

Carbon Handprint: What is it, and how can you contribute?

You may have heard the term carbon footprint commonly used, but have you ever heard of a carbon handprint? Your carbon footprint, according to Nature.org, is the amount of greenhouse gasses generated by our actions. An example would be driving your car or even working on your computer. Both activities contribute to our carbon footprint. A carbon handprint is just the opposite. Any action that has a positive effect on carbon emissions is considered a “handprint.”¹ Think of driving an electric car or inventing sustainable technology that reduces the amount of greenhouse gas emissions. The goal is to have your carbon handprint larger than your footprint. Unless a company has committed to decarbonization, you most likely will not hear the term handprint used.

To understand how our carbon handprints can reduce our carbon footprints, we need to understand that a system-level change is necessary. This means enacting change to our “economic system to be less dependent on the fossil fuels mostly responsible for human-caused greenhouse gas emissions.”² While one company achieving a handprint larger than their footprint is an incredible feat; it is not enough to end global climate change.

There are many benefits to defining a carbon handprint. A handprint establishes a company’s sustainability efforts. Customers are drawn to businesses that clearly define their environmental goals. They appreciate knowing that by using your service or product, they are helping contribute to a larger handprint. Having these goals also helps future company service or product development by having a clear set of the following parameters.

Now, how can your company begin leaving handprints? Simple switches such as using LED luminaires and lighting controls, establishing carpool programs or incentivizing the use of public transportation, walking or biking, and limiting the number of wasted resources will enlarge your handprint. These actions can also be taken home to start positive work in your community. At our company sixteen5hundred, our carbon handprint is improved through our services, impacting the commercial building stock, primarily the makeup of small and medium businesses. Leaving footprints is easy, but so are handprints. All you have to do is get creative and start taking action!

¹ Gregory A. Norris, “Introducing Handprints: A Net-Positive Approach to Sustainability,” Harvard Extension School Blog, Nov. 30, 2017

<https://extension.harvard.edu/blog/introducing-handprints-a-net-positive-approach-to-sustainability/>

² Duncan Nobel, “Does Your Carbon Handprint Reduce or Increase Your Carbon Footprint?,” LinkedIn Pulse, June 26, 2018

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/does-your-carbon-handprint-reduce-increase-footprint-duncan-noble/?articleId=6417395098199429120>