



WESTERN SUSTAINABILITY & POLLUTION PREVENTION NETWORK

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Success Story

Waste Prevention

America's Best Coffee Roasting Company

Oakland, California

KEY FINDINGS

- By shipping coffee in bulk, ABC Roasting Company eliminates the need for approximately 1,000 plastic bags per week.
- Other benefits of shipping in bulk include labor savings for the company and customer in time spent packaging and unpacking coffee.
- Shipping bulk coffee with durable, reusable crates instead of cardboard boxes eliminates the need to discard damaged boxes, preventing waste.
- In 2014, ABC Roasting Company received the StopWaste Business Efficiency Award for Waste Reduction Excellence in Food Processing.



Kelly Zeissner, VP at America's Best Coffee Roasting Company, switched from 5-lb plastic bags for the delivery of coffee to large bulk containers. The move saves the company not only packaging expenses but also significant labor costs. Photo by Justin Lehrer.

Coffee Roaster Abuzz with Waste Prevention Success

America's Best Coffee Roasting Company in Oakland, CA takes pride in their full-service, customized offerings of wholesale coffees and teas, delivered to businesses around the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Since 1993, the company has sourced, roasted and blended coffees to their

clients' specifications, including custom packaging for coffee and tea. "We really try to live up to our name," says VP Kelly Zeissner. "We believe it is essential to build trusting relationships with our clients and to tailor programs that really match their needs."

"I hope others feel inspired by our success and consider similar changes for their business. It really doesn't take that much, and in addition to all the savings, it feels good to tread a little more lightly on the planet."

-Kelly Zeissner, Vice President

Unique Challenge, Custom Solution

The company's individualized customer service model and culture of improvement is apparent in all aspects of their operations, including product delivery. Zeissner describes the interactions with one of ABC Roasting Company's particularly large wholesale clients: "This customer of ours receives thousand of pounds of coffee each week. In the past we would roast the coffee, package it into specially coated, food grade plastic bags that hold 5 lbs each and pack those into cardboard boxes for delivery, ten bags per box. They would then create their proprietary blend and repack the beans into new plastic bags. A portion of those would get shipped back to us for final repacking into smaller bags used by airlines and hotels."

Troubled by the large amount of recurring plastic waste, Zeissner looked into recycling, but to no avail. "We recycle a lot of our waste—coffee chaff goes to animal feed,



One of ABC Roasting Company's larger customers receives weekly deliveries of custom roasted coffee, shipped in bulk containers that hold 600-700 lbs each. Photo by Justin Lehrer.

coffee jute sacks are used by a gardening company—but we couldn't find a recycler for the plastic bags." That's when she explored the idea of eliminating the bags with reusable bulk packaging materials. With hands-on advice and grant funding from local public agency StopWaste (www.StopWaste.Org), ABC Roasting Company purchased two large Ropak hopper bottom bulk containers to supplement a set of existing reusable bulk containers—enough to deliver the weekly coffee shipments without the use of plastic bags.

Unexpected benefits

The new shipping system has been a resounding success. Since product is transported in a closed loop between ABC Roasting Company and their client, the bulk containers are easy to track, and the risk of loss is minimal. Shipping the coffee in bulk eliminates the purchasing and disposal costs associated with approximately 1,000 plastic bags each week. The biggest

benefit is the labor savings, both for ABC Roasting Company and for their customer. "In the past, we would spend about two days worth of labor each week to pack the coffee into bags, then unpack it when it came back to us. And our customer had to do the same on their end," explains Zeissner. "At \$15 per hour, that adds up!"

In spite of these advantages, ABC Roasting Company's customer was initially somewhat hesitant to implement the change. Zeissner attributes that to "a general aversion to change that we see with most of our clients." This is where ABC Roasting Company's relationship building paid off. "Over the years they have learned they can rely on us and that we have their best interest in mind, so in the end it wasn't really hard to get them on board," she concludes.

Why Reusables?

Reusable transport packaging replaces limited-life transport packaging materials with durable, reusable totes, bins, pallets and pallet wrap. Typical benefits include cost savings and improvements in operational efficiency, product protection, worker safety and environmental performance. For more information and resources, including grant funding, visit www.UseReusables.Org, a project by local public agency StopWaste, based in Oakland, CA.

In addition to the deliveries in reusable bulk containers, ABC Roasting Company uses durable crates for all shipments to their smaller local customers. The reusable crates replace cardboard boxes that often got reused a few times in the past, but became worn and needed to be discarded and replaced with new ones.

In March 2014, ABC Roasting Company was recognized for their

efforts with a 2014 StopWaste Business Efficiency Award for Waste Reduction Excellence in Food Processing. At the award ceremony, Zeissner took the opportunity to describe the labor savings benefits her company experienced to the audience of local business leaders and elected officials. Looking back, she says: "I hope others feel inspired by our success and consider similar changes for their businesses. It really doesn't take that much, and in

addition to all the savings, it feels good to just tread a little more lightly on the planet."

For More Information, contact:

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By Justin Lehrer, StopWaste



Justin Lehrer is a program manager at StopWaste, a public agency in Alameda County, California. He manages business assistance programs, aimed at reducing and preventing waste, and increasing operational efficiency. Since 2007 Justin has led the Use Reusables campaign (UseReusables.com), providing free educational resources, training workshops and expert advice to help business transition to reusable transport packaging.