

Top 60 Waste Reduction Tips For Business

(Based on a list originally developed by the Eco-Efficiency Centre at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia; adapted for use in Ontario with permission.)

1. Know Your Waste - Understanding what your wastes are and how much waste your company is generating will help you to develop the most cost effective, waste reduction program.
2. Keep up-to-date with existing provincial and municipal legislation concerning solid waste management. You must ensure that all banned materials are being diverted from your garbage.
3. Contact the Ontario Waste Materials Exchange to buy, sell or give away business wastes (<http://www.owe.org/>).
4. Educate everyone in the organization about your waste management system. Employees need to know what is expected of them. Include information on solid waste management and policies, and provide hands-on training in orientation sessions with new staff. Reinforce the message regularly.
5. High staff turnover? It is particularly important to provide extensive amounts of education and training to employees. The key is to make separation easier, by simplifying separation procedures as much as possible.
6. If you have customers and suppliers that access your waste containers, you may need to educate them on recycling and composting to reduce contamination (this may simply be posting information for these groups near the bins).
7. Consider arranging tours for your staff to composting or recycling plants. This may trigger employees to be more interested in your programs.
8. Pass on any waste diversion cost savings (recycling means you spend less on garbage disposal!) to your staff as an incentive for them to recycle. The money could fund a staff social event, or be donated to a charity chosen by your employees. Or consider instigating a reward program for outstanding employees who make extra efforts in 'greening' your workplace.
9. Reward individual employees (or departments) for "contaminant-free" recyclables/organics. Offer incentives such as small gift certificates to good performers.
10. Create contests to maintain interest in the program.
11. Designate an environmental champion to do regular checks on the system's effectiveness and employee compliance.

12. Provide employees with updated information on how programs are succeeding (using graphics, like a thermometer, to chart progress is effective). Tracking success is important to keeping employees interested and to marketing your efforts.
13. Place recycle bins in convenient locations so staff will use them instead of garbage containers. For example, place paper-recycling containers near high paper areas such as photocopiers and printers.
14. Some professionals recommend getting rid of many regular waste containers to encourage recycling and separation.
15. Label and/or colour-code bins appropriately. List the specific materials that can (and cannot) go into the bins.
16. Make sure containers are appropriately sized. Bins that are too small or too large can create problems.
17. Don't overlook organics/compostable materials. Even in small organizations, you need a plan to keep lunchroom and landscaping waste out of the garbage stream. At a minimum, implement a "Take-It-Home" policy for your organics.
18. Don't forget that soiled boxboard, cardboard, newspaper and paper can also be added to your green bin if they are too dirty for recycling. But keep in mind that too much paper can cause problems for composting plants. Go easy.
19. Keep waste materials (such as plastics and cardboard) clean to increase recyclables.
20. Ensure that all your haulers are disposing of your recyclables and regular waste in the proper way. Ask questions to determine where they take your materials.
21. Illegal dumping and theft of recyclables are often major problems for the business community. Ask neighbouring companies to watch for illegal dumping.
22. You may need to restrict access to outside bins to authorized employees.
23. You may also need to keep the dumpsters/bins locked to discourage illegal dumping.
24. Post additional signage near/on dumpsters.
25. Purchase or rent surveillance equipment/camera.
26. Work with business neighbours to determine what types of waste are generated in your mall unit or on your street. You may be able to cooperate in some recycling programs (for example, one green bin may service the entire complex for organics) and share costs.
27. Look for opportunities to exchange waste by-products (for example, pallets or cardboard boxes) with neighbours.
28. Talk to your hauling companies about your waste materials. Some companies allow businesses to place small amounts of segregated plastics or paper (bagged in clear plastic bags) in cardboard bins for no additional charge.

29. Purchase stationary with a high-recycled content and other office supplies with recycled and/or recyclable content.
30. Buy solar-powered calculators, refillable pens, pencils and tape dispensers, and reusable calendars.
31. Purchase lunchroom condiments such as coffee, sugar and cream in bulk and dispense in reusable containers.
32. Purchasing remanufactured cartridges.
33. Send spent photocopier, fax and printer cartridges, and printer ribbons for remanufacturing. Some companies will arrange free pick up on an "as-needed" basis if you are purchasing a replacement cartridge. Some stores now accept some types/brands of used cartridges at their retail outlets. Check with office supply and retail stores as to the availability of these programs.
34. Email or circulate memos rather than copying for everyone.
35. Encourage staff not to print out emails unless necessary.
36. Set photocopiers and printers for automatic two-sided copies.
37. Check to see if fax machines, photocopiers, and printers are programmed so they do not produce unwanted header or report sheets.
38. Edit work-in-progress reports on a computer before printing it out on paper.
39. Use both sides of the paper for reports.
40. Encourage single spacing of documents. Reduce font sizes and margin sizes wherever possible.
41. Write on the reverse side of sheets for scrap or general use.
42. Use fax tags (small, horizontal stickies) instead of fax cover pages.
43. Reuse large and/or padded envelopes for mailings.
44. Reuse cardboard boxes for outgoing shipments. Produce a "We Reuse" label to place on boxes - most customers will appreciate your efforts to reduce waste.
45. Use white boards with erasable markers instead of paper flip charts.
46. Avoid over production of marketing and publicity materials by reviewing distribution lists and regularly updating databases.
47. Establish a reuse centre in the office where employees can pick up unwanted binders, stationary supplies, etc. for use at home.
48. Put up a free, for sale or wanted bulletin board at work.
49. Sell/give away old office equipment to employees or donate it to reuse centres or charitable organizations.
50. Donate used but still usable computers and other technology for refurbishing and distribution to schools, libraries, and non-profit organizations.

51. Another option for used computers? Contact local e-waste recyclers for proper disposal.
52. Give away old copies of journals, newspapers and magazines to interested organizations or staff.
53. Have some in-house discussion about whether staff is willing to share journals, newspapers and magazines instead of ordering multiple copies.
54. Use linen towel dispensers or hand dryers instead of paper. If you use paper, make sure it has a high recycled content and that it goes into the green bin/organics stream.
55. Discourage the use of straws, paper napkins and disposable plastic stir sticks in the lunchroom. If you have to purchase disposables, try wooden stir sticks and paper napkins made from 100% recyclable wood fibres and compost them after use.
56. Encourage employees to bring drinks, soups, sandwiches, etc. in reusable or refillable containers.
57. Provide reusable mugs, reusable utensils, and ceramic or china mugs, glasses, plates, and bowls for employees.
58. Dispose of surplus/waste paints responsibly through appropriate hazardous waste channels or paint recycling facilities in your area.
59. Interested in battery recycling? Make recycling of rechargeables and button cells a priority, and then consider programs for other types of disposable batteries. Contact battery retailers, or the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation for options.
60. Metal by-products are usually highly valuable and relatively easy to recycle. Some scrap metal dealers will pay you for your scrap metal. Place bins in your shop for the different types of metal wastes, as metals of different types should be kept segregated, this increases their value.