

Reuse It Or Lose It

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Looking for new ways to add to your bottom line? Perhaps you should take a look at replacing expendable packaging with reusable/returnable options. Buying reusable packaging, specifically quality used reusable packaging, can generate cost savings. It reduces per-unit cost, when compared to purchasing new packaging items. It eliminates the middle-man usually involved in purchasing containers. It reduces labor costs. It reduces rejects due to damaged packaging. And it improves your environmental footprint.

Many Packaging Options, Many Ways To Save Reusable packaging, composed of durable materials such as metal and plastic, can be reused and shipped many times. These durable materials enable returnable packaging to last many years, so that it is not uncommon for one returnable container to replace up to 50 expendable packages. By avoiding the use of expendable packaging, businesses are able to save a considerable amount of money on purchasing new packages and disposing of old ones.

IBC totes, which are used commonly by companies that buy food grade products like fructose, are a perfect candidate for buying used. Once IBC totes are emptied, they are still completely capable of holding fluids, and all the bits and pieces still work. The only difference between it and a completely new IBC tote is that the used one has some residual fluids in it. Many users of IBC totes don't actually need a brand new tote, they just need something that can hold fluids.

Plastic Export Pallets are specifically made for the export market. These pallets are made from plastic, and therefore, they meet International shipping guidelines (while wood pallets must be heat treated before they are shipped internationally). Plastic pallets are often more durable than wood pallets, because they are generally all molded in one piece, while wood pallets require nails to hold all the pieces together.

Bulk metal bins are a viable option for a small metal shipping bin. They work well in this situation, because the sides of the container can be collapsed, thereby reducing the size of an empty container. The collapsed storage bin can be stacked in a corner of the warehouse, or they can be loaded onto a trailer for return shipment to your plant.

Wire bulk containers are another version of the metal bulk container. These bins are made from wire mesh, as opposed to steel tubing and steel sheeting, as is often found in the solid metal containers. Wire bulk containers often have less carrying capacity, as they are made from light-duty materials, such as 1/4" or 3/8" wire

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mesh. These bins are lighter in weight and they are collapsible, which makes them much more economical from a shipping standpoint.

Improved Efficiency Equals Reduced Labor Cost The per piece packaging costs for reusable packaging can be as low as five percent of the costs for a comparable expendable solution, depending on shipping volumes. Returnable containers provide a way to reduce costs and increase productivity in food handling and distribution because the food containers can go from processors to distributors to retailers efficiently. They offer flexibility to meet the requirements of users throughout the food supply chain.

Depending on the specifications required, some containers are molded from FDA/USDA-approved materials and some also resist impact, moisture and temperature extremes of 20° to 120°F. Reusable containers provide a way to reduce costs and increase productivity in handling and distribution because the containers can go from processors to distributors to retailers efficiently.

Product handling is reduced with reusable containers because produce, for example, is often packed directly into containers where it remains until purchased by the general public. Reduced handling eliminates product damage possibilities, so there are fewer rejects.

Reduced labor costs are achieved with reduced or eliminated box assembly as well as reduced material handling achieved with fewer moves from stackable containers. Also reusable containers in plastic and metal can stack very high in the warehouse, increasing efficiency in floor space usage.

Reducing Waste In the United States, most expendable packages — such as corrugated boxes, paper and disposable wooden pallets — end up in the landfills. According to statistics provided by the Clean Air Council, a Philadelphia-based non-profit environmental organization, almost one third of the waste generated in this country is packaging. Although American businesses use approximately 21,000,000 tons of paper each year, only one-tenth of all solid waste in the nation gets recycled.

Worse, according to WorldChanging, American businesses send hundreds of millions of wooden pallets into landfills each year, spending approximately one billion dollars in the process. If reports by this Seattle-based non-profit media organization are accurate, then about 40 percent of all hardwood harvested in the United States is for pallets, about two-thirds of which are used only once before disposal. Up to 25 percent of all wood in landfills is from used pallets.

Much of this waste of paper and wood can be avoided if returnable packaging is used. Because a package reused is one less package that will end up in the landfill the general cost, time and manpower required for packaging material disposal can be greatly reduced. Businesses are able to reap the benefits of promoting their policies to protect and preserve the environment.

For more information about the sale and resale of used reusable industrial

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packaging, containers, racks and shelving, visit www.ContainerExchanger.com [1] or www.rackexchanger.com [2].

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