

DFS Waste Project: Saving Money, Saving Space, Saving the Planet

CLIENT:	DFS
SECTOR:	Retail
COST CATEGORIES:	Balers, Compactors, General Waste, Polythene

Furniture giant's 'Zero to Landfill' target inspires and supports many Expense Reduction Analysts (ERA) initiatives across its Head Office, stores, warehouses and factories.

THE CLIENT

DFS was founded in 1969 with a single store near Doncaster and has since grown to become the clear market leader of upholstered furniture in the UK. Today DFS employs more than 3,500 people and operates over 100 retail stores in the UK, the Republic of Ireland and the Netherlands, a comprehensive online channel, and three upholstery factories in the UK.

THE CHALLENGE

"From day one, DFS were very keen on the Waste project," says Hugh Swainston, Client Manager at ERA. "We met with Phil Johnson, then Facilities and Services Manager, and he was enthusiastic not just about the money that could be saved, but also about achieving the corporate goal of reducing waste and increasing recycling. And he recognised that DFS did not have the skills to do this themselves.

"The project was signed off at CEO level, which gives you some idea of the backing that it enjoyed.

"The handling of waste across the supply chain is a huge undertaking for a business as large as DFS. Significantly, the first initiative was around a new recycling system at their Head Office, with the ultimate target of sending zero waste direct to landfill. This was a bold statement by DFS management, and a demonstration to everyone in the business of their determination to change the culture around waste.

SUMMARY OF SAVINGS

Maintenance on balers and compactors	20%
General waste collection service	19%
Polythene collection service	78%



"I could not recommend Expense Reduction Analysts highly enough: they have helped us reduce costs massively; they have worked with us to achieve ISO 14001 accreditation; and we have just learnt that our Head Office of 350 people has reached zero to landfill."

PHIL JOHNSON,
HEAD OF NEW ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, DFS

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THE SOLUTION

“I was fortunate to be able to call upon the expert knowledge of my colleague, Pete Bramhall, a Waste Management Specialist, to co-ordinate the many elements of the project.”

Pete Bramhall takes up the story: “The Head Office ‘zero to landfill’ target was a great start, giving our activities increased visibility and credibility. We then reviewed the waste produced by DFS warehouses, factories and stores, adopting a phased approach to change comprising ten different initiatives.”

“For example, we reviewed the waste handling equipment - polythene balers and general waste compactors - renegotiating the maintenance agreement on these 200 pieces of kit, saving DFS 20% or £32,000 per annum. These machines are frequently relocated as new stores and warehouses open and others close, so we also helped DFS to manage this more effectively to optimise the equipment’s utilisation.

“Next, we looked at DFS’s waste collection from their 100 stores and warehouses and ran a comprehensive tender process. We recommended a change of supplier, which immediately realised a 19% or £68,000 p.a. saving.

Evidence for ISO 14001: recycling more and proving it

“Crucially, this also resulted in greatly improved reporting, which was very useful, especially for DFS’s push towards ISO 14001 certification, for which they need to demonstrate year-on-year improvement in recycling. Their Business in the Community score also stands to rise with the advent of the new supplier, as they are able to prove their high rates of recycling, which they had not been able to do before. “DFS also liked the fact that the new provider put a dedicated account manager in place, with quarterly meetings, an ‘innovation’ log and shared improvement targets.

“We also reviewed the recycling of polythene, which historically had been baled at each store, and then collected by the supplier. This had resulted in high transport costs, and valuable space being taken up by polythene that was often overdue for collection. We are trialling a new system, whereby, when the furniture is delivered, the polythene is immediately taken back to the national distribution centre in smaller quantities for rebaling.

“We anticipate rebate improvements of £86,000 p.a. or 78%, as well as the freeing up of vital space in the store warehouses.”

Hugh Swainston concludes: “Waste is a huge area, and we are delighted that DFS is so committed to working with us on so many different initiatives. The cost savings have been impressive, but the environmental impact has been even greater. With so many new programmes on stream, on trial or at the planning stage, we look forward to working with DFS on this vital area into the future.”



PHIL JOHNSON, HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AT DFS, SUMMARISES THE VALUE OF HIS COMPANY'S PARTNERSHIP WITH EXPENSE REDUCTION ANALYSTS:

“From our first meeting, Hugh Swainston and Pete Bramhall have been so professional. Pete has undertaken a full analysis of our waste, including many site visits, situation reports, tendering processes and so on. We now have greatly reduced maintenance costs, vastly increased recycling (our cardboard recycling has become a revenue generator, rather than a cost); we have supplier SLAs in place; and we are rolling out our environmental management system to all of our locations. The partnership has worked really well.”