



FACT SHEET REDUCING WASTE

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An assessment of the solid waste generated by your business can often give rise to savings in waste disposal by looking for opportunities to eliminate, reduce, reuse and recycle wastes.

This fact sheet will give you some ideas on strategies to help reduce your solid waste.

EASY, LOW-COST STRATEGIES

Order in bulk where possible. Purchasing in bulk minimises packaging. If necessary, consider installing larger storage facilities so that you can order raw materials in bulk and store them for later use. Bulk purchasing is usually cheaper, and you will also be reducing the environmental impacts (e.g. exhaust emissions) of frequent deliveries to your premises. However, capital tied up in storage and product use by dates should be considered.

Ask for eco-efficient packaging. If your suppliers are sending your materials in hard-to-dispose-of packaging, ask them to change it. If they can't, try to find another supplier. Poor supplier packaging can add to your waste disposal costs.

Reduce paper waste. Purchase recycled paper suitable for your office machines, and set the computer defaults to print double-sided (and/or two-to-a-page) wherever possible. If your printer doesn't have this ability then keep a box next to the printer where paper that has only been printed on one side can be stored for re-use in the printer. Select 'draft' and 'greyscale' in the print window to reduce the amount of ink used.

Minimise production waste. Look at your production processes and see what can be altered to minimise waste.

Reduce disposables in your staff room. Make your staff kitchen more eco-efficient: use handtowels instead of paper towels, and washable cutlery and crockery instead of disposables. Encourage staff to compost suitable food scraps.

QUICK TIP

A number of companies are developing low-paper or no-paper register systems for retailers. For example, some allow you to give customers the option of an on-line receipt, instead of the traditional printed version. Look on the internet for more information.

Manage wastewater. Review your operations and office water use to find where savings could be made. Some waste water can be recycled for other uses, for example, gardens or first rinse.

Reduce your plastic bag impact. Plastic bags have a major environmental impact during manufacture and disposal. South Australia became the first state to completely ban lightweight plastic checkout bags in May 2009. The Northern Territory and the ACT have also banned single use plastic bags. Consider the following:

- If you use traditional plastic bags, consider changing to bags that are 100 per cent biodegradable. These will disintegrate in landfill, and cause fewer problems if they end up in the natural environment (e.g. in waterways).
- Ask your customers if they need a plastic bag rather than providing one automatically.
- Consider charging for plastic bags. Stores that do this (such as Aldi) report dramatic reductions in the numbers of plastic bags distributed.
- Offer a small discount or reward to customers who bring their own bag.
- Sell company-branded reusable bags.



**THE ECOBIZ TEAM IS ALWAYS
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REDUCING WASTE PRODUCT BY PRODUCT

Reducing waste product by product Priestley's Gourmet Delights, a bakery product manufacturer, reviews one product per week, brainstorming every step in the process to determine how, where and why waste occurs - for example, incorrect stacking of product, dropping raw ingredients, incorrect decorating procedure. Then they develop solutions and staff are informed through a series of posters with pictures of both the wrong and right methods to reduce waste. So far this initiative has saved approximately \$99,500 in raw materials.¹

Establish a composting system. If your business has food preparation, you might consider a simple composting system. Even a city business can compost using a counter-top composter such as a 'bokashi bucket'. If you have outdoor space, you could establish a worm farm or compost heap. Paper can be composted, along with fruit and vegetable scraps.

Implement waste segregation procedures to assist recycling. Segregate waste into the relevant waste streams. This will reduce your overall volume of non-recyclable waste.

Recycle and reuse where possible. Have recycling bins available and help staff sort rubbish from recyclables. Many councils now recycle paper, glass and metal. Look at other waste products that the council don't accept and see if you can think of a second use for them. For example, bags used to deliver a product may be re-usable as bin liners or for packing your products.

Find ways to recycle other waste products. Try to find others who can help you recycle other waste products from your business. Remember—it is often cheaper to recycle than to pay waste disposal fees. Contacts to try are:

- schools and community groups—who often do fundraising through recycling programs, or may be able to use clean waste products for art and craft activities.
- other businesses—your waste may be their raw material.
- clients—for example, free cardboard boxes may be very helpful. Put a notice up in your clinic, or advertise in a community newsletter.
- commercial waste contractors—who recycle a wide range of waste products, from batteries to mobile phones and scrap metal. Planet Ark have developed a website to help companies find waste recycling contractors near them, www.businessrecycling.com.au.

INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

Use new technology or operating procedures to reduce waste. New technology and new operational techniques can significantly reduce the volume of waste generated.

Implement inventory control procedures to avoid over-ordering. Custom made computer programs can be set up specifically to track your business needs.

Eliminate toxic and non-recyclable materials from the production or services provided. Convert to recyclable materials to reduce waste volume and seek out businesses that will take your waste for recycling.

Employ a specialist in waste minimisation. If your business is complicated or highly specialised, consider employing a specialist to identify where savings can be made.

Use waste material from one process to fuel another process. Waste heat and waste water can often be redirected to power another stage of production—if not for your business then perhaps for a neighbouring business.

Train your staff in more eco-efficient practices and procedures. Training staff offers the opportunity to benefit from their experience. Experienced staff are often the best equipped to identify and implement ways to reduce waste.

NEXT STEPS

1. Listen to an [ecoBiz webinar on waste efficiency](#).
2. Book your coaching session to talk about waste efficiency.
3. Monitor your waste use through the free online ecoBiz Benchmark tool.
4. [Read the case studies on the website](#).
5. Look for more opportunities in your business using the [ecoBiz Site Survey checklist](#).
6. Download the other [fact sheets and resources](#) for you to use in your business.

¹ Queensland Government (2010), Reducing solid waste, www.ecoefficiency.com.au/Portals/56/factsheets/foodprocess/waste/ecofoodwaste_fsr2.pdf

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