

10 Ways to Slash Your Business's Gas Costs

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If you thought you were having a nightmare the last time you drove past a gas station, sorry -- those prices are real. And they're not going away.

This year is forecast to see the [highest U.S. gas prices ever](#). After hitting \$4-a-gallon highs in 2008, gas prices declined, but now they're back in the \$4 neighborhood and predicted to stay there. Expect prices to peak in the summer, when vacationing families drive up demand.

For many small businesses, high gas prices eat away at profit margins.

Mobile businesses or ones with a traveling sales force can be especially hard-hit.

What can you do to keep gas costs down at your business? Here are ten tips:

- 1. Shop around.** Shop around. I used to laugh at my dad for compulsively comparing gas prices as we drove and then stopping to fill up at the cheapest one, but I'm done laughing now. Gas prices do vary from station to station, and those pennies per gallon saved can really add up.
- 2. Use Technology.** Check out gas-comparison apps like [Cheap Gas](#) or [GasBuddy](#) to home in on cheaper prices when you're on the go.
- 3. Don't overlook grocery stores.** If your company is a Costco member, for instance, you might fill up at their gas stations, where prices are usually below average. Or, if you shop Safeway, Publix and other grocery stores that have gas stations, you may be able to apply store credits against your gas bill. These grocery-store stations may also offer [discounted gas cards](#).
- 4. Consider dumping your vehicles.** If you've been doing your own shipping or deliveries, it might be time to investigate whether to book low-cost back-hauling space. By buying a delivery firm's empty capacity on return trips from deliveries, you can save over paying for your own gas and maintenance.
- 5. Plot your route.** Use MapQuest to know exactly where you're going, so you don't get lost. If it's a regular route you drive, try to eliminate [left turns](#), which involve more idling than right turns. When UPS did, the delivery service cut 20 million miles of driving. Then, try to book more appointments or deliveries along your route so you don't have to come back another day.
- 6. Slow down.** Speeding burns more gas, so stay [under the speed limit](#). After Staples installed devices that keep its trucks from exceeding 60 miles per hour, the office-supply giant shaved \$8 million off its fuel costs.
- 7. See who's nearest.** The franchise chain [AdvantaClean](#), call-center employees consult maps to make sure they've got the nearest franchise before deciding which franchise gets a client.
- 8. Do work on site.** Instead of hauling upholstery work back to the shop just to bring it back again, leather and plastic restoration franchise [Fibrenew](#) has switched to doing work at customers' locations.
- 9. Reschedule.** At the in-home senior-care franchise [Senior Helpers](#), some caregivers' schedules were changed from three shorter days a week to two longer ones -- saving each caregiver a days' worth of driving. If you're paying commuting costs for workers, consider letting some staff work remotely or on a four-day schedule.
- 10. Take training virtual.** Rather than have sales staff attend in-person training, let them participate in a [company Webinar](#) or even watch a recording later.

How do you save on gas costs at your business? Leave a comment and add to our tips.