

Travel footprinting

Measure and manage the carbon emissions from business travel and commuting

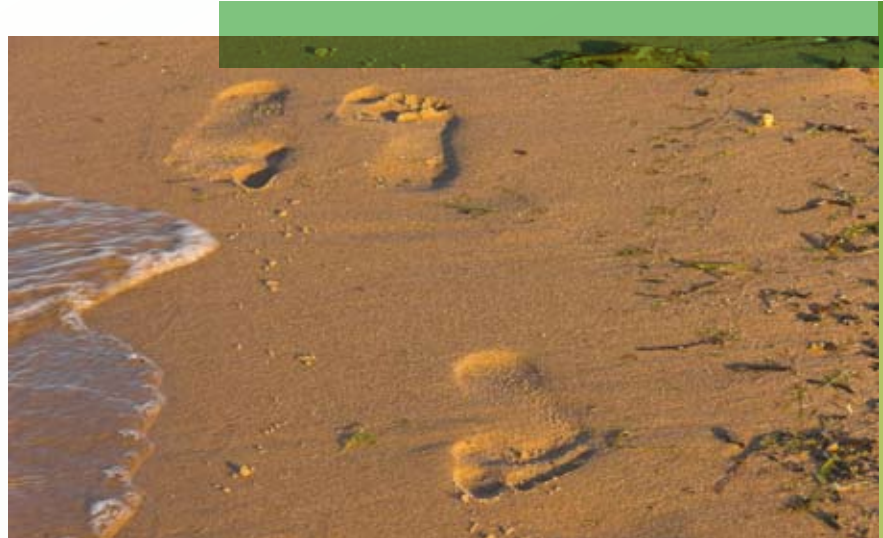
What's the carbon management issue?

Trains, boats and planes... and cars, taxis, and buses too. For many companies, the workplace extends far beyond the office itself as their employees travel around the country or even around the world. Even those staff who never leave the building have to get to it somehow – the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from employee travel are a large and often forgotten part of the total carbon footprint.

Whether it is travel for business purposes or commuting to work, both are areas which need careful attention as organisations begin to work on reducing emissions from their products and operations.

The Greenhouse Gas Protocol categorises these emissions as 'Scope 3' and, although optional for formal reporting purposes, they provide "...an opportunity to be innovative in GHG management."

With planning and ingenuity there are savings to be made. But the importance of the travel budget goes beyond its environmental implications – it affects the profitability of the business and the happiness of the people who work in it. Travel expenses can represent a significant cost both in direct expense submissions and lost working-time; commuting problems can have a major impact on how content employees are.



"In 2004, the transport sector was responsible for around 27% of total UK carbon dioxide emissions."

'Climate Change:
The UK Programme 2006'
Defra (March 2006).

To cut both emissions and costs, organisations need to have an understanding of how and why their employees make their travel choices. Unfortunately all too often this understanding is missing and no-one knows exactly what they are dealing with.

The employees themselves often have little idea of the carbon impact of the travel decisions they make, and in the absence of hard data, organisations will not know the size of the problem, where the greatest issues lie, or in what way they should try to influence employee behaviour.

This is an area of CO₂ emissions which is currently rarely measured by businesses, and if you can't measure it you can't manage it.

What's the solution?

Organisations can now accurately measure the CO₂ emissions from their business travel and commuting. Our travel footprinting approach provides manual and automated tools for capturing the mode and mileage of weekly or monthly travel. This raw data is then converted into CO₂ emissions using Defra's official guidelines (or, in non-UK countries, other recognised conversion factors).

From this, organisations can see:

- The CO₂ footprint of a business area (for example, project)
- The source of emissions, by mode of transport
- The proportion of emissions which could be managed through the regular expenses system
- The CO₂ footprint of individuals.

This approach also provides a baseline 'footprint' measurement for travel from which an organisation can begin to manage change from a position of knowledge.

How to get started?

IBM has used travel footprinting successfully within its UK consulting business to measure the carbon footprint of some client engagements. It has proved easy to use and provided insights into the travel choices of our consultants. Figure 1, below, provides an illustration.

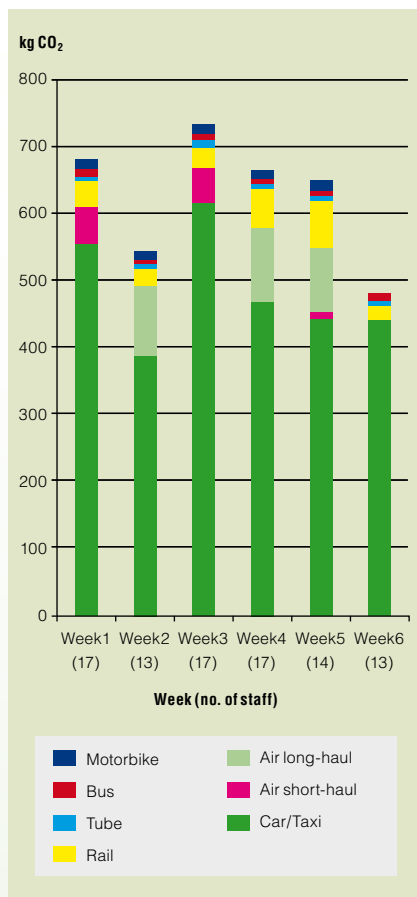


Figure 1: Footprint of a business area

The general approach we have used on engagements is presented in Figure 2, below. However, this can be adjusted in line with your specific needs.

1. Collect baseline information
2. Establish targets, carrots and sticks
3. Agree and implement changes
4. Collect new information
5. Assess success

Figure 2: Engagement framework

Having analysed the travel footprint of your organisation, IBM can help you shape the solution to manage and reduce it. Structured workshops with employees can help uncover why people make the travel choices they do, and identify possible ways to change behaviour. To complement this our online idea exchange solution allows employees to “brainstorm” ideas on both the problem and the possible solutions, through a website. Solutions might go to the heart of your pay and reward system or they may point to ingrained cultural behaviour which needs to be addressed.

In addition we can help to enhance your expenses system so that, in future, emissions associated with business travel can be tracked automatically.

One of the key issues to resolve is what level of reduction in emissions you want to achieve. Should this be a percentage reduction from the baseline, or an absolute target? Should all areas of business have the same targets? What would be the impact of the desired change on other areas of the business? What will you do in cases where reduction in CO₂ emissions is at odds with cost reductions (for example, train versus plane)? And what will you do to encourage the desired change in travel patterns, i.e. what ‘carrots’ and what ‘sticks’ will you use?

Once appropriate influencing measures have been implemented, and the behaviour change begins to be apparent, the same footprinting approach can be used to track the impact of the changes.

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