

Transitioning your business to Zero-Waste operations

The world is facing a colossal waste issue. The Pacific Garbage Patch is now more than 618,000 square miles wide and is growing at a rate of at least 2.5% per year. In the UK, the average citizen produces 400 kgs of waste per year, including nearly £4.5B of food waste.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Commercial businesses also produce plenty of waste. The latest government data shows that 40.4 million tonnes of commercial and industrial (C&I) waste were produced in 2020 alone by British businesses.

Addressing this issue is vital to branding your business as sustainable. You cannot claim to be eco-friendly if your packaging and products end up in landfills, and you should take serious steps to mitigate the waste created by upstream suppliers. This accountable approach will earn you the trust of climate-conscious consumers and aid your efforts to transition to zero-waste operations.

Why Zero Waste?

Reducing your waste is a great way to mitigate your business's environmental impact. Taking proactive steps to cut down on waste is key, as there is a considerable disparity between the plastics and cardboard you put in recycling bins and the actual recycling rates at treatment plants. Currently, only 10% of our waste gets recycled in the UK, as the vast majority is sent overseas to centres in Turkey, China, and

Malaysia, where it has been found in illegal dumps and fires.

Taking proactive steps to reduce the waste your business produces mitigates the potential for waste mismanagement and can help you avoid greenwashing claims by climate-conscious consumers. This is key as modern consumers care about sustainability and are pivoting to brands championing low-waste operations. Additional benefits of embracing sustainability include:

- **Resource Conservation:** Fossil fuels produce far more waste than solar or wind energy. Switching to renewable energy can clean up upstream waste while minimising emissions.
- **Loyalty:** Consumer sentiment is clear — customers prefer to buy from eco-friendly brands when possible. Taking strides to reduce emissions can help you create a profitable, sustainable business and will increase your appeal amongst younger consumers, who will form your primary customer base in years to come.
- **Employee Well-Being:** Employees take great pride in working for brands that reduce waste and protect the environment. Working with employees to promote green causes can reduce staff turnover and help you attract more talented prospective employees.

Working towards zero waste can give you a competitive edge and reduce costs. It may take some extra planning and preparation, but you'll save plenty in the long run by embracing the proposed zero-waste economy and reducing your yearly waste bill.

Zero-Waste Economy

Transitioning to a zero-waste approach isn't just good for the planet — it can increase your profitability in the future. At least, this is the new government's intention, which aims to reap the benefits of creating a zero-waste economy. If managed correctly, businesses that play their role

in the circular economy can benefit from:

- Increased profitability from reusing old products and packaging;
- Job creation to treat and process recyclable goods;
- Reduce resource consumption, thus cutting costs.

The Netherlands provides a prime example of what is possible should the nation pivot towards a zero-waste approach. In recent years, the Dutch people have pushed for better resource utilisation and committed to a goal of halving raw material consumption by 2030. This has sparked a period of sustainable growth and brought new jobs and productivity to the Netherlands through cross-department collaboration.

Making the transition work

If you're considering transitioning your own business to zero waste, consider learning from Dutch firms that have already made the switch work for them. *Dutch giants KPMG* are well on their way to zero waste by 2030 by adopting policies in the UK offices like:

- Working with suppliers to reduce waste associated with packaging that enters their workspace;
- Segregating waste streams to ensure that all waste is recycled properly;
- Donating old, unused IT items to schools and charities to *minimize e-waste in your business*;
- Transitioning to paperless operations;
- Working with food vendors that buy "wonky" produce;
- Redistributing meals that aren't used and composting out-of-date items.

Businesses of all sizes can adopt this approach, which will reduce your waste without impeding your productivity and profitability. If you do

decide to go paperless, consider opting for cloud storage. Cloud storage is innately sustainable, as digital document management systems cut down printing costs and paper waste while ensuring your documents are kept in a safe, secure place. Cloud storage is easy to scale up, too, as you won't need to buy more filing cabinets or storage bins when your business grows.

Conclusion

Transitioning to zero waste can increase your popularity with climate-conscious consumers and improve your overall efficiency. Get started by working with suppliers to cut down supply chain waste and mitigate the upstream impact of your firm. You can also make common sense changes, like donating old PCs or working with food vendors that adopt sustainable production methods.



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