

GREENING YOUR BUSINESS



In business, saving money is the same as making money and the latest statistics show that wasting resources is costing companies up to 4.5% of turnover. The Government announced increases in landfill tax rising from the current rate of €30 per tonne to a whopping €75 per tonne in July 2013.

The increases are being introduced in September 2011, July 2012 and July 2013. The Government signal is clear - Disposal of waste is environmentally unsound, disposal of waste is currently a cheap option and disposal of waste is simply unsustainable!

Recycling and reusing are important, but resource efficiency is about stopping valuable materials being wasted in the first place!

You will save more money by taking a more systematic approach and examining what ends up in your bins and skips!

You can start making savings straight away through some low-cost improvements - take a look at some of the Top Tips to start reducing the amount of waste your business produces or put simply, use some of these top tips and stop "throwing away your money"!

- Use printers and copiers that are set to print on both sides. Check your printer can do duplex printing. If buying a new printer ensure that you include "duplex printing" in the specification.
- Does your office use recycled office stationery? Ensure any stationery purchased has high levels of recycled content.
- Encourage electronic circulation of documents and archiving to avoid unnecessary printing. Where possible, switch to electronic billing for customers.
- Consider replacing any local printers and copiers with one or two large, networked, multi-function printers, copiers and scanners. This reduces the use of consumables and discourages people from printing unnecessarily.
- Purchase reusable products. Look at items such as refillable ink cartridges, rechargeable batteries, and reusable mugs and glasses.

- Use a plumbed-in mains water filter, chiller or fountain rather than a replaceable drum water machine. This will save most offices hundreds if not thousands of euros per year. If you only employ a small team, you can purchase filter jugs that fit snugly in the door of the fridge.
- Segregate your paper and cardboard for recycling. Improve the amounts of materials collected by having fewer general waste bins and more recycling collection points.
- Make the best use of charity and community sector /social enterprise recycling schemes. Use these for IT products and furniture, as well as for commercial services. Camara is a volunteer organisation in Dublin who recycles your old computer and uses the technology to improve education in schools in Africa. Rehab and Sunflower recycling are also worthy organisations that collect and recycle office equipment and furniture.
- Purchase in bulk whenever possible. This uses less packaging and means you will need less deliveries to receive your goods and also reduce the amount of "back door waste".
- Encourage your suppliers to use returnable packaging systems. This will reduce their cost in the long run and reduce your back door waste bill.
- Ensure that you are receiving the right quantities of the materials you are buying. It is best to rigorously check both quantity and weight.
- Create set procedures for goods receiving and handling. This can help minimise product and material damage.
- Do all you can to reduce material residues in packaging. For example would it be useful to use drum warmers to reduce viscosity or wash out IBCs to obtain more material yield? How about a bag splitter / shaker for dry materials?
- Replace hazardous materials with less harmful alternatives. Many solvent-based materials can often be replaced by water-based or high solids materials for example.
- Consider buying recycled materials. Look at recovered solvents and oils, or plastics and other solid materials with recycled content.
- Do all you can to reduce spillages and evaporative losses around the site. For example, pipe materials around site to processes rather than move them in open containers and decant. Ensure your storage vessels and reservoirs are fully encapsulated to avoid losses.
- Improve product design or production planning to reduce material wastage. For example could you make a small change in the product to allow improved material yield? Could you look more carefully at batch sequencing to reduce wastage and the need for cleaning?
- Try to prevent or reduce "start-up" wastage. For example preventing or reducing waste on production lines or printing presses.
- Consider improving process controls to reduce wastage. Sensors, for example, can be used to detect critical process and product changes, avoiding wastage.
- Think about switching to processes and equipments that naturally produce less waste. For example, could materials be mixed centrally and accurately in a properly controlled and calibrated system rather than using bucket chemistry at the side of the process? Could ultrasonic cleaning be used with water-based cleaners to avoid solvent degreasing?
- Carry out planned preventative maintenance and checking/ calibration of your plant. This ensures that equipment is functioning properly and efficiently.

- Review how you package your products. Could you use less materials or layers, or materials that are easier to recycle at the customer site?
- Improve the efficiency of packaging, pallet and vehicle loading. Often too much air is distributed, leaving space in boxes which could be better used.
- Reuse supplied packaging. For example, machines are available that can lattice cardboard boxes to make a useful, bulky fill material.
- See if waste streams can be further segregated for on-site reuse. For example can excess materials (extruder waste, powder coating etc) be kept clean enough to be put back into the process?
- Segregate materials more effectively to improve recycling. Search for local recyclers able to take your waste, and talk to other nearby companies about having joint recycling collections.
- Use compactors, balers, drum, can and glass crushers etc. Use to obtain revenue from recycled materials or to reduce general waste costs.
- Segregate all hazardous waste. Include segregating electrical items like fluorescent tubes and computer monitors, from general waste.

These valuable tips have been provided by Greenbusiness.ie you can contact them to find out more about "greening" your business and perhaps find out if you are eligible for a free resource efficiency audit.