

Successful Workplace Recycling Guide

Your guide to optimum recycling rates
within processing & distribution centres

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Why recycle in the workplace?

Save money

General waste collections can cost twice as much as recycling collections, so by increasing your recycling rates, you can drastically reduce your waste collection costs.

Also, by implementing the right bins for the right job in your facility, you can make massive operational savings & significantly reduce the time spent on waste management by your cleaning staff.

Demonstrate your organisation's commitment to sustainability

In today's world, the pressure put on large corporations to improve their environmental footprint is huge. Through the power of social media, not only the general public but your customers, stakeholders & staff are demanding more action to support the environment. Implementing an effective recycling system can be a great way to show that your company cares about sustainability and the environment.



Introduction

Improve your company culture & boost employee engagement

It's been proven many times that a good corporate responsibility scheme can actually boost employee engagement. Studies have shown that by empowering your employees to be able to make a positive impact on the environment, you can not only improve your organisation's sustainability, but also have more engaged employees and a better company culture.

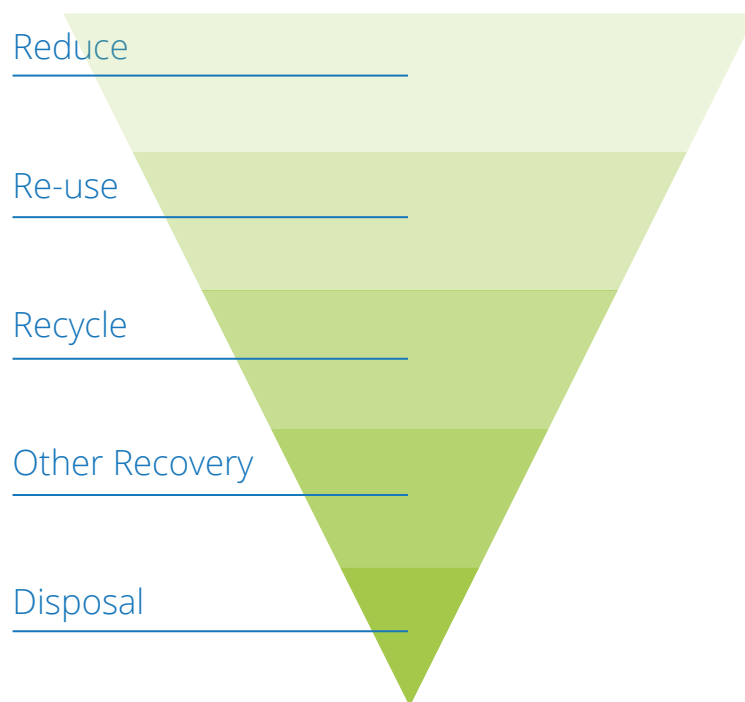


Preserve the planet for our future generations

This really goes without saying, but the more your company can recycle, the more waste you are diverting from landfill. This means you are not only contributing to reducing the harmful greenhouse gases these landfill sites emit, but you're also reducing the need for extracting and processing raw materials, which is an extremely high-energy process.

What is the hierarchy of waste?

Using the hierarchy of waste is a great way to prioritise how to reduce your waste, working towards being a zero-waste facility. Start by reducing the amount of waste you produce in the first place, and working down the hierarchy, you will minimise the negative impact your waste has on the environment.



Reduce – Reducing your waste volume and the impact it has on the environment

Re-use – Re-using waste products without any other processing

Recycle – Sending your waste to be processed into other materials & products

Other Recovery – Sending your waste to be used to produce energy or fuels

Disposal – The last resort – Sending your waste to landfill or incineration

Optimising your recycling solutions

Refreshing your recycling systems can get costly, so it's important to ensure that you get the most out of a new system, without breaking the bank.

What type of bins do I need?

For optimum efficiency, you'll need to carefully consider which bins you use in which environment. Simply having the same bins throughout your facility for use in all applications & areas will result in a compromise in both your recycling & operational efficiencies.

For example, the key thing to consider in processing and packaging areas will be waste volume. Depending on your industry, this type of environment will often create high volumes of bulky packaging waste which can be difficult to manage. In these circumstances it's vital to have a solution which can easily cope with such high waste volume. If you use a waste compactor, then you'll need a solution compatible with that, for example perforated liners which allow the air to be easily pushed out when the waste is compacted.

In a front-of-house environment, however, the needs will be completely different, and aesthetics will be far more of a priority, but waste volumes will be far lower. Within food preparation and staff eating areas, you're likely to have a range of different waste streams, including a range of different plastic packaging, and of course food waste.



What waste streams do I need?

The first thing to consider here is what waste streams you have collected at your site. Obviously, if you only have general waste & mixed recycling collected, there's no point in spending money on a recycling scheme that segregates recycling into 5 separate streams. If you want to segregate your waste better than you are currently, then the first thing to do is talk to your waste collector, or maybe even find a new one. Once these back-of-house processes are set up, it's time to start thinking about how to effectively segregate the waste. You may even consider using multiple waste collectors.

Industrial & manufacturing environments often produce a large amount of a particular waste stream. Processing & packaging areas will often have a particular type of plastic, or other packaging waste, produced in large quantities. If the quantity is high enough, it could be worthwhile recycling this waste, even though it's typically put in general waste.

However, there are often other waste streams that you may be producing a lot of. An analysis of your waste may reveal that there could be an opportunity to recycle a particular item that would not usually be recycled. Always bear in mind that almost anything can be recycled, but it's often not commercially viable unless you produce large quantities.



What signage do I need?

It's the signage that can make or break the success of a recycling scheme. This needs to be given careful consideration, especially if you're starting to recycle more or different waste streams than before. So here are 3 pointers to help you set up the most effective signage possible, thereby increasing your recycling rates & decreasing general waste collection costs.



Keep it concise

It may be tempting to have long lists of what can & can't go in each waste stream, thinking that this makes it very clear to staff what goes where. In reality, however, staff are unlikely to read every word, and the really important information can get lost in the noise. It's usually more effective to have literature in the form of a poster near the station giving more details of the waste streams and keeping the signage on the bin itself as simple and concise as possible.

Making recycling easy & decreasing contamination

Make it specific

If there are certain items that your staff are repeatedly disposing of incorrectly, then just a little more information about each waste stream could go a long way. For example, if employees are putting shrink-wrap in the general waste stream, you may want something saying 'no shrink-wrap' on your general waste aperture. If you can solve problems specific to your facility, this will go a long way toward eliminating contaminated recyclable waste.

Make it as clear as possible

Everything about the design of your recycling scheme should be designed to make recycling as easy as possible for your staff, thereby increasing recycling rates & reducing contamination

We recommend colour-coding the waste streams to make things as clear as possible. Where possible, use the WRAP colours for waste streams. The Waste Resource Action Program (WRAP) is a governing body which seeks to standardise waste recycling across the country, by using standard colours, symbols & signage. You'll recognise these symbols & colours from your household recycling, especially at your local civic amenity centre. These waste streams won't always perfectly translate into how you recycle at work, but by using the colours & symbols where possible, you'll make it easier for staff to identify waste streams.



Making recycling easy & decreasing contamination

How many bins do I need?

There are 2 main factors that will affect this: the density of your staff and they type & volume of waste you produce. For example, a packaging area will typically have a density of people, and a high volume of waste created. A modern warehouse, however, with advanced automation and a very low density of people, will create far less waste, and therefore have very different needs.

The type of operation in a particular area will also determine how many bins will be needed. For example, in an area where time is at a premium and maximum employee efficiency is vital, you won't want your staff walking too far to dispose of their waste, so individual bins next to each worker's space may well be worth the investment. In other areas, however, it may make more sense to have higher-capacity bins, but less of them.



Engaging employees in recycling

A well-designed recycling solution will only go so far. If your employees aren't engaged in your recycling scheme, they won't buy into it, and your recycling rates will suffer. A successful recycling campaign must be designed with staff engagement in mind. So here are a few pointers to get your staff to buy into your plans

Make it simple

Don't over-complicate things. Recycling can be complicated, so keep your system as straightforward as you possibly can. You might think that splitting your waste into multiple waste streams will improve your recycling rates, but this can often lead to confusion among staff instead.



Make it fun

You might not have thought it possible, but recycling can be fun! By injecting something playful and interesting into your recycling, you will naturally engage more staff. For some inspiration on how to make recycling fun, check out some of the work by Hubbub, an environmental charity. They've run several campaigns designed to encourage recycling & reduce littering among the general public, and each one is designed to engage people in a fun & quirky way.

Incentivise staff



The age-old 'carrot for the donkey' technique. By using reverse vending machines, you can reward your employees for doing the right thing. These machines allow you to set up an incentive system which can reward employees with anything from a discount at the staff restaurant to a donation to charity.



What does successful recycling look like in a food production or preparation facility?

Different facilities may recycle more of different things. For example, some facilities recycle shrink-wrap & other soft plastics, but some don't get through enough of these materials to make it worthwhile. So the percentages of recycled waste may vary significantly.

A good guide is that if all waste is correctly segregated, mixed recycling should take up 60-80% of waste volume compared to general waste. However this figure can often vary dramatically depending on the types of waste your facility produces.

So if your recycling levels are below this, then your first priority should be improving this. If your levels of mixed recycling are already good, then there's plenty more you can do.



Continuously improving

Even if you send zero waste to landfill, there's likely to still be room for improvement. If you remember the hierarchy of waste, your first priority should be to reduce the amount of waste you produce. In this sector alone, you can always improve: in an industrial facility, whatever your industry, there is almost always scope to reduce the waste created by your processes. This alone is a never-ending task. Combine this within reducing waste within the offices & staff eating areas throughout your facility, and you have plenty of improvements to make!

However, even when just sticking to recycling, there's still always room for improvement.

New waste streams

If your mixed recycling rates are already high, then it could be time to look at recycling more waste. For example, start to recycle more types of packaging, or analyse your production processes to see if there is any scope to recycle a particular waste stream that you produce a lot of, but is currently just added to the general waste.



Monitoring results

Continuous investment in improvement

The reality is that to keep improving your recycling, you'll need to keep investing in better recycling solutions. Whether that be more or better waste stations, more waste streams collected, or ensuring that your waste is all diverted from landfill, successful recycling is likely to involve some investment. Being prepared and willing for this is important in continuous recycling improvement. However, bear in mind that the most expensive waste collection is for general waste. As more tariffs are placed on waste sent to landfill, the expense of recycling is only going to go down, and the cost of doing nothing is only going to increase.

The ultimate goal

As you strive to continuously improve your recycling & waste management, don't lose sight of the bigger picture. The guiding principle behind all your efforts should be the hierarchy of waste. Never forget that recycling should always be your third option after reducing your waste volume and re-using waste products. If you find that there's a certain item that you're putting a lot of into general waste, remember that the first question to ask yourself is; 'can I reduce the amount of this waste I produce, or stop it altogether?'. Then see if you can re-use it in some way, then consider if it's recyclable. Only when you start thinking like this will you really make an impact on your waste's carbon footprint.

Your move next...

Hopefully this guide has helped you. For more information, or to chat with one of our experts, feel free to contact us.

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