



**Sustainability
Advisors**

Waste reduction actions

Recommendations to reduce
waste across your business



Agenda

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What is it and why is it relevant for your business?

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Key information to takeaway



1

The circular economy



Waste and the circular economy

What is it and why does it matter?

'Waste' refers to all the materials, items, and products that are thrown away.

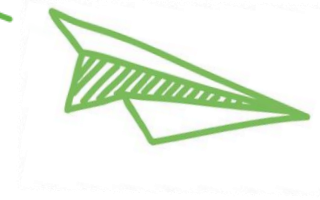
The 'circular economy' is an economic model which places importance on the need to reduce waste to a minimum and make the most of the planet's resources.

Products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, and recycling.

The circular economy helps to tackle climate change and other global challenges – like biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution – by ensuring economic activity doesn't have to be tied to the consumption of finite (or non-renewable) resources.

The circular economy is based on 3 principles:

1. Eliminate waste and pollution
2. Circulate products and materials
3. Regenerate nature





Waste and the circular economy

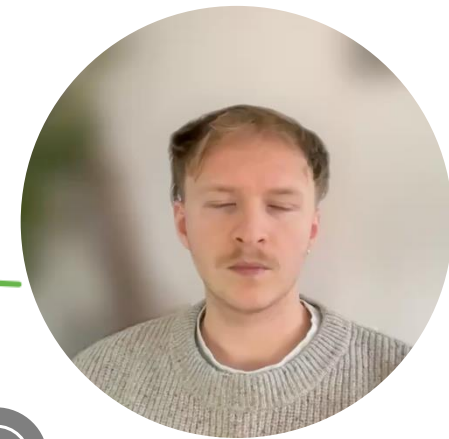
Why the circular economy and waste reduction is important

Over the past 250 years, we have transitioned from being local producers / consumers to global ones.

The Industrial Revolution was a significant changing point in how we produce and consume. The post-war era then saw the rise of consumerism and a fixation on GDP. We became a **linear economy – take, make and waste.**

Manufacturers responded to growing wants for newer, faster, and cheaper products by producing more and more, often while reducing product reusability, quality, and efficiency.

As a result, waste is considered a normal byproduct of operations, and the volume of waste is rapidly increasing.

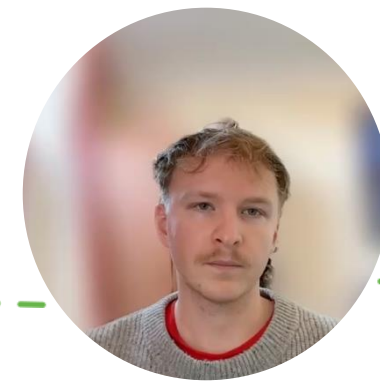


Did you know?

Every year more than 2 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste is generated. This is currently projected to increase by around 50% by 2050.^[1]

That's roughly the same weight as the world's merchant fleet carrying capacity.^[2]

[\[1\] Statista](#) / [\[2\] GOV.UK](#)

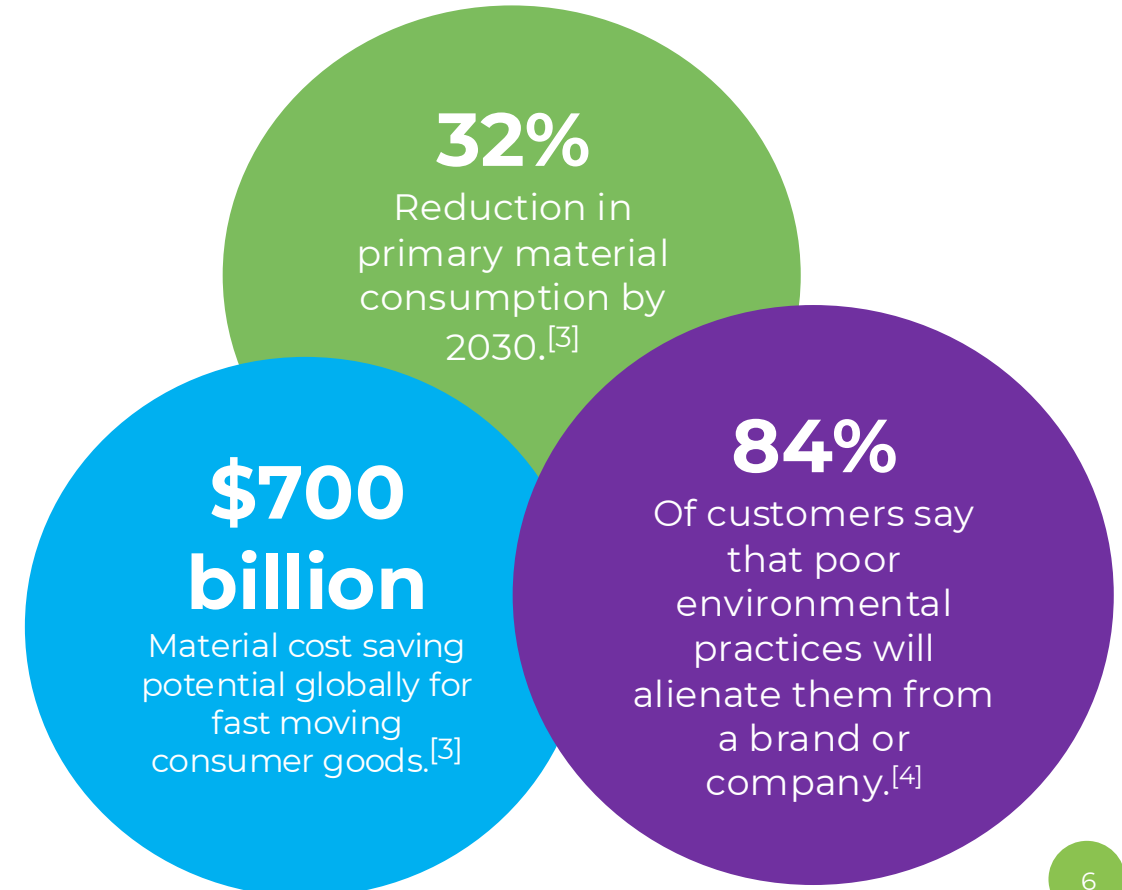


Waste and the circular economy

What impact could a circular economy make?

The business case

- **Resource efficiency** – By extending a product's lifespan, companies can reduce their reliance on finite resources.
- **Cost savings** – Repairing and refurbishing old products can be more cost effective than creating new ones.
- **Market differentiation** – Circularity helps businesses attract consumers who increasingly value sustainability and want to make ethical choices about the products and services they look to buy.
- **Risk mitigation** – Organisations rely less on virgin or limited resources – and strengthen the reliability of supply chains.



[\[3\] The Circular economy in detail](#)

[\[4\] 52 Huge Environmentally Conscious Consumer Statistics](#)



The waste hierarchy

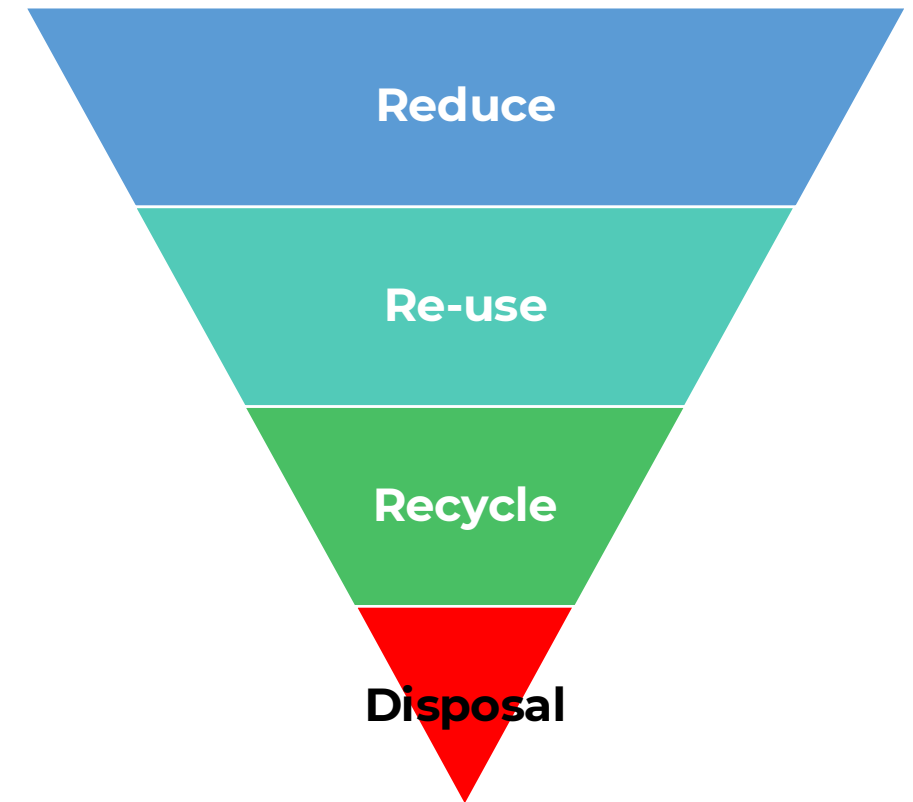
A strategy to help implement a circular model of business

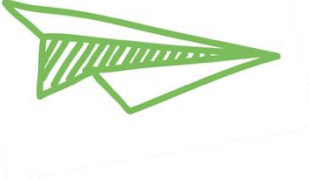
The waste hierarchy model ranks waste management options from most to least environmentally beneficial. The top priority is reducing or preventing waste.

When waste can't be avoided, businesses should focus on re-use and recycling – the other two elements of the “3 Rs.” If neither the “3 Rs” nor energy recovery are possible, disposal becomes the final option.

Naturally, the appropriateness of any waste actions will vary between manufacturers and service providers, as many service providers are unlikely to produce the same amount of waste as manufacturers. Nonetheless, there are several actions that both types of businesses can adopt, with some clear areas of overlap.

What practical actions can your business take to implement principles of the waste hierarchy?



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Conduct a waste audit

Firstly, understand the waste streams from your business

A waste audit allows a business to understand the types of waste it generates, the quantity of waste, and where the waste is generated. You can't improve what you don't measure!

With this insight, businesses can:

- Identify opportunities to reduce waste at the source
- Divert materials from landfill through reuse or recycling
- Embed circular economy principles into your operations

Typically, a waste audit requires a business to:

1. **Collect a representative waste sample**
2. **Record waste measurements** - *this could be as simple as measuring the capacity of your bin and the amount of bin bags used per week*
3. **Analyse waste measurements** – *is it mostly paper, organics, or tins??*

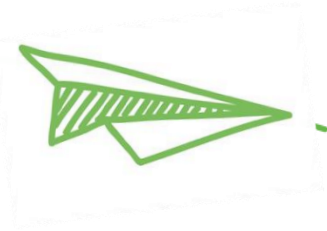
By completing these three steps, a business can identify recommendations to reduce its waste streams and divert waste from landfill.



2

Reduce actions



A green line-art icon of a paper airplane, pointing to the right. It is enclosed within a light green dashed-line square frame.

Reduce

Always try to reduce waste in the first place

Buy second-hand items and materials

Many businesses specialise in selling second-hand goods that often perform just as well as new goods. Identifying where these alternatives are suitable can help reduce demand for new resources for manufactured products, lower costs, and minimise your business's exposure to risks associated with fragile supply chains.

Reduce packaging waste

Aim to reduce your packaging by using smaller, more efficient designs and recyclable materials that result in less packaging waste sent to landfill. Globally, 40% of the total 353 million tonnes of plastic waste comes from packaging.^[5]

Reducing packaging also helps companies who have to comply with the UK's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) rules. By lowering the amount of packaging you place on the market, you reduce the amount of reporting and the fees charged for managing that packaging at end-of-life.



£5.92bn

Total UK spend
on second-hand
products in
2023^[6]

£1.07bn

Total UK spend
in 2023 on
renting items^[6]

[\[5\] Our World in Data](#)
[\[6\] Recommerce revolution](#)

Reduce

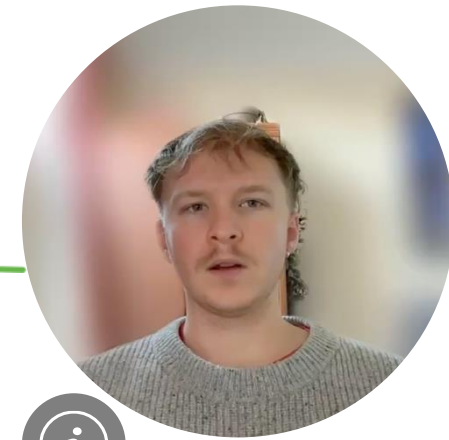
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Factor less resource intensive materials into R&D

As you design (or redesign) products, consider the potential of new bio-based materials that are less resource intensive or fully recyclable. Supporting this, many European countries are adopting 'bioeconomy strategies', helping to drive market demand for bio-based products.^[7]

Donate unused products

Mass production often results in surplus materials or goods that do not get used or sold. Instead of throwing them away, consider donating them. This keeps products in use for longer and directly reduces your waste, diverting many products from landfill. It also supports social good, builds local ties and showcases your support for charitable causes.



Did you know?

In 2025, the EU bioeconomy represented €2.7 trillion in revenue, up from €812 billion in 2022. It's only expected to grow - tap into this market to benefit!^[7]

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Reduce

Continued

Go paperless

Document printing can cost up to 1% - 3% of total business turnover. Digitising business documentation could help to reduce office waste and cut costs.^[8]

Reduce single-use plastics

Within staff kitchens and workspaces, avoid disposable plastic cutlery and cups, and encourage re-usable alternatives.

Buy high-quality, long-lasting equipment

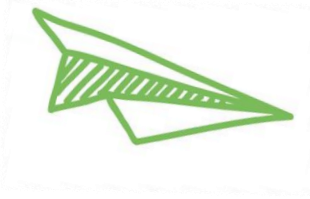
When buying new equipment for your offices and/or facilities, consider the durability and longevity of what you are buying. Prioritise equipment that can be easily maintained or reused. For example, purchasing high-quality office chairs that will last several years, rather than low-cost chairs that need replacing every 1-2 years will reduce resource usage and waste.



3

Reuse actions





Reuse

Where reduction is not possible, consider reusing products and materials

Repair faulty or broken equipment

Instead of discarding broken or faulty equipment, explore opportunities to repair and fix it. Research shows that half of UK consumers are repairing broken possessions to counter the rising cost of living.^[9] This offers businesses another opportunity to embed circularity into their business: set up a repair-first policy in response.

Implement rental initiatives

Customers often buy a product and never reuse it. Consider offering products as part of a subscription or lease, where they can be reused again by multiple clients. This will reduce resource consumption, lower costs, and encourage in-house maintenance and repair. It also opens a new revenue stream for the business.





Reuse

Continued

Reuse packaging materials

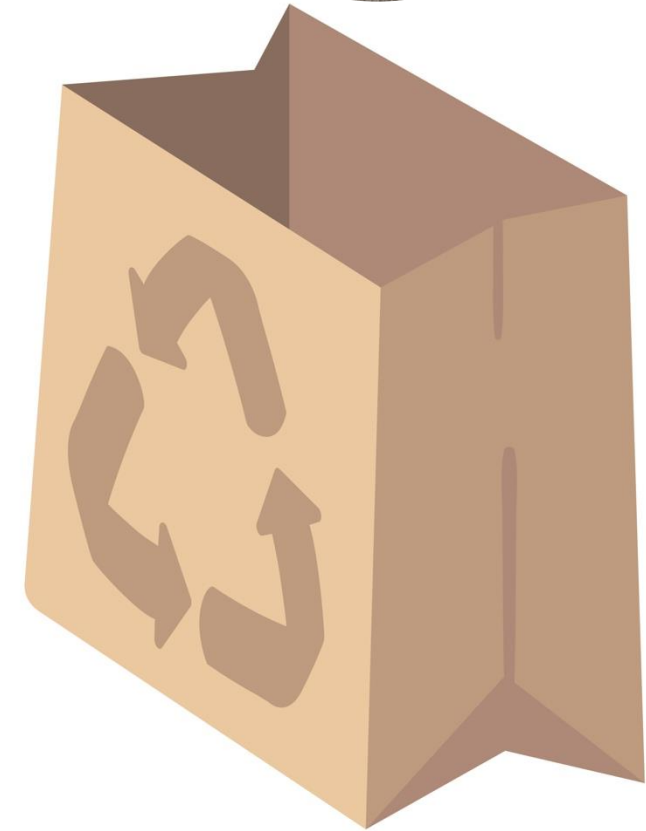
Boxes, pallets, wrapping, bags, and other packaging materials can often be reused several times, yet we often use them once and dispose of them. Reusing these items several times will reduce the constant need for new packaging, cutting costs and reducing overall waste.

Support schemes that reuse by-products and waste

Manufacturing processes and everyday business activities can't help but create byproducts and waste. Instead of allowing these materials to accumulate, partner with organisations that can repurpose them for new applications. For example, food waste can be diverted to composting or anaerobic digestion, while materials like cardboard, textiles or rubber can be used by other businesses in their own production cycles.

Reuse and share office supplies

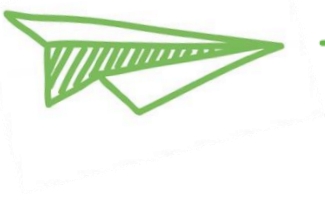
Share and reuse items like office stationery and kitchen utensils to reduce the need for single use items. For example, set up a dedicated area in the office where staff can deposit, share and reuse supplies.



4

Recycle actions





Recycle

Every time you think of disposing something, ask yourself if recycling is an option

Set up recycling stations

At your site/s, set up clearly marked recycling stations for employees and customers. Recycling stations encourage more waste to be correctly recycled. To ensure waste is placed in the right bins, provide clear information for your employees, customers, and visitors. This can be done using waste posters at each recycling station, and colour coding.

Ideally, install bins for the following categories:
Mixed paper, plastic packaging, tins and cans, mixed glass, food waste, and general waste.



Recycle

Continued

Integrate recycled material into production

If you are unable to reduce the amount of material used in your products, consider using recycled content. Using recycled materials in your production process delivers significant benefits for your business and society, including:

- **Cost efficiency**
- Increased **supply chain resilience**
- **Increased brand appeal** to sustainability-conscious customers

Wider benefits include resource conservation, land-use reduction and greenhouse gas reduction.

Support and create take-back schemes

Support schemes that aim to increase recycling rates. This could be through the installation of reverse vending machines (RVMs), where consumers get rewards for returning items such as bottles, cans and boxes. This reduces waste and boosts customer engagement through instant rewards such as cash or store vouchers.



95% less

Making recycled aluminium only takes around 5% of the energy needed to make new aluminium.^[10]

74%

Of respondents in a European Union survey said they were more likely to recycle if there was a reward involved.^[11]

^[10] [Infinitely Recyclable](#)
^[11] [The Future of Recycling](#)

Support charities and NGOs

Be a company that champions those making a difference

Partner with charities & NGOs tackling waste

Examples include WRAP, Keep Britain Tidy, Surfers Against Sewage, and Waste Aid.

By offering financial or practical support, you help these organisations:

- Secure vital funding for their operations
- Expand the reach of their campaigns and strengthen their influence
- Tackle waste!

In turn, your business will likely benefit from access to expert waste-management support which comes with more reliable waste data and the ability to create a customer-trusted sustainability profile that differentiates you from your competitors.



Provide training

Educate your employees about the circular economy

Offering training for employees on waste management and the circular economy is a great way to improve understanding and awareness around the topic. Understanding the basic principles of the circular economy is essential for supporting widespread waste reduction.

When your employees have a greater understanding of why we need to transition away from accepting waste as normal and move towards circularity, they will be better equipped to contribute positively and promote waste reduction initiatives in the workplace.

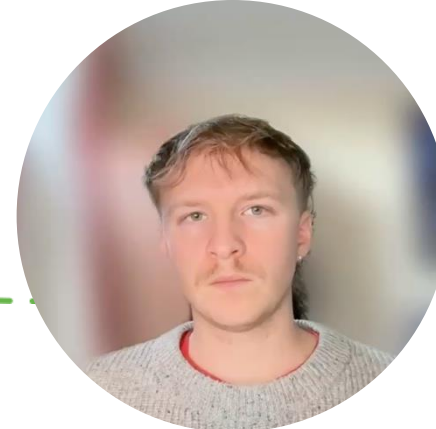
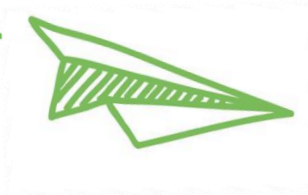
Support the Goals is an online platform sharing free and accessible sustainability education resources for businesses, which you can use for education & engagement. Learn about the **circular economy** [here](#).



5

Summary



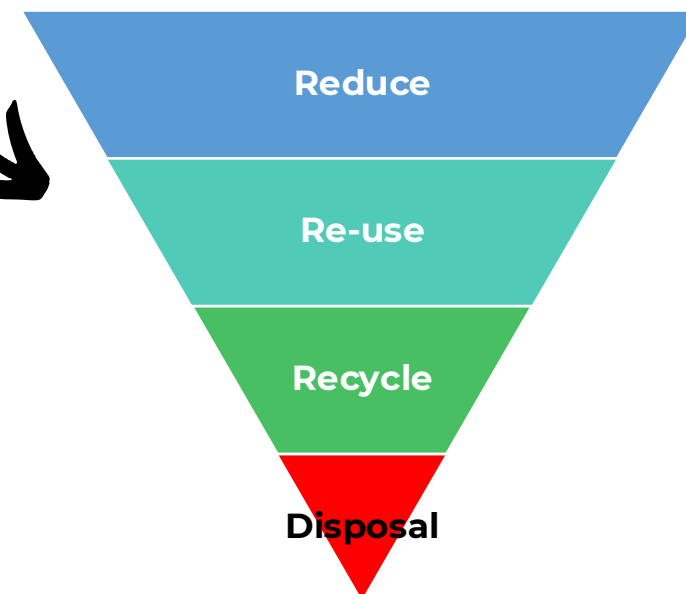


Summary

Key takeaways from this course

- Conduct a waste audit!
- Practical waste reduction actions your business can take include buying second-hand, reducing packaging, factoring less resource intensive materials into R&D, and purchasing high-quality, long-lasting equipment.
- Where reduction is not possible, consider reusing products and materials.
- Every time you think of disposing of something, ask yourself if recycling an item is an option. Set up recycling stations and support take-back schemes.
- Support organisations tackling waste and educate your employees on the circular economy.

Waste management options from most to least environmentally beneficial. The **top priority is reducing** or preventing **waste**.



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- ☐ Achieve net zero
- ☐ Develop and implement policies
- ☐ Set metrics and targets
- ☐ Understand, align or comply with standards and frameworks
- ☐ Report on progress
- ☐ Engage suppliers
- ☐ Engage customers and employees
- ☐ Educate your people





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