

Total Waste Solutions

A comprehensive approach to finding efficiencies, reducing costs and optimizing disposal operations

A Primer on Total Waste Solutions

Managing waste is far from the most highly visible function in most companies, and as a result, it is too often overlooked by those seeking to improve the business's bottom line. It is, however, a universal need for businesses—every company generates waste streams that must be addressed to some degree. The volume of waste and complexity involved in its disposal can vary substantially from operation to operation, but especially in large manufacturing applications, it is likely that managing waste could be conducted more efficiently and cost-effectively.

One way to optimize how waste is managed in an organization is via a Total Waste Solutions (TWS) program. Such programs offer large industrial companies with multiple, expansive manufacturing facilities a turnkey, centralized solution that reduces cost and waste while making progress toward specific environmental goals. Experienced experts manage all waste across all facilities, gathering data and utilizing industry expertise to standardize processes and provide broad visibility into performance and waste needs.

In some industries, such as automotive manufacturing, TWS programs are commonplace and have been saving companies large sums of money while supporting sustainability goals for decades. For those embracing a "zero landfill" strategy, TWS programs are often the key to success. In other industries, such as chemical processing, energy production or major manufacturing, the benefits of a TWS program are more recently becoming understood. Even those that embraced a TWS strategy many years ago are still discovering new efficiencies as they continually tweak waste stream management operations, showcasing the promise of TWS programs as a means of reducing costs long term.

Whether a TWS program is right for you depends on your current protocols, the scale of your operations, and your goals. These customized programs tend to be especially compelling if you self-manage waste disposal, have numerous sites dealing with various waste streams, and do not have centralized control over company-wide disposal practices.

The Value of a TWS Program

There are a variety of benefits of a TWS program that are worth considering. Strong programs are typically tailored closely to individual company needs to provide maximum return on investment (ROI), but, in general, you can expect to benefit from several of the following factors.

Improved Compliance and Risk Reduction

Relying on an experienced single source for management of transportation, disposal and recycling of hazardous, nonhazardous, special and universal waste can reduce risk related to lack of uniformity in how waste is managed in your organization. Employees at an environmental solutions company like US Ecology, for instance, are highly qualified, trained and well-supported, with decades of experience handling even the most complex hazardous waste streams. As a result, they can ensure indemnification and compliance with all regulations related to consolidating management functions for different waste streams.

Cost Savings

There are several ways that a TWS program can save companies money. First of all, companies with broad networks have strong negotiating power with vendors, and thus, they can often save on costs associated with transportation, disposal or recycling through brokered deals. Also, a TWS provider like US Ecology actively looks for additional waste-reduction opportunities and process efficiencies throughout the course of a contract term, relying on gathered data to find ways to streamline operations. Simply by having a comprehensive view of standardized practices across an organization, a TWS provider can recognize opportunities for savings that may previously have gone unnoticed.

Goal Progress Tracking

Besides saving money and avoiding fines, a TWS program can create a path toward realization of sustainability goals. Whether “zero landfill” is an objective or not, TWS program providers can help companies gain a comprehensive grasp on their situations while also generating and analyzing the data necessary to create or measure against key performance indicators laid out in corporate sustainability initiatives. They can even provide initial waste audits and analysis to establish a baseline if waste data is unavailable, and they can also implement and manage a waste tracking system once a TWS program is underway.

Creative Solutions

The biggest benefit of a TWS program is sometimes simply having access to the deep knowledge of experts whose core competency is the complex management of waste. These experts can not only identify opportunities for improvement of internal processes and structures that are causing slowdowns/inefficiency, but they can advise on innovative means of recycling or disposing of waste in a manner that saves money and reduces liability.



What to Look for in a TWS Partner

Should you decide that a TWS program could make sense for you, the next step is determining the right partner to provide services. Besides pricing, there are a number of additional factors that should weigh into your decision:

Applicable Expertise

Perhaps the most obvious consideration is whether or not a TWS program provider has the experience and expertise required to handle the volume and complexity of your waste streams. If you have hazardous or other specialty waste streams, it is important to find a partner that can effectively handle this major source of liability. Companies that can internalize complex waste may be especially compelling, as this is an indicator that the company is intimately familiar with the specialized management of waste.

Large Footprint/Networks

One factor that will impact efficiency of a TWS program is the geographic reach of a partner. Look for companies that have a large number of facilities to keep logistical costs down. Also, consider the size of the company’s network of partners, as brokered agreements with local waste handling companies can also help to keep your costs down.

Strong Customer Support

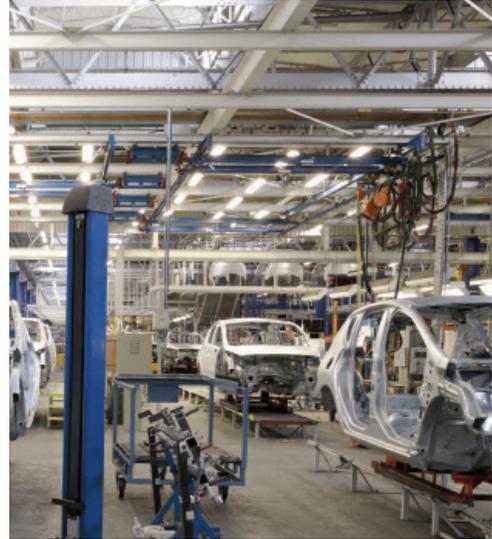
Unfortunately, one of the most overlooked factors when companies are choosing partners is the level of service they can expect to receive from their partner. Look for a company with accessible, knowledgeable customer service and technical support staff. The best partners prioritize open communication, are responsive to inquiries, exercise transparency and are willing to collaborate to address your challenges. Consider, also, the company’s record of reliability and longevity of existing client relationships, as those are strong indicators of how you will be treated.

What Does TWS Success Look Like?

For a better understanding of how a TWS program can create value, consider four stories of situations where a TWS program provider introduced innovative waste solutions that provided significant benefits.

Example #1

An automotive manufacturing company had a co-mingled waste stream, consisting of screw machine oil filtration sludge, associated filtration roll media, screw machine oil filter bags and PIG materials, that was being disposed of via landfill. As part of a “zero-landfill” initiative, they sought to incinerate the waste, but were denied because the action would exceed the incineration facility emissions permit for chromium. US Ecology, the company’s TWS program provider, came up with a creative solution to the problem by separating oil from waste sludge using a centrifuge-equipped mobile fluid recovery vehicle. Once oil was removed, it could be conditioned and repurposed. The rest of the now-dry waste material was shredded, processed and utilized as feedstock in cement production. The result? Process improvement, significant cost savings and realization of the company’s zero-landfill goal, despite a challenging situation.



Example #2

A major manufacturer sought an innovative solution that would produce cost savings, reduce environmental impact and increase process efficiency related to management of its 2,000 ton annual grinding swarf waste stream. US Ecology was engaged to solve the problem, and they implemented a system that enabled the plant to recapture coolant and produce a commodity of the metal and abrasive. The product could then be remelted in an electric arc furnace to once again make steel. As a result, a six-figure cost was turned into a six-figure return for the manufacturer.

Example #3

Another company was using a vertical baler to compact and package 200 tons of cardboard waste per month, but it was very labor intensive. US Ecology recommended a switch to a horizontal baler to improve load densities, based on extensive knowledge of technology and processes, and, as a result, the company realized \$100,000 of annual waste savings and additional labor savings when the two technicians who operated the baler for 10 hours a day were suddenly available for other tasks.

Example #4

In another situation, a company's operating structure was decentralized and each facility managed its own waste. In a move to promote efficiency, US Ecology was awarded a contract to manage all byproducts (waste and recycling) at more than 30 locations. US Ecology visited each location to perform compliance reviews and evaluations of process improvement opportunities to establish baseline performance data. That data was processed and monthly performance metrics were developed to track savings and continuous improvement initiatives. Every month, facilities received a consolidated invoice representing all services at the unit rates established, and every quarter, the company received a running list of projects and information from quarterly performance review meetings. The results? Guaranteed savings targets continue to be met at all local sites and at the corporate level, due to more comprehensive, well-measured management functions.

TWS Opportunities and You

In industries like automotive manufacturing, TWS programs are regarded as invaluable. Automakers have been able to vastly decrease environmental impact, improve efficiencies and realize savings by increasing their awareness of performance and relying on knowledgeable TWS partners. This sort of potential for savings and peace of mind does not stop with vehicle manufacturing, however—there are extensive untapped opportunities for successes in a variety of other industries, as well. In many cases, those who have engaged a TWS provider are already wishing they had done so sooner, based on the ROI and collaborative guidance they are experiencing.

Would a TWS program make sense for you? The only way to know is to engage a TWS program provider to discuss opportunities for improvement. You may be surprised at the opportunities you uncover.