentally-sensitive companies. It is also a key method to differentiate your products or services in a crowded marketplace," he says.

Cost savings of 20 per cent are common via green measures.

And Herbert says Hong Kong is a key player when it comes to environmentally-friendly buildings. However, he acknowledges that

comparisons between cities and countries are difficult because the methodology to assess whether a building is green depends on local conditions.

"The local climate in Britain, with little demand for air conditioning, couldn't be compared to Singapore," he says.

"In Hong Kong, we have a larger constructed area of independently certified green buildings per capita than any other city on the planet."

All the green buildings in Hong Kong are listed at the BEAM Society website, www.hk-beam.org.hk.

"I would like to see the Hong Kong green-building rating tool, BEAM, developed and customised for different types of buildings - for example, schools, residences and shopping malls," he says.

During Eco-Expo Asia 2009, Herbert conducted a survey of exhibitors and was stunned to learn that 98 per cent of those eco-friendly companies did not even know their own carbon footprint.

"Green and low-carbon claims need to be backed up with independent third-party certification. Many companies and organisations that promote green in theory need to step up to the plate."

According to Herbert, there are similarities between greening an office and a home.

"Increased awareness and education



is the key, and it's part of our business. Today, there are many products, such as cleaning products, that are healthier to use than traditional cleaning agents and don't cost the earth."

Herbert's Sai Kung home reflects his green commitment. Solar shades lower the cooling load, while waste water from

dehumidifiers and air-conditioning units is used to water the garden. Increased glazing provides natural daylight, toilets have dual-flushing cisterns, waste is separated for recycling and all internal lighting is energy efficient through the use of compact fluorescent bulbs.

"We need to think more about



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sustainability even before we shop. Reuse is better than recycling, recycling is better than creating waste for landfills. There are numerous opportunities, but not all will be immediately apparent. That's where a professional can help you map and implement a green plan," he says.