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Should Reducing Waste and Reusing Resources be considered a Priority when Designing a Product?

There was a misconception that one should not recycle and reuse refuse as it could cause health-related problems. They also felt that reusing refuse would only cause time and money constraints. Wastes such as plastic bottles and corrugated boxes used in packing, were used in landfill or burnt to remove them. Little importance was given to reuse these wastes, as they were felt to be useless. Similarly, no effort was made to study possible alternatives to disposing them. It all changed once the damage had been done, and its effects began to show on climate change.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the lack of availability of landfill space was cited as one reason for the unhealthy practices of disposing of waste in the US. The U. S, with its huge consumer base, was the largest importer of foreign equipment and products. Every product or equipment that came in packing would accumulate, and when the time came to dispose these, it became exceptionally difficult for them to do so. This led to the development of unhealthy disposal practices. Global warming, landslides, and contamination of water bodies and air, are some of the effects of such practices.

There are a number of benefits by reusing refuse. Doyle (2013), in Reusing Refuse, talks about the benefit of reusing refuse. From an exhibition that left behind huge banners, Repurpose America, a Las Vegas-based non-profit organization, converted them that were to be used in landfill, to a 4, 000-square-foot sunshade for the College of Southern Nevada child care facility's playground. The awning has helped protect sixty-five children from the

Nevada sun, and saved the school the \$3, 500 it would cost to purchase a new one. What's more, Repurpose America is involved in community programs, and has helped hundreds of unemployed, employable. Instead of trying to destroy waste, it could be used in a more profitable way to ensure better living conditions and infrastructural development.

Reducing waste and reusing resources can definitely ease designing and production costs. As the designing stage involves a lot of probable changes, the amount of raw materials that is used up before a design is accepted can cause cost escalation. By recycling and reusing waste, companies can minimize their operational costs; they can increase their time in developing a suitable product design, and most importantly, reduce environmental damage. The advantages of reusing waste are innumerable, and highly rewarding. For example, Tesco, one of the leading retail giants in the UK, supports initiatives to protect the environment. As part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR), Tesco care to minimise the waste they produce. They instruct their stores to monitor the wastes that they produce by reviewing and reporting it every week. Once they find a sizable amount of waste accumulated in stores, the company “ reform packaging design so that it does the job it needs to, without using excess resources, has led to us saving thousands of tonnes of materials” (Tesco, 2014). This way, the company increases its profits and enhances environmental protection. Tesco also uses the waste of poultry products to make alternative sources of energy through third-party plants which produce fuel for electricity, and also turns recycled carrier bags into refuse bags and recycle cardboard boxes, which are used by consumers in great numbers today.

In another article Reusing Refuse published in Prism Business Media, efforts <https://assignbuster.com/good-essay-about-other/>

were on a war footing to collect waste and process it to benefit society. “ Working with . some of the world's most exclusive restaurants and hotels, Beverly Hills has been testing a food waste program over the last year designed to increase the city's recycling levels. So far, the voluntary program has more than 120 participating restaurants and hotels, and collects an average of 600 tons a month in food waste.” These are then, converted into compost, and sold to commercial farmers and residents, and given free at community events (2011).

The increasing amount of packaging waste accumulation has led to health hazards and global warming. Because of the serious nature of accumulation of waste, efforts to find a suitable method to improve wastage management continues unabated. The growth in household waste can be put down to two prominent reasons; growth in consumption of goods, and rising processing level of food and food-related production and consumption. According to Stolaroff (2009, p. 1), the “ report builds on the EPA " Foundation Paper" and adjusts emissions to account for imports and exports. It also splits ‘ provision of food’ from ‘ provision of materials’ and adds ‘ provision of materials’ with ‘ use of appliances and devices’ to estimate that ‘ products and packaging’ contribute 44 percent of GHG emissions including emissions embodied in international trade.” Due to the unethical practices in disposal of garbage and packaging waste, environmental concerns have only multiplied. The emission of CO₂ has not only contaminated the atmosphere, the disposal of waste underground has culminated in water contamination. The EPA along with the Product Policy Institute (PPI) has categorically stated that garbage accumulation and its processing methods have only added to environmental

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hazards. The reports of the diminishing ice covers over the Antarctica, the rise in day temperatures, and un-seasonal climatic changes point to the adversity of global warming increasing.

Wastes have many uses, and utilizing them in industries cannot be ruled out. From an engineering perspective, reusing refuse has its benefits. Ghatikar (2013) believes that till recently, most of the engineering industries disposed their wastes by burning them, using as landfill, or dumping them in the sea. Recycling of wastes was not part of their strategy, nor did they know that wastes could in fact enhance productivity and cut costs and time. The industrial wastes could be used to cut design time and costs, and utilized in developing new product. This strategy is similar to recycling, and most engineering industries today, are aware of the benefits of recycling refuse. While redesigning or reusing existing materials involves lesser time and effort, creating a new design from raw materials will involve more time and effort, which will increase designing and production costs. By reusing existing materials (wastes) in design, industries have the benefits of enhancing their innovative skills, gain more time in marketing the concept or product, and predefine tooling and machining needs.

Conclusion

Contamination of the Earth and its atmosphere has caused serious health hazards to people all over the world. Global warming has assumed gigantic proportions, and organizations have come under the scanner for their non-management of waste disposal activities. While the awareness of the importance of protecting the environment grows, little have the majority of organizations understood the benefit of reuse and minimizing waste.

Reducing waste and reusing resources ease designing and production costs, and it also allows organizations to use these to develop their strategies for the future, without having to start from the scratch. The benefits are immense; reuse and minimizing waste offers increased savings of money, protects the environment, and reduces the flow of materials and energy consumption.

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