

Managing waste from buildings

Effective waste management in your buildings not only helps reduce environmental impact but also promotes a sustainable workplace culture and can lead to cost savings. By assessing waste, developing reduction strategies, enhancing recycling and composting efforts, engaging employees, and monitoring progress, SMEs significantly reduce their waste as well as costs. This guide focuses on buildings such as office buildings or stores, and does not include industrial waste.

Step 1: Assess Your Current Waste

- **Conduct a Waste Audit:** Start by identifying the types and amounts of waste generated in your office building. Common sources include paper, packaging materials, electronic waste, food scraps, and disposable items like cups and cutlery.
- **Categorize Waste:** Break down your waste into categories such as recyclable, compostable, hazardous, and general waste. Understanding what makes up your waste stream helps in targeting reduction efforts effectively.

Step 2: Develop a Waste Reduction Plan

- **Minimize Paper Usage:** Encourage digital documentation and communication to reduce paper waste. Implement double-sided printing and use recycled paper where printing is unavoidable.
- **Reduce Disposable Items:** Replace single-use items like plastic cups, plates, and cutlery with reusable alternatives. Encourage employees to bring their own mugs, bottles, and utensils.
- **Optimize Office Supplies:** Review purchasing practices to avoid over-ordering and reduce waste. Choose suppliers who offer minimal and recyclable packaging.

Step 3: Enhance Recycling and Composting Efforts

- **Set Up Recycling Stations:** Place clearly labeled recycling bins in accessible areas such as break rooms, near printers, and in communal spaces. Ensure bins are available for different types of recyclables (e.g., paper, plastics, glass).
- **Promote Composting:** If possible, introduce a composting program for organic waste like food scraps and coffee grounds. Partner with local composting facilities or services that can handle organic waste.
- **Recycle Electronics Responsibly:** Arrange for proper disposal of electronic waste, such as old computers, printers, and batteries. Work with certified e-waste recycling companies to ensure these materials are handled safely and sustainably.

Step 4: Engage Employees in Waste Management

- **Educate and Involve Staff:**

- To effectively address waste reduction, companies should both educate staff and learn from them. Start by conducting training sessions to inform employees about waste reduction and recycling, providing clear guidelines on what can and cannot be recycled or composted. Encourage a two-way dialogue by inviting employees to share their ideas or concerns about waste management.
- **Assign Responsibility:** Decide on a person responsible or form a dedicated group of employees to lead waste reduction initiatives. This team can help monitor waste practices, suggest improvements, and organize sustainability events.
- **Encourage Waste Reduction Behavior:** Promote behaviors that minimize waste, such as using reusable containers, reducing paper use, and properly sorting recyclables. Consider incentives or recognition programs for employees who actively participate in waste reduction efforts.

Step 5: Monitor Progress and Improve Practices

- **Track Waste Data:** Regularly measure the amount and types of waste your office produces. Use this data to assess the effectiveness of your waste management strategies and identify areas for improvement.
- **Review and Adjust Plans:** Continuously evaluate your waste reduction efforts and adjust your strategies as needed. Consider conducting periodic waste audits to stay updated on your waste management performance.