

Defra raise staff awareness of food waste impact with citizen facing campaign ‘Small Change Big Difference’

The waste prevention campaign led by TRiFOCAL, has helped to improve Defra’s staff engagement with the issue of Food Waste.

The challenge

7 million tonnes of food and drink are thrown away each year, which amounts to a cost of up to £60 per household, per month. Defra recognise food waste as a major environmental concern that every individual plays a role in.

The solution

An internal staff engagement campaign supported by TRiFOCAL. Delivered through on-site activities to provide information to employees to enable them to reduce their food waste both at work and home.

The benefits

Encouraging the small changes that make a big difference to an employee’s health, pocket and the planet.

Background

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) was the first organisation to pilot the Small Change Big Difference campaign in the workplace using the ‘Engaging Employees Guide’. During the week-long campaign, Defra were keen to raise employee awareness of the causes and effects of food waste on the pocket and the planet and encourage changes in behaviour. Supported by the Small Change Big Difference initiative, the team piloted the pack ‘Engaging Employees Guide’. Defra’s Waste and Recycling team organised the main campaign activity in their London office, with their York and Bristol offices participating in the campaign too.

Objectives

The campaign activities took place in January 2018, as the start of a New Year is typically a time when people are more receptive to new ideas.

The main objective of the campaign was to encourage employees to reduce food waste, both at work and at home, by promoting the following key messages: meal planning and cooking the right amount; better storage including advice on use of fridge and freezers; understanding date labels; and using leftovers.

- **Promote healthy and sustainable eating by improving purchasing, cooking and diet habits**
- **Reduce food waste generated by households by encouraging behaviour change in citizens**
- **Ensure unavoidable food waste is correctly recycled**

Campaign highlights

- Endorsement by the Minister Thérèse Coffey gave the campaign a high profile across Defra.
- Advice and templates in the Small Change Big Difference 'Engaging Employees Guide' helped the campaign to be planned effectively.
- Through the campaign, Defra selected food waste prevention resources that were most applicable to the office-based workplaces and staff cafeteria.

During the week-long campaign, various activities were launched:

An intranet news story was published to announce the launch of the Small Change Big Difference campaign and introduced key messages around food waste prevention, recycling and healthy sustainable eating. It also mentioned the activities that would take place during the week, some top tips for reducing food waste at work and at home, as well as a video of Minister Thérèse Coffey highlighting the importance of the issue.

A 'leftover' recipe competition where staff were asked to send in their favourite 'leftover' recipes. The Minister judged each entry and presented a prize to the winner.

A 'Love Food Hate Waste'* stand was displayed over a lunch time in the three main Defra office canteens, to complement the Small Change Big Difference message. Advice was provided to staff as well as handouts such as leaflets and tools to help reduce food waste, such as spaghetti measurers and bag clips.

An intranet blog was posted to raise awareness to staff of the various opportunities available to them, to reduce their own food waste. The blog specifically highlighted food waste apps that enable people to connect to share surplus food, rather than throw it away.

An interview with the Waste and Recycling Deputy Director of Defra was placed on the staff intranet. This interview focused on food waste and raising awareness of the Small Change Big Difference activities.

*Love Food Hate Waste is a food waste prevention campaign, launched by WRAP in 2007

Outcome

Post-campaign, the staff involved provided feedback on the campaign day which was wholly positive. Employees who visited the stands in the staff canteens felt the information they were given was helpful and interesting, and campaign organisers noted that this was a good location for the stand, due to the high staff footfall. During and after the event, staff posted comments on the intranet news stories page, which demonstrated positive employee engagement. Other campaign feedback and learnings are detailed below:

Access to resources

Not everyone had access to the Defra intranet to see articles and campaign related promotion about the stands, it was suggested that an email to all staff on the site on the day, or in the run-up to the day of the event could help improve communications.

Enthusiastic team members

Staff were proactively approaching people as they walked past to try to interest them. Questions such as 'Do you know what your fridge temperature should be?' and 'Do you have a favourite leftover recipe?' were all used to start conversations.

Handouts

The food waste prevention tools provided were well received. Campaign team members noted that giveaways such as fridge magnets were a good way to start a conversation with staff.