

Change Your Approach to Waste and Improve Your Profits

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Waste costs companies money. Would you write a paycheck for someone that doesn't work for you? No! Businesses must realize that not accounting for waste in the profit picture is like paying for a ghost employee—you pay for something with no return. As with any change in a company's business plan, a sound waste reduction program starts out with awareness. When management is aware of the "no-return" costs affecting the profit picture, change is more likely to be embraced and supported, if not mandated as a new "culture" for the company. The following guidelines will help you get support to establish a waste reduction program in your printing operations.

Get started, get the numbers!

You must know how much your waste costs. This may seem like a very time-consuming task, but its easier than you think. Vendors, purchasing agents, commercial laundries, and waste carriers, as well as your process operators, can be enlisted to help gather the information you need.

- Work with your process operators to identify and quantify waste streams.
- Vendors can supply costs, total gallons, and even provide air-emission summaries associated with inks, blanket washing solvents, or fountain solutions.
- Purchasing agents and scheduling personnel can

help set up a material tracking system for each job to establish an ink-usage guide.

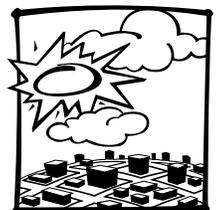
- Waste carriers can provide amounts and costs associated with specific wastes.
- Operators can supply labor time associated with waste handling and paperwork for environmental or OSHA related compliance.

Create awareness.

Education is critical to the success of any new program. Management, of course, must understand the importance of a waste reduction program and then provide the necessary support to ensure success of a pollution prevention (P2) program. Establishing a new attitude towards waste will involve many changes; change involves people and people tend to resist change unless they understand it. Creating an atmosphere for change will be most successful if management and your employees see a personal benefit or reward associated with it.

Create an incentive to change.

Incentive programs provide a means of personal motivation to enhance employee participation. Some companies offer bonuses or cost shares for ideas that save the company money; some offer free lunches or dinners and/or public recognition. Whatever the incentive, remember, it must have personal or team



value to the employee(s) such as a safer working environment. Our society is more educated today about health issues than ever before; employees know and care more about their health and are more likely to embrace changes that create a safer working environment. Explain to employees that more efficient operations with less waste help their company become a more competitive business with a better future for long-term stability and employment. Form a P2 team that includes management and operations staff—management must provide support for a waste reduction policy and projects, and operators know the processes best and will be the key players to implement changes needed for success.

Prioritize the projects.

Choosing the “right” project to focus on will vary from company to company. However, consider the following factors when prioritizing P2 efforts:

Worker health

- Does the project involve a reduction in adverse health liabilities?
- How many workers will benefit?
- Will it reduce management, recordkeeping, and personal protective equipment costs?

Environmental impacts

- Will the project eliminate or reduce a hazard to the environment? Be careful that elimination of a hazardous waste doesn't result in an increase in air emissions or wastewater contaminants.
- Will the project eliminate long-term liabilities?
- Will the project improve your company's or industry's public image?

Costs

- How much disposal costs are eliminated or saved?
- How much is labor reduced?
- Are the management costs—regulatory education and personnel training, required paperwork and record keeping, personal protective equipment costs and health testing—included to accurately reflect the true savings?

Many companies choose smaller projects to ensure a successful beginning. Starting small also helps employees “get used to” the change in attitude your company has towards waste and doesn't involve too much change in their personal work routines—so they are more likely to adopt the change.

A company may choose a large P2 project to start with that offers many easily recognized benefits, but careful consideration should be given to employee buy-in and support. Although management may see a waste that offers immediate and tangible paybacks, your employees may desire a P2 project that will create a safer working condition or make it easier for them to do their job. It's very important to seek input from shop personnel and work with them to establish which project is more important.

Capitalize on your success.

As with any business project, you need to know how successful the program is. Quantifying and advertising successes of the P2 program is very important. Measurement is a must in today's world—the bar-coding technology revolutionized material tracking and patterned the mindset for success. Now numbers tell the story! Reduced disposal costs, raw material use, and labor savings are higher profile items that may be more impressive to management budgets, but reductions in employee exposures to adverse health hazards, reduced need for personal protective equipment, and reduced training and paperwork are also notable savings for companies to track.

Web resources:

www.pneac.org/ (the Printer's National Environmental Assistance Center web site offers case studies, fact sheets, and maintains a listserv for printers' technical and regulatory questions)

www.perc.ca/waste-line/rrr/wrap/toc.html (a waste reduction guidance document with waste audit forms, how to calculate waste ratios, and employee incentive and reward programs)

www.dnrec.state.de.us/del-prnt.htm (general waste reduction program and techniques)



The Small Business Environmental Assistance Program's (SBEAP) mission is to help Kansas small businesses comply with environmental regulations and identify pollution prevention opportunities. SBEAP is funded through a contract with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. SBEAP services are free and confidential. For more information, call 800/578-8898, send an e-mail to SBEAP@ksu.edu, or visit our web site at <http://www.sbeap.org>. Kansas State University is an EEO/AA provider.