Waste output & reduction

PlanetMark

Introductory toolkit

This toolkit is designed to introduce businesses and organisations to **waste measurement and reduction best practice.**

Contents

The importance of **good waste management**

The evidence of poor waste management is clear for all to see. From islands of plastic in our oceans to the litter-lined streets of our towns and cities, the impacts of our throwaway culture can be seen both locally and globally.

On average, each person in the UK throws away their **own body weight in rubbish** every seven weeks.

This is the equivalent of **412kg per person every year.**

However, we have the solutions to dramatically cut organisational waste to create cleaner businesses and communities. **Office waste is often more than 80% recyclable,** but recycling this much requires the proper systems and measurements in place. Without a rigorous waste strategy, many items can unnecessarily end up in landfill. Businesses and organisations, including Planet Mark members, are increasingly embarking on zero-waste-to-landfill targets, with an aim of streamlining a number of business processes to meet this goal.

The solutions to a low-waste culture are not only kinder to our planet, but can benefit businesses and organisations in a number of ways, such as:

Environmentally

Landfill waste contributes to climate change by generating greenhouse emissions at landfill sites. These sites also have tremendous impacts on their surroundings, disturbing local wildlife and communities through pollution. Furthermore, there are associated carbon emissions with the transportation and management of fleets of waste collection. By changing behaviours and attitudes towards waste, your business will being playing its part for the environment.

Financially

Businesses can save in a number of ways when undertaking waste-efficient policies. As well as avoiding costly (and potentially rising) landfill taxes, cutting the amount of waste through reduction, reuse and recycling can also save on waste collection services. Furthermore, reducing waste at its source could have impacts for packaging and supply chain costs.

Competitively

Being able to communicate a clear, measured approach to waste management is a core part of any corporate sustainability project. As businesses and customers seek sustainable organisations to deal with, waste reduction could have a role in winning and maintaining contracts, customers and suppliers.

Internally

Waste management is truly a team effort. Successful waste policies require everyone's buy-in at an organisation. Engaging your team in sustainable efforts, and demonstrating your ability to do your bit for the planet, regularly surveys as an important factor in staff acquisition and retention.

Who is **this toolkit for?**

This toolkit is designed for:

Facilities Managers

Waste Managers

Office Managers

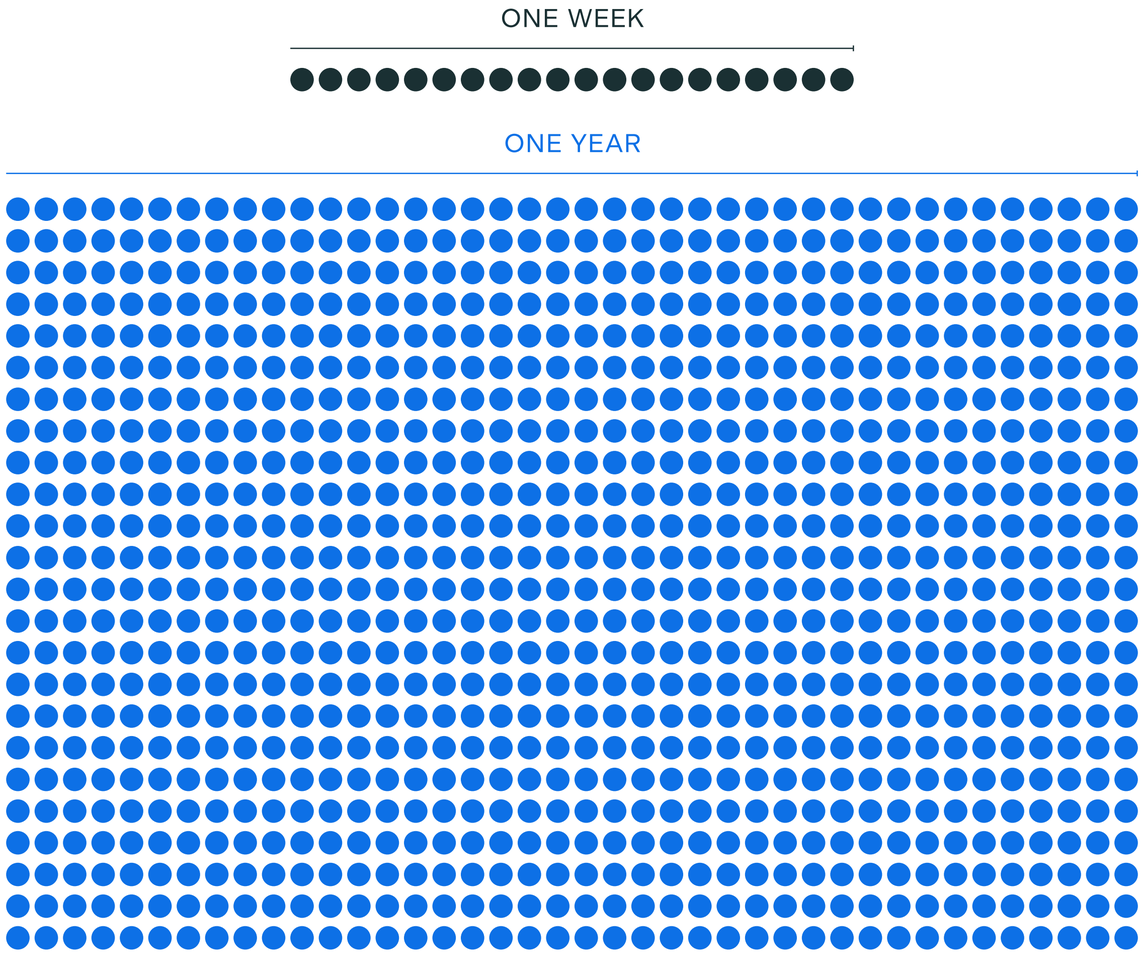
Decision Makers

Sustainability Champions

What is a **normal level of waste** for a business?

Every business is unique, and the waste profile of your business will of course vary dependent on industry, location, and working style. However, there are some benchmarks which can be used for typical office spaces.

A typical office of 100 people produces on average **20 bags of waste a week. Thats 960 bags in a working year.**



How to **measure your waste**

Measuring your waste output is a critical first step in any sustainable waste policy. Without initial measurements in place, it becomes much harder to evaluate the progress made from your waste strategy, and to communicate your successes to stakeholders.

The **first step in measuring your waste output** is taking a waste audit.

A rudimentary waste audit can be done simply by walking around your work premises. However, this requires more than just counting all of the bins and collection points in your office. It requires measuring waste accrued over a set period of time (we recommend a year to account for seasonal fluctuations and low-frequency waste creation), and considering different types of waste.

Different types of waste to consider, and define, are:

- Landfill waste
- Recycled waste
- Technological waste (such as disposing of batteries & old computers)
- Office furniture waste (how to dispose of old furniture)
- Food waste & kitchen waste
- Bathroom waste
- Other associated staff waste
- Waste from shared spaces
- Waste created by design (this includes printer settings, or improper access to the correct bins)

Once all these sources have been accounted for, you will have a good understanding of how much waste is created in your office, and some ideas of ways this waste can be reduced, reused or recycled. The more accurately you can identify the weight of each waste category - the better understanding of waste impact. This data is usually available from your waste collection company.

Supplier waste

It is also important to account for waste created throughout your supply chain. One third of waste in developed countries comes from packaging alone, so engaging your suppliers early in the waste management process is critical to an effective waste policy.

Asking what waste is associated with your suppliers (particularly those that interact with your premises), may uncover hidden waste that you were unaware of. Many suppliers will take away their waste and might be otherwise unknown. This is a good way to start an initial dialogue about low-waste solutions with your supply chain.

At the other end of the supply chain there are also people to be engaged in the process. Make sure that your waste audit includes the input of cleaning and facilities staff. They may be able to provide different insights on your waste production, and tips on reduction in the future.

One third of waste in developed countries comes from packaging alone, so **engaging your suppliers early in the waste management process is critical to an effective waste policy.**

Staff engagement

Early staff engagement is important to the success of a waste strategy. Creating a safe, non-judgmental space for everyone to contribute to a waste audit and ideas for reduction helps positively reinforce sustainable behaviour in the workplace.

The waste hierarchy

The waste hierarchy is a system that allows everyone to prioritise how to handle waste. The hierarchy is an important tool for understanding how waste can impact the planet, and how best to avoid the unnecessary production and handling of waste.

The hierarchy is:

Prevention	Using fewer materials and keeping products for longer is the best way to cut waste
Reuse	Cleaning, repairing refurbishing and repurposing items for continued use
Recycling	Turning waste into a new substance or product, including composting
Recovery	Processes such as anaerobic digestion and incineration with energy recovery
Disposal	Landfill and incineration without energy recovery

Why is landfill bad?

Landfill is increasingly costly in the UK due to landfill taxes. It is also a major cause of emissions, both locally and globally.

In 2019, landfill in the UK caused 14.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions equivalent. This is same amount of carbon emitted by 1.7 million homes. While it is unfortunate that some waste may end up in landfill (as not all materials are recyclable), reducing landfill as much as possible is critical to a successful sustainability strategy.

In 2019, landfill in the UK caused 14.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions equivalent

Why should we incinerate waste?

Both recycling and waste-to-energy have a place in an integrated waste management system. Where the waste not suitable for sustainable recycling, it is sent for incineration to generate heat and power.

In some cases there is a higher cost or environmental impact to collect and sort out waste for material recycling than to send it for energy recovery. Waste is an energy source which reduces pressure on dirtier fossil fuels. Incinerating waste destroys the waste for good, without leaving the legacy that landfill does. However, the process produces toxic ash, which still has to be landfilled.

The Planet Mark **methodology**

At Planet Mark, we convert your waste into a carbon dioxide emission equivalent, to help you easily measure and understand your waste emissions. To calculate this, we have produced a data hierarchy for our members to help us calculate their waste emissions:

1. Waste contractor reports with actual weights of waste
2. Waste contractor reports with number of pickups
3. Member estimate based on number of bins by bin size

Want to know more?

Get in touch with **our team**

PlanetMark

#DoMoreGood