

THROWAWAY CULTURE



Paper Round



#ThrowawayCultureUnwrapped

WHAT IS THROWAWAY CULTURE?

Throwaway culture is pervasive in the consumer driven society we live in. Excessively and deliberately producing items with short life-spans instead of creating durable and repairable goods has become the norm.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH THROWAWAY CULTURE?

The short answer: it is **unsustainable**.

But there's a lot more to it than that...

The UK produces more than 170m tonnes of waste every year. This is because our culture of convenience dictates we need easy and cheap packaging solutions to facilitate our busy, on-the-go lives. Unfortunately, as populations increase, so does demand, leading to an ever-escalating problem. However, the world's resources are finite, and this means we must find sustainable ways to manage our lives, societies, and consumption habits.

So, where did the throwaway problem begin?

WHAT IS THROWAWAY CULTURE?

PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE

Planned obsolescence is a product-selling strategy where products are designed to deliberately fail; be difficult, impossible, or costly to repair; or have a set lifespan imposed in some other way.

The idea was borne out of the 1930s depression in the US. Politicians and economists believed if people bought more products, the economy would get a much-needed boost. As most people already owned everything they genuinely needed, buyers had to be convinced to purchase things they already owned. An intentionally shorter product lifespan meant consumers would keep consuming. The advertising industry boomed, and society became gripped by a culture of conspicuous consumption, throwing away whatever they no longer “needed”.

This new consumerist society had an insatiable appetite which paid little heed to the drain on natural resources, or the environmental costs of creating, transporting, selling, and disposing of these materials. In the UK, we’re proud of our war-time ‘make do and mend’ heritage but today you and I are more likely to buy a replacement than to spend time mending something that’s broken.

PERCEIVED OBSOLESCENCE

Perceived obsolescence is another side of the same coin. Here, instead of designing products to fail, you create a culture which perceives the products to be out of date and therefore obsolete. The fashion industry is an excellent example of this, where clothing is made to last for just a single season.

WHAT IS THROWAWAY CULTURE?

LINEAR ECONOMY

Why does it matter that we are throwing away so much of what we consume? Well, with a linear economy, which is what we have as things stand, our precious and finite resources are only used once:



The result of this one-way street for our resources, is mountains of waste, overflowing landfills, islands of trash floating in our oceans, and suffering wildlife. Plastic is a prime offender, a cheap-to-produce and highly convenient product that has become intrinsic to our daily lives.

PLASTICS

Despite these issues, and the recent spate of negative media attention, plastic is not our enemy. It has transformed the lives of humans in a multitude of ways, driving change in medicine, transport, and technology. But, with plastic in the ocean estimated to reach 250 million tonnes by 2025, nations worldwide need to start acknowledging the problem it is causing and begin the search for solutions to curb its abundance in our waste bins.

Plastics are not by their nature bad. The problem is that most plastics are designed for unsustainable, single-use products. Many single-use plastics are readily recyclable, such as drinks bottles, but not enough of these are being captured for recycling. Other types of plastic are not energy efficient to recycle, and so they are sadly destined to be burned in incinerators to make energy, or to while away the years in landfill sites where they take millennia to biodegrade.

Therefore, we need to find ways to use fewer plastics and, where they're essential, we need to use them for longer, giving them a fuller life, where they can be used, and then used again, in line with the circular economy. We need to design them to last and only use plastics that are easy to recycle. This will minimise waste and prevent over-use of new resources.

5 Plastic facts

- More than 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic have been produced since 1950.
- That's equal in size to 1 billion elephants.
- Over half the plastic ever produced was made over the last 13 years.
- 50% of the plastic we use, we use just once and throw away.
- Plastic will outweigh fish in the oceans by 2050. (If we do nothing!)

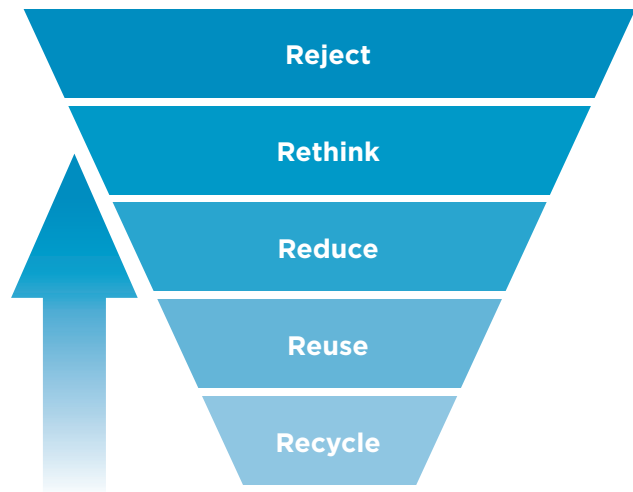
THE WASTE HIERARCHY

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Support the circular economy. It aims to keep resources in use for as long as possible; get the maximum value from those resources; and then recover and regenerate products and materials, so the same resources can be used again.

The traditional waste hierarchy says we must reduce our waste, reuse where possible, and recycle the rest. But you can go one step further.

WASTE HIERARCHY



Here we'll take you through each step and discuss how you and your business can better support the circular economy, to create a more sustainable world.

THE WASTE HIERARCHY

REJECT AND RETHINK SAY “NO”

We have all experienced the compulsive desire to say “yes!” to a freebie or pick up a deal from the bargain bucket. But 50% off is still 50% of your hard-earned cash spent, and a give-away is still made of precious resources even when it’s free to you. To be sustainable, we need to stop. And think:

Do I actually need this?

What is it made of?

How long will it last?

Is it designed for the dustbin? (This is the planned obsolescence idea we were talking about earlier.)

Can it be easily recycled?

Can it be repaired?

Can it be reused?

Essentially, you need to think about how a product is made and how it will be disposed of, before you purchase.

The most environmental option is often saying ‘no to new’ and using something you already own.

BORROW DON’T BUY

Another way to save resources is borrowing not buying. A sustainable sharing economy is galvanising right now with inspiring examples springing up everywhere in the UK. Instead of everyone owning their own, we can borrow from each other; friends, neighbours, and wider communities. This will save us money, and the planet resources. There are [toy and tool libraries](#), [borrow shops](#), [car shares](#), [bike shares](#), [home swaps](#), the list goes on!

So, discard the culture of ownership, and start sharing.

THE WASTE HIERARCHY

REDUCE

We all create needless waste, and it is essential we identify where it comes from, so we can properly tackle the issue.

FOOD WASTE

Did you know? Over a third of all food produced globally goes to waste.

At work

The first step is finding out how much food you're throwing away. Add it up and share the results. If you recycle food waste with us, your monthly recycling reports will clearly lay out this information. Next, tell your people all about it, whether in your case that means chefs, cleaners, your staff or your team. Talk about the amount of waste you're generating and what it consists of. Getting people to acknowledge the problem is the only way you'll work towards solving it. Having a baseline is also essential for measuring your progress and feeding back the results to everyone involved.

Invest in good technology. In terms of net profit, kitchens are wasting as much food as they make. This is financially and resource inefficient. Some commercial kitchens are using intelligent weighing scales such as Winnow which measures the food thrown away by exact category. This means head chefs can make the right decisions in ordering food and preparing dishes.

Typically, the Winnow system can help reduce avoidable food waste by 40 - 70% (financially speaking). You can watch [this 2 minute video](#) to see the Winnow system in action.

If new technology is expensive or unrealistic for your business, then work out where you think improvements can be made and set targets. WRAP have produced [this great, free resource](#) which might be the right option for you. Do portion sizes need to be reduced? Is lots of food getting spoiled? Perhaps you aren't utilising ingredients effectively, and preparation needs to be streamlined? Get everyone to agree to the plan, and of course measure and track your success.

THE WASTE HIERARCHY

At home

In developed countries over half of all food waste takes place in the home.

You can easily reduce your food waste by:

Planning meals ahead

Freezing leftovers

Using smart recipes where the entire ingredient is used

Getting creative with your leftovers, [here's a great website](#) full of delicious recipes

Ordering smaller portions when eating out (order fewer needless sides)

Using a food sharing app like Olio. This great tool allows you to share any waste food from your house. You just take a photo, write a brief description, and provide pick-up details for someone to come and collect

Together, all these steps can make a real difference.

FareShare

FareShare are a charity who fight hunger and food waste at the same time. They collect food that would otherwise be thrown out and redistribute it across the UK to charities and communities in need, like homeless hostels. Last year they redistributed enough food for 28.6 million meals. If your business has surplus food, find out how you could donate.

Paper Round have partnered with FareShare, to support this important cause. We donate the value of 1 whole meal for every collection of food waste bins. So, by recycling your food waste with us, you are supporting them too.

THE WASTE HIERARCHY

PLASTICS

Evaluate the packaging your business uses. One third of waste in developed countries comes from packaging alone, so buy unpackaged where possible. Check your procurement processes and remove whatever packaging you can. If your suppliers don't have this option, write to them. Make them aware of your preferences as a consumer, and shop around for other companies who are more sustainable. At home you can often purchase your fruit, vegetables and herbs loose, or even grow your own.

Buy in bulk. This is an easy way to reduce the amount of plastic you and your company consumes. Can you buy used items instead of new? This will avoid the drain on resources that new products create.

Five easy plastic-waste wins:

Incentivise reusable coffee-cups and get rid of any disposable cups supplied within the workplace. Use mugs instead. (we'll talk about this more later)

Ban bottled water and provide tap water and glasses

Ban single-use plastic straws

Ban plastic bags – or create bag points so staff can grab one before heading out at lunch

Switch to glass milk bottles

PAPER

Saving the planet doesn't have to be difficult and reducing your paper waste certainly isn't. You should:

Go paperless. Change your company printer settings to print double-sided. Write on both sides of the paper. Use technology. Always ask yourself, "do I need to print this?" Track what people are printing, and who is printing too much. Use thinner paper.

These initiatives seem small, but together they add up to make a big difference.

THE WASTE HIERARCHY

REUSE COFFEE CUPS

Coffee cups have been making the headlines because the phenomenal amount of waste they create has recently been revealed. 2.5 billion cups a year to be precise. Again, our throwaway culture sees commuters and shoppers using fresh cups every day and nearly all of these are headed for the waste bin. The coffee cup issue is complicated by the makeup of the cup itself; they are made from virgin material and are very tricky to recycle. The cardboard of the coffee cup is bonded to a plastic liner, which is difficult to remove. This means the cups cannot be processed by ordinary paper mills.

Since the spotlight fell on coffee cups, there has been a rush to solve the problem. We work with James Cropper who offer a CupCycling service. This is the world's first recycling process dedicated to upcycling coffee cups into luxury paper. If your business uses a lot of coffee cups, you should consider launching a cup [recycling service](#) with us.

Recycling your coffee cups isn't the only answer. You could reduce your consumption of them altogether, by using cups fit for reuse. Businesses can purchase branded, and best of all reusable, coffee cups to give to staff. There's a wealth of reusable cups on the market; hydro-flasks; bamboo cups; collapsible cups; lidded tumblers; glass cups on-the-go, the list goes on... If you need help sourcing cups, we can help you.

You can also encourage reuse by banning coffee cups from your office or canteen and introducing ceramic mugs in your kitchenettes.

THROWAWAY CANTEENS

Canteens can be culprits of needless waste. Encourage your business to be better. Swap paper plates for ceramic, use metal cutlery, glasses rather than single-use cups, have jugs of water where staff can refill their bottles, and don't allow single-use plastic straws. Clearly labelled recycling points will then properly capture any waste that is created.

THE WASTE HIERARCHY

REMEMBER

Talk to your staff about waste, how much they create, what they are recycling, how they can do better. The better informed they are, the more they will engage with your recycling scheme. A gentle reminder can also be helpful. The Story of Stuff Project have created “remember your reusables” [posters](#) that you can display in your office.

FURNITURE

According to [this](#) WRAP report, approximately 295,000 office chairs are reused in some form in the UK every year. This is a start, but only represents 14% of all chairs being thrown out of offices. The remaining 86% are not reused and instead are sent to recycling, energy recovery or landfill.

More businesses need to prioritise reuse in how they dispose of and purchase their office furniture. We can collect your office furniture and reuse all the items in good condition (recycling the rest). The Furniture Reuse Network supports over 200 reuse charities helping them support vulnerable people.

IT

The electronics industry rightly gets a fair amount of flack when it comes to waste generation.

The electronics industry is famed for planned and perceived obsolescence. Your PC starts to slow down after 3 years and the easiest option is to buy another machine. A new model of a phone hits the shelves and people queue around the street to get their hands on it.

Electronic equipment contains rare metals and a serious amount of embodied carbon, so there are huge benefits to reconditioning old computers and electrical items and giving them a second life. Paper Round wipes all the data-bearing equipment we collect to military standards, and everything that can be fixed and sent for reuse, is.

So, think before you throw.

THE WASTE HIERARCHY

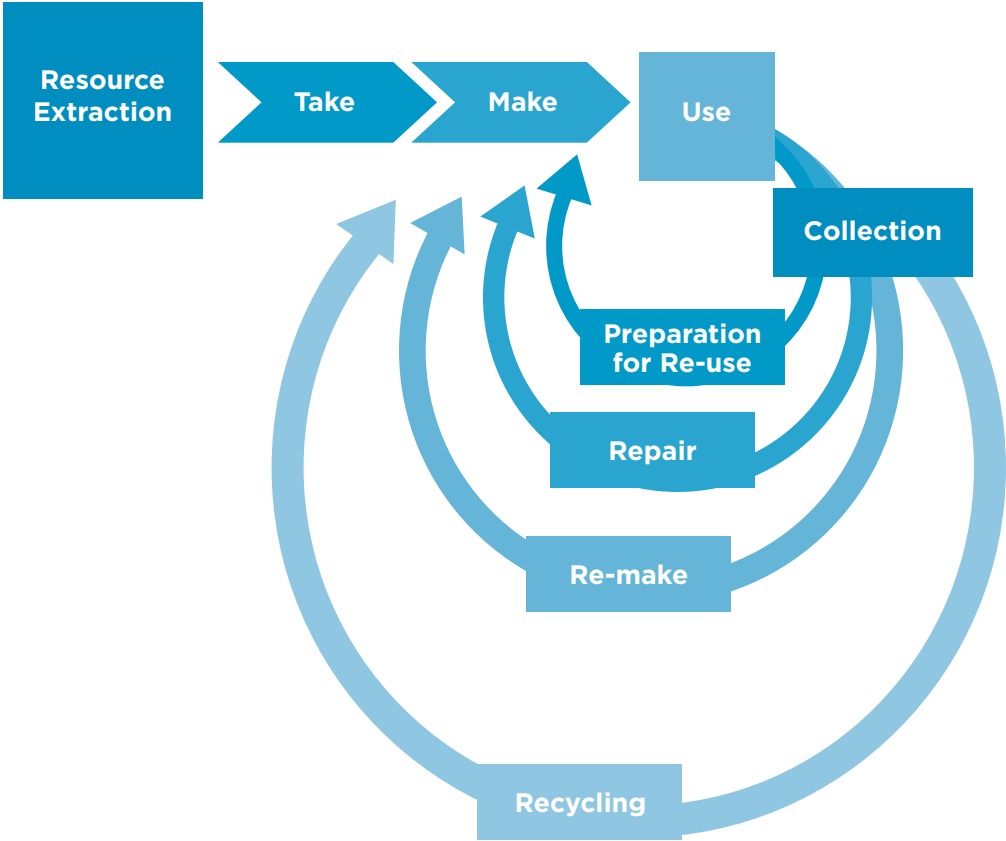
RECYCLE

Recycling is a great way to give resources new life. But it is not enough to fight ever-growing consumerism – not on its own. So, once you’ve refused, and re-thought, reduced, and reused, you’re finally ready for recycling.

Recycling uses 95% less energy than creating raw materials, (on average), so far preferable to just throwing items in the waste bin. Closed-loop recycling is even better, as it truly upholds the principles of the circular economy.

Make sure you’re working with a waste management company who recycle everything to the highest standards. At Paper Round we encourage source segregation of certain key materials. This means we obtain the maximum value from the resources we collect, providing an environmentally efficient and knowledgeable service, to help our clients be as sustainable as possible.

THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY - CLOSED-LOOP RECYCLING



THE WASTE HIERARCHY

THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY - CLOSED-LOOP RECYCLING

Paper

Paper makes up a large portion of office waste and can be effectively recycled back into brand new paper. We take all the paper we collect to a mill, where it is transformed back into high quality Image® office paper. Our clients can then choose to “close the recycling loop” by buying back their recycled paper from us. This dramatically reduces the environmental impact of their paper usage and supports the circular economy.

Glass

Glass is one of the simplest materials to recycle, if it's not contaminated with other types of waste. We collect source segregated glass and transport it to a local facility in Dagenham. There it is sorted and crushed into cullet. This is then used to make new glass bottles here in the UK. Another full closed loop.

OTHER RECYCLING INITIATIVES

Coffee cup recycling

As mentioned earlier, we can now recycle your coffee cups and transform them back into luxury papers. This is a great step in solving the coffee cup crisis.

Food Waste and Energy Buy Back

Paper Round offer a food waste recycling service. The food we collect is sent to an anaerobic digestion facility where it produces energy and biofertilizer (used to grow crops). We also donate the value of one meal to FareShare for each collection of food waste bins we make.

We have also launched an exciting new initiative. Our clients can buy the electricity produced by their food waste recycling through npower. This enables them to further support the circular economy.

Textiles

Textiles are easy and valuable to recycle. We collect them from our clients take them to LMB, a recycling company who specialise in textiles. Around 80% of the clothes LMB collect are exported for reuse, they are donated to local markets in developing nations. The remaining are recycled into flocking and felting or cut into wiping cloths.

RECYCLERS BEWARE

It's important to recycle, but it's also important to know what can be recycled. This can then inform your purchasing choices, and stop you contaminating your recycling streams with waste. Here we list some of the false friends that should actually just go in the waste bin.

PLASTICS

EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE

This is often not recycled because it is 95% air which means it is not cost effective or energy efficient to store it, transport it or recycle it.

PLASTIC BOTTLE CAPS

The caps and lids found on items such as milk bottles are typically made from Polypropylene, this has a different melting point to plastic bottles which can cause problems when they are put together for recycling.

HARD PLASTICS LIKE PLUG SOCKETS

Thermosetting plastics have strong molecular bonds. This means instead of melting, it burns at high temperatures. They also release toxic chemicals like carbon dioxide and benzene into the atmosphere when burnt.

CLING FILM

This is made from polyethylene, which is recyclable. However, many materials recycling facilities (MRFs) do not recycle them due to the likelihood of food contamination.

BLACK PLASTIC PACKAGING

This is not recycled in the UK because of the black pigment in the plastic. Sorting machines in our MRFs cannot detect the trays because of the pigment, which means they are processed as general waste.

CARD

GLITTER

Any greetings cards that contain glitter cannot be recycled.

FOOD & DRINK POUCHES

Any laminated food pouches (e.g. baby food or pet food) cannot be recycled as the plastic is bonded to the card.

TAKEAWAY FOOD CONTAINERS

Any grease or food particles present can contaminate the other materials due for recycling.

RECYCLERS BEWARE

PAPER

BROWN PAPER

Brown Paper: This can be recycled, but should be recycled with card, not paper. This is because it causes brown flecks in the new paper, resulting in whole loads of paper being rejected.

DIRTY PAPER

Dirty paper: If the paper is soiled with grease, it cannot be recycled. This is because the paper fibres cannot be separated from the oils during the recycling process.

SOME WRAPPING PAPER

Some wrapping paper: Wrapping paper can cause problems when being recycled. This is because it is often dyed, laminated or contains non-paper additives such as glitter, or coloured plastics. Some wrapping paper is very thin and doesn't have enough quality fibres to be recycled.

SOME COFFEE CUPS

Some coffee cups: We send our coffee cups to James Cropper who turn the cups into high quality paper. However, they cannot accept cups made with brown paper or corrugated card as these are lower quality materials. They also cannot accept compostable coffee cups, which we will talk about shortly.

COMPOSTABLES

COFFEE CUPS

Compostable coffee cups: Instead of a plastic lining, some coffee cups use a Polylactic Acid (PLA) lining to make them waterproof. However, PLA ruins the paper batches when being processed, so cannot be recycled alongside other coffee cups.

OTHER COMPOSTABLES

Other compostables: It is also worth knowing that most compostable plastics, can't just be thrown in a compost bin or food recycling stream, they actually need to be sent to an industrial composting facility. There are no industrial composting facilities in the London area. So, check with your recycling company, before you go compostable, it might just be green wash.



Thank you for reading. To engage in the debate visit us on:

 #ThrowawayCultureUnwrapped  BPR Group Europe Ltd



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