

Envirowise One Bin Day - challenging office wasters

Submitted by: Mistral Group

Wednesday, 20 February 2008

Bad waste practices are costing UK industry at least £15 billion each year, says sustainable business expert Envirowise. To bring the message home, Envirowise is targeting UK offices with its 'One Bin Day' campaign on Thursday, February 21.

As Envirowise programme director Dr Martin Gibson explains:

"One Bin Day is designed to make people think about what they buy, use and throw away. It highlights how much waste a typical office can generate in just one day. Much of what we discard can be reduced or recycled but the convenience of a bin right by your desk makes for a big temptation to throw away valuable resources."

Paper is an obvious focus of the campaign: office workers can get through 50 sheets of paper a day, with several studies suggesting that much of this is wasted printing that goes straight in the bin. Overall this contributes to 80.6 million tonnes of printing and writing paper entering the waste stream each year in the UK – 24% of total UK waste.

By removing individual desk bins and forcing people to walk to just one central bin, Envirowise hopes to raise awareness among the nation's 25 million office workers to rethink the way they use materials and handle waste. Approximately 70% of office waste is recyclable – but on average only 7.5% reaches a recycling facility.

"The visual impact can be staggering," says Dr Gibson. "If workers follow their normal practices, the central bin will soon be overflowing within a matter of hours. This will help focus attention on just how much is used and thrown away daily. Once people start thinking about how they use things, they often think of how to reduce the amount they use and improve the reuse and recycling of what is left."

Organisations that have tested One Bin Day for themselves are pleased with the results. Victoria Hands, Environmental and Sustainability Manager, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), commented:

"Alongside our existing recycling schemes, we trialled One Bin Day in our Estates Division last year, providing recycling bins for paper, cans and glass and a communal lidded bin for waste going to landfill in our open plan office for 30 staff. We're pleased to say it has worked exceptionally well throughout the year. Apart from the obvious environmental benefits, there have been other advantages such as improved hygiene and pest deterrence from the lidded bins as well as happier cleaning staff who only have to empty bins in one area rather than from under 30 desks.

"In fact, the campaign has been so successful at cutting waste and increasing environmental awareness that all new staff are briefed on how the scheme operates, we now only use transparent bin bags so we can be more aware of the waste we produce, instead of hiding it in black bin bags and we're extending the One Bin provision to other departments at the LSE."

For an overview of the campaign and how to take part see <http://www.envirowise.gov.uk/onebinday>

To publicise the campaign and encourage participation, Envirowise will be taking to the streets of London on Thursday, February 21 with a giant eight foot high waste paper bin made from 1584 sheets of paper – the amount of paper that the average office worker prints off in a month.

Please liaise with Alison Hill on 01869 352 722 / 07956 859 749 / alison.hill@mistral-pr.co.uk for filming opportunities, further comment and interviews.

Issued on behalf of Envirowise by Mistral PR

About Envirowise

Envirowise is a government-funded programme dedicated to putting the sustainable use of resources at the heart of UK business practice. Since 1994 Envirowise has helped UK businesses save over £1 billion by enabling them to significantly reduce their environmental impact. Envirowise offers businesses of all sizes and sectors a wide range of free, independent and practical advice designed to genuinely improve their processes, profitability and competitiveness.

Notes to editors:

The total waste produced in the UK is estimated to be around 335 million tonnes each year.

(Defra, <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/waste/kf/wrkf13.htm>)

Offices who want to find out more about reducing waste in the workplace are encouraged to use the Envirowise publication 'Green efficiency: running a cost-effective, environmentally aware office' available online at <http://www.envirowise.gov.uk>

Recycling one tonne of paper can save 7,000 gallons of water. It also saves 17 trees, 380 gallons of oil, 3 cubic yards of landfill space and 4,000 kilowatts of energy.

Envirowise has a range of simple steps to reduce office waste:

- Set the office printer to print on both sides of the paper by default.
- Use electronic communication where possible to reduce printing and faxing.
- Don't print out e-mails unless absolutely necessary – add 'think before you print' to the bottom of email signatures as a prompt
- Avoid over-production of marketing and publicity material by reviewing distribution lists and regularly updating databases.
- Collect all paper that has been printed on one side and re-use it for printing in draft or for scrap message pads
- Re-use envelopes wherever possible, especially for sending information internally.
- Place recycling bins in all offices
- Ensure that vending machines allow the use of china mugs rather than plastic vending cups

- Avoid purchasing disposable catering products such as milk jiggers, sugar sachets and paper plates.