

# Lighten The Load

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How the right waste and recycling partner can help you focus on what's important in your restaurants

Today's restaurant facility manager is charged with ensuring a stellar experience from the moment customers enter the door until they depart. Unbeknownst to the customer, this experience is highly dependent upon critical back-office operations, including proper waste and recycling management.

Having a partner with waste and recycling program expertise to handle the various needs of each of your restaurant locations removes the burden from the facility managers. This partnership saves time and money, typically reducing costs an average of 12 percent across the entire portfolio.

Each restaurant facility may have its own specific needs, as well as ad-hoc projects, such as restaurant openings. Collaborating with a trusted partner, who is viewed as an extension of the facility management staff and who is available around the clock, will result in a holistic, customized and innovative solution.

## Finding a Partner

When designing an integrated and customized waste program solution for a restaurant brand, let each location's specific needs drive the service recommendations. As you evaluate your program and partner, consider these best practices to ensure your restaurant's financial and sustainability goals are met.

## Dedicated Account Management

The restaurant industry continues to evolve. Customer behaviors that were prevalent just a few years ago have changed significantly. For example, food delivery is expected to experience double-digit growth over the next five years. Depending on the location, this small shift can have a big impact on your restaurant's waste program.

There may also be location-specific differences that must be taken into account. For example:

1. Are there space constraints at a facility?
2. Are dumpster enclosures required?
3. Are there unique recycling mandates?

When you can speak directly to your account manager, this establishes a solid and trustworthy relationship that will carry you through these tides of change. A dedicated account management team that understands industry trends, as well as your restaurant's needs, enables each of your locations to have a customized program that is flexible and adaptable.

## Compliance Expertise

When it comes to waste regulations, facility managers must ensure compliance with federal, city, town and other municipal requirements. While the regulations at the highest level may not change as frequently, citywide mandates can be more fluid. Being proactive in monitoring these changes is time-consuming. Having a dedicated and knowledgeable resource assigned to this critical business need will avoid the potential fines and fees, and more importantly, help you to maintain compliance.

These additional, potentially unbudgeted expenses, ranging from a few hundred to thousands of dollars, can jeopardize an otherwise healthy bottom line. A waste and recycling management partner must have a comprehensive database of regulations and reliable means to communicate any changes with each restaurant location in a timely manner. They should also have a proven approach to compliance monitoring and be able to illustrate cost-savings with industry-specific examples.

These compliance challenges, along with changes in customer behaviors, are why a “set it and forget it” model cannot be a successful long-term strategy to achieve your sustainability goals.

### Solid Business Intelligence

It goes without saying that your waste and recycling management partner must have a user-friendly, data-rich and transparent technological solution that delivers key data points and informative reports to aid in the decision-making process. Additionally, reviewing this data on a regular basis ensures financial and sustainability goals are on target. This is another benefit of having a dedicated account manager who thoroughly understands your business.

Ongoing business reviews, based on key sustainability program data points, lead to a comprehensive solution that is flexible and open for continuous improvement. Waste programs that are pliable and adaptable are effective and efficient, both in the short and long terms.

### Innovation

Just as a restaurant facility continually invests in technologies or other solutions to provide an optimal customer experience, so must your waste and recycling management partner. Ensuring that they are delivering leading-edge solutions illustrates that they are strategic, forward-thinkers. Stagnation is a recipe for disaster in the restaurant and waste management industries.

Does your waste management provider have an entrepreneurial approach to implementing new technologies? Are they nimble enough to quickly roll out these solutions across multiple geographic locations with a systematic approach that does not disrupt daily business operations? A one-size-fits-all approach lacks creativity and can lead to additional expenses or other program inefficiencies.

### Program Customization Leads to Optimization

While some locations may evolve into a “set it and forget it” program, the reality is that every restaurant location has its nuances and sustainability goals that need to be top of mind for

your waste management provider. Understanding the unique characteristics of each restaurant leads to the development of a customized solution that:

- Delivers measurable cost and process efficiencies
- Provides transparency of program details
- Enables access to business intelligence for optimal decision making
- Stays ahead of compliance requirements in a timely and proactive manner

This integrated solution cannot solely exist on paper. A dedicated team of industry professionals is critical to its success. Having access to cutting-edge technology, transparent business intelligence and a team of compliance experts can be the difference in a waste and recycling management program that simply “does the job” versus one that consistently exceeds financial and sustainability goals.

Caitlin Hitt is a creative client retention strategist with more than 15 years of experience in developing national accounts programs. She is an inventive business process improvement expert with proven success in streamlining processes, leading to cost efficiencies and new revenue opportunities. Hitt excels at nurturing client relationships, delivering best-in-class solutions to meet and exceed sustainability goals.