

reducing waste

wrap

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how much waste are you producing? – reducing waste in your business



reducing waste

What's in this fact file?

- **Identify how much waste material you're generating.**
- **Cut down the volume of materials you handle.**
- **Get more out of the materials you do use.**

Over half of all hospitality businesses know how much it costs them to dispose of their waste - but few know what products are being thrown away and how much they are wasting.

Most businesses find that, when they embark on a waste minimisation programme, they uncover wastage of packaging materials, food, drinks, cleaning materials and more. Reducing the use of these materials lowers not only the cost of dealing with waste, but purchasing costs too.

So before you embark on a waste minimisation programme, it's essential to understand how much you can save now within your current contract, and what changes to the contract will deliver greater savings in the future.



how much waste is your business generating?

If you don't know how much waste you're producing, or how much of it comes from your suppliers' packaging (and what it costs you to dispose of it), you won't know how much you can reduce it – and how much money you could save.

Negotiate with suppliers

By looking closely at your waste streams, you might find – as many have – that you can **stop buying from companies that are unwilling to reduce their packaging**, and instead buy higher quality products from others that will actually take back their packaging.

When negotiating with suppliers, **get into the habit of discussing packaging**, its use and disposal. The more this happens, the more suppliers will consider reducing packaging, which will benefit your business, and businesses throughout the sector. Why pay for something you don't need and then pay to have it removed?

Even better, you could also **improve the quality of your service as well as cut waste disposal costs**.



what exactly is in your waste?

In fact file 3 you'll find out how to cut costs immediately by reviewing waste contracts.

But this fact file is about making medium- to long-term cost savings, and that requires a better understanding of what makes up your waste stream. Assess this, and the weight of each element of your waste, and it will help you identify the most beneficial long-term contract for your business – and also target waste reduction measures that will have great benefits with minimal effort and/or investment.



figure 1 - what's in the bin?

| Category | B&B | Guesthouse | Hotel | Pub |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | % | % | % | % |
| Paper | 20.31 | 13.66 | 11.93 | 6.96 |
| Cardboard | 9.95 | 7.68 | 7.16 | 10.00 |
| Glass | 12.47 | 14.55 | 10.16 | 32.13 |
| Steel and aluminium cans and tins | 3.38 | 2.01 | 4.82 | 2.45 |
| | 46.10 | 37.90 | 34.07 | 51.54 |
| Plastic (containers and film) | 14.94 | 10.84 | 8.54 | 6.91 |
| Food waste | 28.38 | 39.20 | 53.83 | 31.10 |
| Other | 10.57 | 12.06 | 3.56 | 10.45 |
| Total % | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

Source: adapted from Waste Counts (www.business.brookes.ac.uk/research/ceshi/waste_counts_ebook.pdf)



If your business has no data about the volume or weight of waste sent to landfill each year, then you should find out. It will help you implement a waste minimisation strategy and assess the relative costs and savings from management.

You can achieve this in one of three ways.

1. Ask your waste contractor to provide you with data about the volume of waste they have collected from you. Make sure the data indicates the actual fill level or weight of each bin emptied, rather than just the number of bins emptied.
2. Commission a detailed waste audit – it will tell you the precise components of your waste, and may reveal potentially hazardous items that should be separated out from the general waste stream.
3. Run a rule-of-thumb assessment for each site – ask your staff to help you if necessary. Annex 5 contains worksheets that will help you (or each business unit) to estimate the volume and weight of waste your business produces.



set targets

Once you know how much waste you produce, you can identify potential savings and set targets for reducing waste.

Targets are useful because they give business units something to aim for, and they encourage monitoring. Make them realistic though – it is better to set a target that can be achieved. Unattainable ones can result in disappointment and a lack of motivation. Bonus or reward schemes or partnerships with local charities can be an effective means of driving forward waste minimisation.

Break it down

Most hotels are unlikely to weigh the waste they produce each day, but a regular (for example six monthly) review of the weight, volume and/or composition of waste can help you identify ways to deliver the most significant savings.

If you have not tackled waste minimisation yet, you can expect to reduce waste volumes by up to 10% in the first year of your programme – even without factoring in the savings potential of recycling services.



Case study

Setting targets for waste minimisation

Strattons is an eight-bedroom independent country hotel in Swaffham, Norfolk.

Owner-managers Les and Vanessa Scott embraced the concept of sustainability after undergoing a waste and energy audit – and waste reduction and recycling are now second nature to everyone involved.

All waste including recyclable material is weighed to ascertain what is being produced, and identify where improvements can be made. By recording and managing the hotel's waste they now send just **2% of their waste to landfill**. Even small improvements make a difference – for example using a laminated wipe-clean sheet for the housekeeping schedule, instead of printing paper copies each day.

reducing the burden of waste

Generally, businesses reduce waste volumes and costs by adopting a waste strategy commonly known as the '3 Rs' (reduce, reuse and recycle).

Step 1 – Review purchasing policies

The simplest way to eliminate waste is to focus on the range of products you purchase. Many businesses, especially those without central purchasing staff or departments, buy a wider range of products than they really need. A review of the purchasing ledger often reveals things like unnecessary stationery supplies, cleaning fluids that are no longer used, or foods that perish before reaching customers' plates. Eliminating these reduces both waste and purchasing costs; it also reduces the risk of potentially hazardous substances entering the waste stream.

Top tip: For greatest impact, focus the initial review of purchasing on perishable items such as food to identify whether these are being thrown away before even reaching consumers.

Step 2 - Reduce wastes

Packaging includes wooden pallets and plastic trays as well as cardboard and plastic shrink-wrap. These materials make up a large proportion of hospitality waste (see Figure 1); cardboard and polystyrene packaging are particularly bulky.

You can reduce your waste volume by up to 35% by selecting products with minimal packaging or asking suppliers to take packaging back. Remember that, as the customer, you pay for the packaging and then pay again to have it taken away by a waste contractor.

Top tip: When entering into an agreement with a supplier, you should negotiate a requirement for the supplier to take back packaging if possible.

Step 3 - Replace single use products with multi-use alternatives

Replacing single use items with reusable products can reduce the total weight of waste

by 8%. Single use products are often more expensive than their reusable alternatives too. Some examples of once only items that can simply be replaced without significant health and safety implications include:

- good quality rechargeable batteries. These have a lower running cost over their lifespan and save on waste disposal costs (batteries are classed as hazardous waste);
- fabric instead of plastic bags for guest laundry;
- individual mugs for staff and no plastic cups (except in swimming pool areas);
- wall mounted dispensers containing high quality products instead of individual soap and shampoo packs (but check with your quality rating agency first).

If quality and image is important, then trial these products (especially the dispensers) in a small number of guest rooms or staff areas first.



The Waste & Resources Action Programme

The Old Academy
21 Horse Fair
Banbury
OX16 0AH

Tel: 01295 819900
Fax: 01295 819911
website: www.wrap.org.uk

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