University of Greenwich Estates & Facilities

♻️ Waste & Recycling Case Study

REUSABLE CUP RACE

Responding to the increased use of single-use coffee cups, a 'latte levy' and the world's plastic pollution problem hitting the headlines, two of our graduates implemented an easily replicable, cost neutral initiative that facilitated lasting behavioural change by temporarily rewarding rather than taxing tea and coffee drinkers. Through a strong working relationship with our catering partners, and a shared goal of influencing behaviour, the 4-week Reusable Cup Race encouraged staff and students to act together by offering increasing discounts off hot drinks the more people ditched the disposable and started using crockery or reusable cups instead.

"...perfectly illustrates how our University values encourage and enable great outcomes for our students, graduates and staff. This ambitious initiative developed by our graduates, evidences that determination and creative thinking can deliver sustainability progress of which our University is truly proud"

Professor David Maguire, VC

How we did it

When looking at transaction data, we found that on average only 6% of hot drink purchases had been in reusable cups since the start of the academic year, across all the University catering outlets.

Over a 4-week period, the initiative encouraged students and staff to act together through responsible purchasing by offering increasing discounts the more hot drinks were purchased in reusable cups.

The development and planning of the campaign took a little over three weeks and consisted of:

- Initial discussions with our catering partner, BaxterStorey, looking at data and gauging their support.

- A review of the costs and benefits of such an approach.

- Preparing a proposal of differing reuse rate thresholds and costs to determine an agreed reward level.

- Ensuring there were sufficient reusable cups in stock.

- Developing a communications plan with the internal comms team to help raise awareness.

- Preparing a series of poster promotions for display in the catering outlets.

- Introducing the initiative to catering staff to enlist their support, asking them not to automatically offer disposable cups and instead to ask if the

customer would be drinking in when no reusable cup was presented.

To announce and launch the project, the 10p discount offered on hot drinks purchased in reusable cups prior to the start of the campaign was raised to 20p.

Based on the number of reusable coffee cup transactions registered across the three campuses, additional discounts were applied in 10p increments as reusable cup transactions reached certain thresholds:

up to 7%	= 20p	discount
7% - 10%	= 30p	discount
10% - 15%	= 40p	discount
+15%	= 50p	discount

Using four average reusable cup targets allowed the team time to collect, analyse and respond to the data.

The initiative was launched as part of Fairtrade Food Fortnight and Twitter and Facebook were used to promote it via social media. It also featured several times in internal news to update all on progress and the latest discount available.

Our graduate interns, also ran pop-up stands across the catering outlets to help students and staff better understand the environmental impact of single-use coffee cups.

Key Outcomes

3507 hot drinks were purchased in reusable cups during the campaign, achieving a 12.45% reuse rate by the end of the 4 weeks; that's more than double the reuse rate for the academic year prior to the initiative.

It's estimated the initiative has been responsible for preventing an additional 6427 disposable cups from being procured and entering the waste stream to date (31/07/18).

The sustained average reuse rate of 12% since the launch equates to a consumables saving of almost £900; making the initiative cost neutral.

Nominated a Finalist in the 2018 Green Gown Awards.

It helped raise awareness on the issues associated with the use of disposables and created a community, collaborating to improve the collective outcome.

Established a low-cost campaign model that could be replicated in the future.

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