

Leading online retailer: Waste audits and consultation

Case study



Project carried out by Helistrat, now part of the Reconomy Group



Waste management review commissioned across the client's European distribution centres



Full waste audits carried out, meeting the client's tight deadlines



Further work awarded following this initial, including the identification of nuisance packaging



Waste review

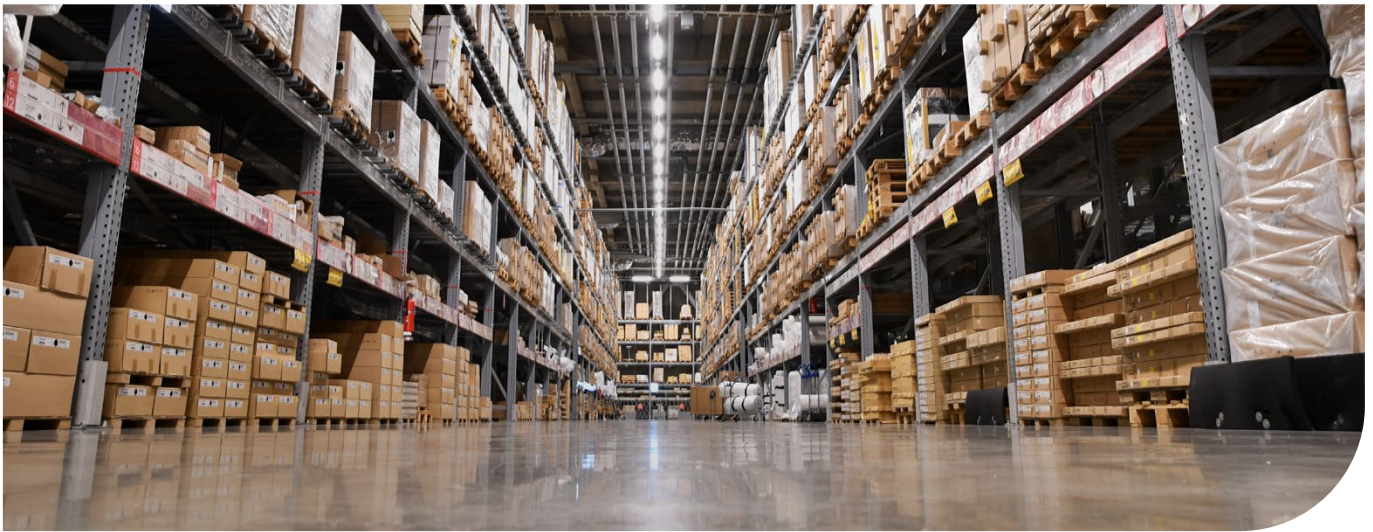
Our client, one of the world's leading online retailers, commissioned a review of its waste management practices across their European distribution centres. The primary objectives of the project were to:

- Document the current position to establish a baseline level
- Validate and verify environmental compliance
- Standardise and simplify reporting channels
- Share best practice
- Identify synergies
- Develop a strategy for the future.

Understanding existing practices

Working closely with the client's Procurement and Sustainability departments, our project team audited a total of 9 distribution centres, spread across 7 countries, over a 2-month period.

The first stage was to understand the breadth of waste management activities already taking place at each of the distribution centres. This involved getting 'boots on the ground' to carry out site walkovers, as well as interviews with staff to document all pre-existing waste streams (with indicative volumes where possible), where it was being produced and how was it being handled. It was also important to understand if the approach was consistent across the entire portfolio or managed differently on a site-by-site.



Compliance

The second stage involved tracing the journey of all waste and recycling through to the main contractor. The primary objective of this work was to ensure waste was being managed in a legally compliant manner but also to highlight any obvious failings that meant the material was managed in the most sustainable way. Where failings in the system from either the Client or Contractor were identified, this was fed back as areas for future action. Compliance with the client's own strict security processes was also verified to confirm no products or materials could find their way back onto the market.

Our network of associated regional specialists was vital in achieving the project's objectives due to the requirements for documentation reviews, interviews and an understanding of multiple local regulatory and legislative frameworks. Given that this needed to be completed in 7 different languages, the complexities that this project presented are clear.



Achieving results

In addition to a headline report, a full waste audit was produced for each of the distribution centres, documenting what waste was being produced, the process leading to its creation and its disposal route. As well as also documenting material types, flows and (where possible) quantities, the reports highlighted any potential instances of non-conformity as well as instances where best practice were either being, or not being, applied.

These findings were presented to the senior management team in line with the agreed tight project timeframes. A follow-on piece of work also manifested itself out of the initial project, involving the rationalising of EWC codes being used across the various distribution centres. This made reporting easier and more consistent, as well as acting as a control mechanism for correct disposal.

Further opportunities

A number of follow-on projects have evolved from the initial project with the client, including the identification of 'nuisance' packaging across key areas of the business and their points of origin. These materials are either unnecessary, hard to recycle or likely to contaminate other waste streams. By preventing or isolating these materials from other waste streams, we can ensure they don't prevent other materials from being recycled – benefiting the client's performance both financially and environmentally.

