

CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES FOR RESTAURANTS MAKE GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

WHITE PAPER



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One of the most widespread movements among customers today is a push for a greater understanding of the food they eat and many associated concerns related to environmental sustainability.

The foodservice industry is a complex, difficult business. The margins are low, employee stress is high, and the pace never slows. Added to this, foodservice has a consumer base that demands both quality and transparency. Businesses can't ignore widespread customer desires or the trends those eaters embrace. A failure to keep up with the times can quickly lead to declining relevance and revenue.

One of the most widespread movements among customers today is a push for a greater understanding of the food they eat and many associated concerns related to environmental sustainability. The growth of the farm-to-table concept, issues with food additives and GMO ingredients, sourcing transparency, sustainable farming and responsible disposal and diversion of waste are all expressions of this common attitude among diners.

SUSTAINABILITY: AN ENDURING DECISION FOR MANY CUSTOMERS

There's only so much people can worry about outside of their direct, personal needs, especially in today's fast-paced, always-connected world. It's clear that sustainable practices for companies are one of the rare issues that strikes a chord with an especially broad group of consumers. From activist investors influencing major corporate decisions to customers participating in widespread palm oil boycotts, a significant number of people care about more than the quality and price of the goods and services they buy. That feeling extends into the foodservice world, encouraging farm-to-table and local ingredient sourcing, more in-depth discussions of ingredients and many other practices through the dollars that consumers choose to spend—or not spend—at local restaurants.



Appealing to environmentally conscious eaters has to be a consideration for nearly all foodservice businesses moving forward.

Millennials are especially relevant in this context, as they are more focused on fast casual restaurants, due to demographic-wide preferences to eat out more frequently but spend less money doing so. They value sustainability to an especially high degree, with research from Nielsen showing nearly 75 percent will pay more for products and services from companies that have a clear dedication to sustainable practices. That means price and quality can't be the only considerations. Restaurants have to tap into other strong, relevant consumer preferences to build stable, long-term relationships with diners.

Major restaurant chains like Panera have made strong, across-the-board pledges for serious action, like a 100-percent clean menu that features no artificial preservatives, sweeteners, flavors or colors from artificial sources. While providing few direct cost savings, this decision appeals to customers, especially millennials. A focus on corporate sustainability ultimately enhances brand loyalty

and positioning, helping the fast casual chain to bring in more revenue. Appealing to environmentally conscious eaters has to be a consideration for nearly all foodservice businesses moving forward. That's especially true for those with fare and brand image slotted above the quick service restaurant category, where convenience, low prices and little else are enduringly popular attractions.

TAKING THE ENTIRE SUPPLY CHAIN INTO CONSIDERATION

Corporate sustainability for the foodservice industry stretches from how farmers and ranchers raise ingredients to how restaurants recycle and divert food waste—and the many other types of waste—produced by a successful operation. Taking these many waste streams into account is especially important for fine-dining chains and fast-casual enterprises that make commitments to ideals like farm-to-table sourcing. Because chains operate in a



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wide variety of areas and regularly open new restaurants, a steady, accountable and effective method of addressing waste at every single location is critical to long-term success.

- ▶ Major waste streams to consider include, but aren't limited to:
- ▶ Excess safe and edible food.
- ▶ Inedible food waste.
- ▶ Used cooking oil.
- ▶ Grease trap waste.
- ▶ Garbage.
- ▶ Recyclables like paper, cardboard boxes, glass or plastic bottles.
- ▶ Restaurant signage, menus, table tents and similar items.
- ▶ Electronic waste, like lightbulbs and batteries.
- ▶ Construction waste from new site development and renovation.
- ▶ Cooking equipment, whether during renovation, kitchen upgrades or at the end of the equipment's useful life.

Addressing waste in all of its many forms is the final step to creating a sustainable supply chain that minimizes environmental impact and holds strong appeal for diners. How can your organization close this last gap and present a fully developed and powerful sustainable supply chain to current and potential customers?

ZERO-WASTE SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS ALL RECYCLING AND DIVERSION NEEDS

A truly effective approach to recycling and diversion in the restaurant industry means all major streams of waste are addressed and dealt with appropriately, reducing waste, water and energy footprints as much as possible. This strategy isn't only optimal from a pure sustainability standpoint, it's one of the few practical approaches that makes operational sense for chains. With locations spread across many counties,



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states or the entire country, managing individual waste-reduction programs with strong corporate standards is a major drain of time, money and resources at best—and an impossibility at worst.

Many companies operate a mix of corporate-owned and franchised locations, which means maintaining consistency across both is vital for customer engagement and reaching financial and environmental goals. Oversight at corporate-owned locations can be a simple process, but the franchisee area of operations is much murkier. Partnering with a waste management company means all your locations have a program that follows the same standards and are primed to generate similarly positive results.

Quest offers constant, responsible and active management of all waste streams through a single contact, improving efficiency in terms of both waste diversion and recycling as well as from the local and corporate

oversight perspectives. We customize our solutions to the needs of each partner, which means no excess or irrelevant services included—an especially important point when it comes to corporate sustainability and responsible recycling and waste diversion.

Through eco-conscious management of waste streams from both store buildout and daily operations, restaurants that work with Quest achieve consistent results for their newest locations, longest-running restaurants and all units in between. Our focused yet flexible tactics for recycling and diversion help form a complete, trustworthy sustainability halo that offers results that resonate with the expectations of eco-conscious customers.

Quest's comprehensive approach to restaurant waste management is available in all 50 states, Canada and Puerto Rico thanks to many relationships with vetted local subcontractors. Quest even manages integrated recycling solutions for thousands of restaurants



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For fine-dining chains and fast-casual businesses that focus on high-quality ingredients and farm-to-table sourcing, an environmentally friendly approach

to handling restaurant waste streams is a responsible approach and a major feather in the cap that appeals to the carefully cultivated customer base. To stand out from the competition in a meaningful, sustainable way, restaurants need to make their supply chains as efficient and eco-friendly as possible. Quest is here to help you make that idea a reality.

To get in touch, call us at 877-321-1811 or email solutions@questrmg.com.

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