



Eliminating Disposable Plastics Activities



Plastic Audit

Conducting an audit is the first step to take in a bid to reduce or entirely eliminate the single use plastics from your organization. It will enable you to have a full scope of the plastic use within your organization, and thus provide you with a baseline data highlighting your plastic use. This will enable you to create a strategic plan to eliminate your plastic waste, which will in turn be more fruitful than an Ad-Hoc approach to the problem.

Before you begin with your audit, it is important to introduce the issue to the members of your organization. This can be done by means of infographics, videos or even sending out emails to your members highlighting the ill effects of plastic.

Another helpful step will be to introduce the idea of an audit well in advance to the team, and even collecting a collating estimates from them. Perform a pre-audit survey with questions such as How big is our plastic problem? How much plastic waste is generated in our cafeteria etc.?

Design the investigation, and pick the locations whose waste you will be analysing for the presence of single use plastic. Ideally, every bin within the organization should be analysed. Also arrange for materials such as tarps, waste buckets for liquids, gloves and a weighing scale. Ensure that there is access to disinfectant and soap.

To Conduct the audit, divide your team into smaller groups and ask them to analyse the plastic present in their allotted

bins. The team can distinguish members as sorters who will distinguish plastics from non-plastics, researchers to look up unknown materials, measures to quantify and weigh the plastics, and data recorders to keep a record. Create a plastic audit data sheet enlisting the location of waste bin, description of location, the type of plastic collected and its corresponding waste.

The next step is to analyse the data, with respect to weight, volume against type of plastic, or time of collection. They can also compare the findings of the true data against the estimated data.

Once this is done, draw conclusions and highlight locations that generate most waste, areas that are generating the most of a specific type of waste. It might also be beneficial to perform a second audit to verify the results.

Once a conclusion has been drawn the members can devise an action plan on the basis of these conclusions to devise a strategy to reduce and or eliminate the use of single use plastics within the organization.

Infographics and Posters

A great way to bring about empathy and awareness of the issue of plastic pollution is utilizing infographics and posters. These can either be informative, or aspirational or even a call to action.

Before you set out to create your posters, determine the locations where you will be displaying your posters. Decide

the number of posters accordingly, ensuring that these posters are placed in areas of your organization that is highly visited or populated.

There are a few simple steps to ensure that your posters are engaging and well received. Keep your audience in mind while you create your posters, i.e. do not make posters that are childish for a grown audience or vice versa, ensure that your poster design and style fits the audience it is aimed at. Keep it simple, especially while creating infographics. One of the advantages of infographics is that they can distill advanced ideas into a simple visual form. But the inherent advantage of infographics can be their demise. An infographic can become needlessly complex, creating a mind-numbing cognitive overload rather than an “Oh, I get it” experience. Like everything else in life, infographics are better when they are simple.

Don't just make your infographic a potpourri of facts and figures. Make it a streamlined and focused on a single topic. Try to portray as much information as you can visually, and keep the text to a minimum. Also ensure that the text is easily legible.

A simple way to create an engaging poster / infographic is to create a killer headline that is concise and catchy. Also remember to always check your facts and cite your sources. Try to use sources that are as up-to-date as possible. Using old stats, especially in an industry where information is always changing, makes you seem out of touch. Website like www.ourworldindata.org provide real-time facts.

Ensure that the posters in a specific location, can relate to the area of display. For example, displaying a poster pertaining to the hazards to plastic bottles near the fridge.

If you are unable to use design and editing software to create artwork, there are a variety of easy to use design tools available online for ready use. Some of these websites are listed below:

<https://www.befunky.com/features/graphic-designer>

<https://artworktool.com>

<https://crello.com/>

<https://www.canva.com/>

Pledge Drives

Contrary to popular belief, pledge drives are not just for broadcasting, but also an important tool that can be utilized by institutes and other organizations.

Firstly, you will have to pick a location to carry out your pledge drive. A popular public spot with a diverse crowd is a good choice, such as a mall, public garden or a picnic spot. Ensure that you speak to the authorities well in advance to acquire necessary permissions, and avoid surprises on the day off.

Determine the theme of your drive, and create a few posters relating to the various pledges one can take. Speak to the people individually, explain to them the issue with plastic pollution and inform them about the various pledges they can take to combat the problem.

It might be a good idea to collect contact details of all those who are willing to share the same, you can send them tips and tricks to help them achieve their goal, and also ask to share progress reports!

Plastic collection drives

Carrying out a plastic collection drive is another way to highlight the amount of plastic generated by upon a daily basis by a particular region. There are a few simple rules to keep in mind before you organize a plastic collection drive. Firstly, speak to a recycling centre, and ask them to advise you upon the efficient segregation of the collected plastic, and also inform them of the date of your drive and when you will be dropping off the collected plastic for recycling.

The first step to organizing a successful collection drive is to pick a date. While there are no rules to selecting the date, it would be ideal to choose one after a major event or holiday (often more plastic is generated around these days!).

Once you have selected a date, selecting a location to serve as the sorting location. Ensure that this location is spacious and ideal. You may choose the campus of your own organization or a location that is easily accessible and central to your city.

To ensure the success of your drive, promote your event early and often. Let the citizens of your locality know that you will be collecting plastic on your selected date, giving them ample time to collect and keep the plastic ready. It might also be helpful to give them information about the

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sorting and segregation of plastic, so that they can bring you their plastic waste pre-sorted.

It would be helpful if you could collect contact details about the respondents, so you can send them a report about the drive, enlisting the details of the plastic collected in terms of weight and volume, as well as the potential environmental effect it will lead to, to demonstrate to the participants the positive impact they have collectively made to the environment.

Eliminating single use plastic.

If you have previously conducted the plastic audit within your organization, the immediate next step is to eliminate single use plastics from within your organization. Identify the kinds of plastic being used most frequently within your organization, and replace them with non-plastic alternatives.

Coffee cups can be replaced with reusable cups, plastic bags with cloth bags, etc. Replacing single use plastic with a more durable option is a good idea and encourage the members of your organization to do the same, both at the organizational and personal levels.

While it is an extra cost to replace your items, it will ultimately be offset by the fact that you will not need to buy new single use plastic every time. If you find replacing all single use plastic in your organization costly, select a single item, and gradually replace other items with alternatives.

Alternatives to plastics

There are hundreds of alternatives to single use plastics, with easily accessible information all over the internet. You can refer to some selected references below:

<https://www.innovationexcellence.com/blog/2018/07/02/13-plastic-packaging-alternatives/>

<https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/green-tech/sustainable/5-plastic-substitutes.htm>

<http://www.sustainablebabysteps.com/alternatives-to-plastic.html>

Before you go about replacing plastic with alternatives, do some research on the production and environmental impact of the same. Do not go about replacing plastic with an alternative that is just as environmentally harmful.

Nature Walks

A walk in nature brings us a serenity by allowing our overstimulated modern minds a chance to rest. It helps us to relax, it lowers our stress, depression, and anxiety levels, it increases our attention spans and memory, and it provides a source of gentle exercise. Spending time in the natural world slows us down and makes us feel at peace; thus nature walks can be very effective as a supplemental therapy for addiction, AD(H)D, anxiety, and high levels of stress.

A nature walk is also an important way to connect with the environment around us, and develop empathy for the biotic

and abiotic components of the world surrounding us. It enables us to realize the importance of the world around us, and essentially empowers us to take better care of the environment.

To start with, identify a location for your nature walk, and ensure that it is accessible for your potential audience, for e.g. If it's families, then it should be shorter, stroller-accessible. Pick a location that is not too far away from your location, and ensure that your nature walk isn't too strenuous.

While selecting the route, the ideal to choose a scenic path, however since the objective of the walk is to create awareness of the problem of plastic pollution, choosing a polluted area might be a good option, to generate awareness of the problem.

If possible, Test the walk beforehand. Scout the route once for good places to talk, good things to see, potential destinations and so forth. But walk it again, slowly, to get an idea of the amount of time it will take. People walk more slowly in groups than they do alone. They like to talk along the way.

During the walk, you are responsible for the walkers. Carry a small backpack containing water, sunscreen, band-aids (aka "sticking plasters") or a first-aid kit, a cell phone, a bit of money and anything else you think someone might need.

Awareness Drives

Hosting an awareness drive is a good idea to shine a light on certain issues plaguing the environment.

An awareness campaign may require you to allot significant resources, hence determining a budget beforehand might be a good idea.

Time is also a valuable resource and determining the amount of time that it will take to put together an awareness drive, will enable you to utilize volunteers to complete the task at hand.

Once you have your goals, know your resources and audience, you can plan the specific events of your awareness campaign. The type of events you put on should build from your goals, resources, and audiences to include various active and passive awareness campaigns.

It is a good idea to ensure that the logistics of your drive align with your end goal. For ex. Conducting a drive to generate awareness about single use plastic while utilizing flexes, or plastic bottles will be counterproductive. Ensure that the material you use in your drive, align with the goal of the same.

Clean Up Drives

Organizing a clean-up drive may be daunting, however if you plan in advance, It doesn't have to be.

Identify a location that needs to be cleaned up, and speak to the authorities for the necessary permissions required for the same. Organize a bunch of volunteers who can help out.

If necessary, speak to local organization to help you out with the requirements for the clean-up drive. You will require gloves and mask for all volunteers, as well as multiple waste bins to collect and segregate the waste.

Before starting the drive, educate your volunteers about the proceedings, ensure that the waste collected is being segregated. Divide the volunteers into groups as per your ease. Contact the authorities again to ensure that you have all the necessary permissions to conduct the clean-up drive, and keep all the cleaning tools and materials ready.

An important aspect of a clean up drive is to ensure that you have a strategy to dispose of the collected waste. Drop off all recyclable waste at a recycling centre, and compost the organic waste.

Ensure that you share the success stories with all those who are involved with the clean-up drive!