

BY CHRIS HOWARD

# WHY REDUCING AND RECYCLING WASTE MAKES BUSINESS SENSE

For many organisations in the south east, separating waste for recycling has become good practice, but there is no doubt that much more can be done – waste can be reduced, diverse material streams recycled and habits changed. So why does taking a long, hard look at your waste make such good business sense?

Using their expert knowledge gained from operating in the resource management and recycling sector for many years, Kent-based resource management and recycling specialist, Countrystyle Recycling Ltd provides the reasoning behind making sure businesses are doing all they can to minimise waste and to max out on recycling. “We have helped businesses of all shapes and sizes work out how much waste they generate, how best to reduce waste in its purest sense, and how to think differently about waste. Managed correctly materials in a business’s waste stream have value and can be recycled,” says Chris Howard, managing director of Countrystyle.

## WHY DO IT? SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT

Reducing and recycling waste has obvious environmental benefits including saving valuable resources, reducing energy use and preventing pollution. In a landfill site, many types of waste generate harmful

## IN THEIR OWN HOMES, MANY PEOPLE DILIGENTLY REDUCE AND RECYCLE THE WASTE THAT THEY PRODUCE, UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS IT BRINGS – HOWEVER, DOES THIS BEHAVIOUR TRANSFER TO THE WORK PLACE?

greenhouse gasses. Biodegradable waste, such as food waste and green waste, produces methane which is 23 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. In addition, making new products from recycled materials requires less energy than producing products from virgin materials.

## SAVE MONEY

But for a business, one of the more practical reasons to reduce waste and recycle is the cost savings that can be achieved. Most businesses pay for waste collection services. Plus with landfill tax having reached £80 per tonne in April of this year, disposing of waste is becoming a very expensive problem. Therefore understanding where your waste is coming from, reducing this where possible and ensuring that you have recycling processes in place will deliver results on your bottom line.

## IMPROVE YOUR REPUTATION

Dealing with your waste in a responsible manner says a lot about your business. Recycling demonstrates a commitment to the environment and shows that you are

an organisation that cares about the way it behaves and its impact on its surroundings. This can go a long way to improve your reputation with customers and the local community.

## GETTING STARTED WHAT'S IN YOUR WASTE?

The first step is to get a full understanding of the waste your business produces. Conduct an audit of all the waste that your company produces by monitoring what is thrown away across several weeks. If possible, try and list the types and amounts of waste your staff, and where applicable customers, throw away. Contact your waste disposal contractor – they should be able to help with identifying what waste is produced.

**TOP TIP:** If your current service provider is unable to offer the recycling services you need, consider changing contractors.

For offices, waste streams are most frequently white paper, cardboard, toner and ink cartridges, old computers and other defunct electronics and food packaging such as plastic bottles and aluminium cans. For retail and manufacturing businesses, waste streams can be far more varied (and challenging in terms of recycling) from scrap metal and old tyres to food waste and plastic wrapping.

“We love a challenge,” says Chris Howard, Managing Director of Countrystyle. “We offer a complete service for our customers, from collection to processing, and we thrive on coming up with innovative solutions for the trickiest of waste streams.”

**TOP TIP:** Check what can and cannot be recycled with your waste contractor, you may be surprised at what you are able to recycle now.

## WHERE TO PUT IT

Once you know what materials you have that can be recycled, you can plan your waste reduction and recycling programme. You need to consider what bins and containers are required both internally and externally and work out where these will be best placed – often alongside your rubbish bins is a sensible idea as this makes people think twice as to which bin to use. Your waste contractor can visit your site to help advise on this.

**TOP TIP:** In an office environment, remove all the bins from next to desks to encourage staff to use the recycling bins provided.

## COMMUNICATION AND BUY IN

Make sure your scheme has management support and is well communicated to all involved to ensure maximum participation. Staff training at the launch of your waste reduction and recycling programme is essential to make sure you achieve your aims. Make sure signage is clear so staff and customers alike know what goes where.

**TOP TIP:** Consider establishing a ‘green team’ of interested and enthusiastic employees to help ensure company-wide buy-in of your scheme.

## WHERE DOES IT GO?

Most waste and recycling companies should be able to provide reporting on where your waste goes, how much of it there is and where it ultimately ends up.

“A detailed audit trail of where waste ends up is becoming more and more important,” explains Chris Howard.

“Customers want to know the ‘footprint’ that businesses are having on the environment and part of this is ensuring that waste is handled and disposed of in a responsible and environmentally friendly manner.”

## EXPANDING YOUR PROGRAMME

Once you are confident that your waste reduction and recycling programme is working well, look to see what more can be done. Perhaps there are more challenging waste streams you haven’t yet tackled? Perhaps you can reduce your waste further by trying to become a paper-free office or by repairing broken equipment instead of replacing it? Again, talk to your waste contractor about what else you are able to do.

**TOP TIP:** Ask your supply chain to help you – perhaps they can reduce the amount of packaging they send you or only use materials that can be easily recycled.

Finally, don’t forget to close the loop by trying to always buy recycled products and make use of reused products where possible.

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