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Article

Why better waste management is better business

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Please note this content was curated for SME businesses in the UK

Waste management is a necessary consideration for any small business owner. But it isn't always one that attracts the most enthusiasm. You might be aware of the importance of recycling, for example, but you might not have thought about the ways waste management could affect almost all aspects of your company.

When working with limited space, time and resources, it's understandable if thinking about waste is not a priority. But as climate change and pressure on natural resources are changing how waste disposal is regulated for small businesses, waste management practices are aspects of business that increasingly need your attention.

Just as importantly, there is mounting evidence that a good and proactive waste management strategy could reap benefits across your business – possibly in ways you may not yet have considered.

This article outlines some of these potential

advantages of reducing, reusing and recycling waste – from cost savings to environmental benefits, legal compliance to happier customers. We also set out, in straightforward, practical terms, what a better approach to waste could look like for a small business like yours.

Business-wide benefits of good waste management practices

The positive effects of good waste management go beyond supporting the environment in the face of climate change. By limiting how much waste you produce, finding ways to reuse and recycle waste, and disposing of unavoidable waste responsibly, your business could thrive in many, often unexpected, ways.

Increasing market share - customers increasingly seek brands and products that have an environmental conscience. Promoting your green waste practices could steal a march on your competitors **(1)**.

Increasing efficiency - reducing your waste could positively impact your overall operational efficiency as you streamline processes and workflows **(2)**.

Protecting nature - by using resources more efficiently, you could buy fewer and more sustainable materials, relieving the strain on natural resources **(3)**.

Lower waste disposal costs - put simply, the less you use, the more you're likely to save on disposal costs, such as waste management fees and landfill taxes **(4)**.

Avoiding penalty fines - UK small businesses have a legally binding duty of care for waste. By complying with waste disposal regulations, you should avoid financial penalties **(5)**.

Reducing procurement costs - using fewer, more sustainable resources is likely to reduce the amount of materials you need to procure, leading to cost savings **(6)**.

Improving inventory management **-** waste reduction is a critical component of any good, cost-efficient inventory management system **(7)**.

Waste management touches most, if not all, aspects of your business. So, a positive and proactive approach to waste reduction could be a critical aspect of your business's success.

Five stages for reducing waste in your business

Generating waste is part and parcel of doing business, whether it's

paper, plastic, food, electronics, packaging or something else. But there are practical steps you could take towards reducing, recycling and reusing the materials that pass through your company.

According to the Federation of Small Businesses, waste reduction strategies follow **five key stages,** which should be considered in the order below.

1. **Prevention**

You can prevent waste in numerous ways. For example, working with suppliers to reduce packaging, switching from paper to digital wherever possible, or installing energy-efficient lighting.

2. **Reuse**

Switching away from single-use items such as plastic cups and cutlery could significantly decrease the amount you throw away – and potentially save you money.

3. **Recycle**

If you haven't already, you might separate your bins into cardboard, paper, glass, tin, food and plastics. Not only could this reduce disposable waste, but it could also make it more attractive for waste carriers, brokers and dealers to buy.

4. **Recovery**

You could consider whether any materials you've used could benefit other local businesses. Perhaps you could join a circular economy club to discover companies that could use your waste in the development of new products.

5. **Disposal**

Finally, it is important to make sure that whatever waste you have remaining is disposed of in landfill or through incineration as cleanly and efficiently as possible.

Small businesses are becoming more affected by national and global environmental concerns every day. By adopting a positive approach to waste management, you could become part of the solution. You could also save money and help your business grow in a better, more sustainable way.

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1 Recycling lives: https://recyclinglives.com/news/report-reveals-81-people-prefer-buy-sustainable-sellers/
2 Northern Ireland Business Info: https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/process-efficiency-cut-waste
3 Net regs environmental guidance: https://www.netregs.org.uk/environmental-topics/carbon-reduction-and-efficiency/buying-eco-friendly-goods-and-services/benefits-of-buying-sustainable-goods-and-services/
4 Greenbank recycling guidance: https://greenbankwastesolutions.com/how-much-does-waste-disposal-cost
5 UK government statutory guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/waste-duty-of-care-code-of-practice
6 Federation of Small Businesses: https://www.fsb.org.uk/resources-page/how-to-achieve-sustainable-procurement.html
7 Finale inventory : https://www.finaleinventory.com/inventory-management/why-small-businesses-should-have-an-inventory-management-system
8 Federation of Small Businesses: https://www.fsb.org.uk/resources-page/how-to-reduce-waste-in-your-small-business.html
9 Register of Waste Carriers, Brokers and Dealers: https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers
10 Circular Economy Club: https://www.circulareconomyclub.com/

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