

# Sustainability at Work

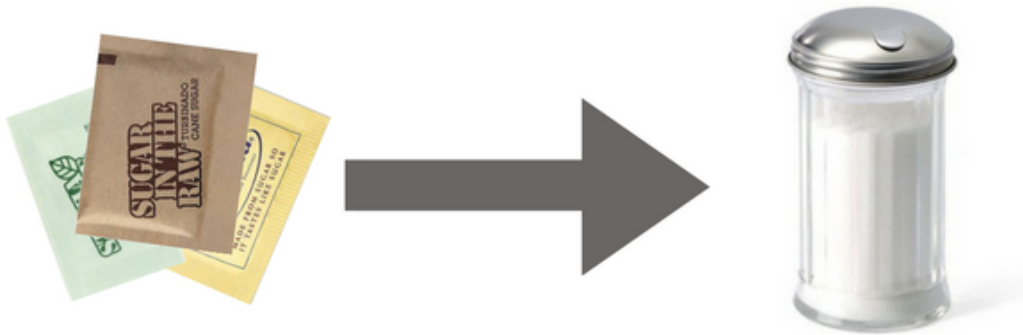
Providing free tools and expertise to achieve your goals

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## Trim your waste by bulking up

Next time you grab coffee or tea from your breakroom or kitchen, take a look at your kitchen supplies with fresh eyes. You may have overlooked a great opportunity to reduce waste and expense without sacrificing any perks.



### Bulk up on sugar and cream

First, consider your coffee and tea set up. Assuming you haven't done so already, stop providing single-serve creamers and sweeteners in packets. Buy cream, sugar and other sweeteners in bulk.

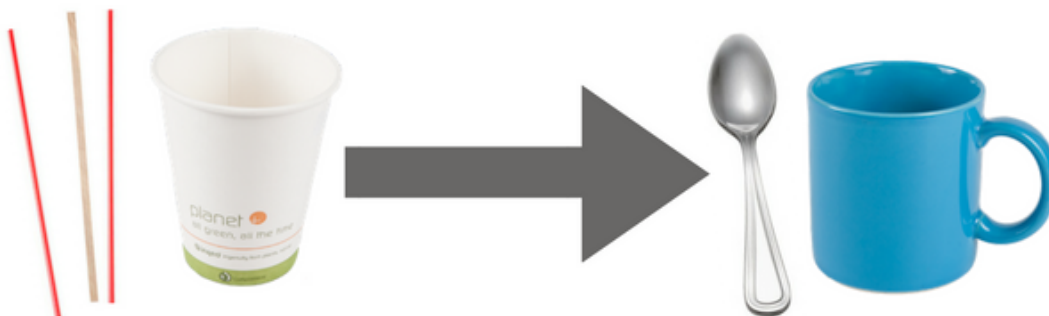
If you contract for all of this through a beverage service, ask them to switch to bulk items on your next order. If your coffee and tea is provided in single-serve packaging, don't forget to explore opportunities for providing them in bulk, too.

### Ditch the disposables

If you've already made the switch to bulk items, there are other opportunities for you to reduce waste. Start by replacing single-use coffee stirrers with reusable spoons. Even if your office doesn't have a dishwasher, cleaning a cupful of dirty spoons each day doesn't take much time, and thrift stores are a great source for affordable utensils and other kitchen supplies.

If you are fortunate enough to have a dishwasher at work (either a machine or willing coworkers), you can take a big step forward by replacing all paper plates, cups, bowls, and plastic utensils with durable dishware. Get started by asking employees to donate unwanted plates, mugs, glasses, and bowls from their personal kitchens to the work kitchen. Then fill in the missing pieces at the thrift store. Of course, if it's important to your organization's image that you buy new matching plates and silverware, you'll still save resources over the long run. However, do try the reuse route first if your organization is willing.

Sugar packets and bulk sugar dispenser



### Don't forget about paper towels and napkins

Paper towels are often the biggest source of paper waste in large offices. Some workplaces have made a switch to cloth kitchen towels and napkins. For this, you'll need a collection basket or box for the dirty linens and a volunteer strategy to ensure linens are washed and returned as needed. Read about a Portland office that made the switch (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork/article/528206>).

If that seems too much right now, start by encouraging everyone to bring in and use their own cloth napkins. Even if only a percentage of employees embrace this approach, it's a start and gives everyone an opportunity to make a change on their own.

\*But what about things that are recyclable or compostable?

Rule of thumb #1: Less is more.

Generally speaking, the less “stuff” you’re disposing of (in trash, recycling or compost), the better: Just think about all the energy, water, resources, and transportation that go into making and delivering something that gets used once and then tossed. Even if an item can be recycled or composted, it’s still better to reduce waste first.

Rule of thumb #2: “Recyclable” and “Compostable” labels don’t always mean it should be recycled or composted.



None of these items should go in Portland’s curbside recycling (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork/article/461315#RecyclingGuide>) or compost (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork/article/468043>) bins:

Single-serve creamers or sweetener packets

Single-serve coffee and beverage pods

Stir sticks

Disposable cups, plates and utensils (regardless of what they’re made of)

Paper towels

“Recyclable” and “compostable” labels are not regulated. What’s allowed in recycling and compost differs by geographic area, depending on a variety of considerations including local processing facilities, the environmental value of recycling a particular material, and the market for reusing the recycled materials.

Want more ideas for bulking up your office kitchen? See what we’ve done at our office

(<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork/article/507591>).

And check out:

Why reusable dishware is the most sustainable option

Make the switch from paper towels to hand dryers

Tap water vs bottled water

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