

SUSTAINABILITY AND PACKAGING: STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Written by [Kim Donohue](#) | November 21, 2023



RECYCLABLE, RECYCLED CONTENT

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

CURBSIDE RECYCLABLE

Products that are accepted in your curbside bin and are then brought to specific processing plants to be properly recycled.

STORE DROP-OFF RECYCLABLE

Flexible poly bags and wrap that are accepted at your local grocery store's designated front-of-store recycling bin to be properly recycled.

POST-INDUSTRIAL RESIN (PIR)

Refers to the scrap or waste created during the original manufacturing process. It may come from poly scrap or reprocessed pellets and can be recycled into new products.

POST-CONSUMER RESIN (PCR)

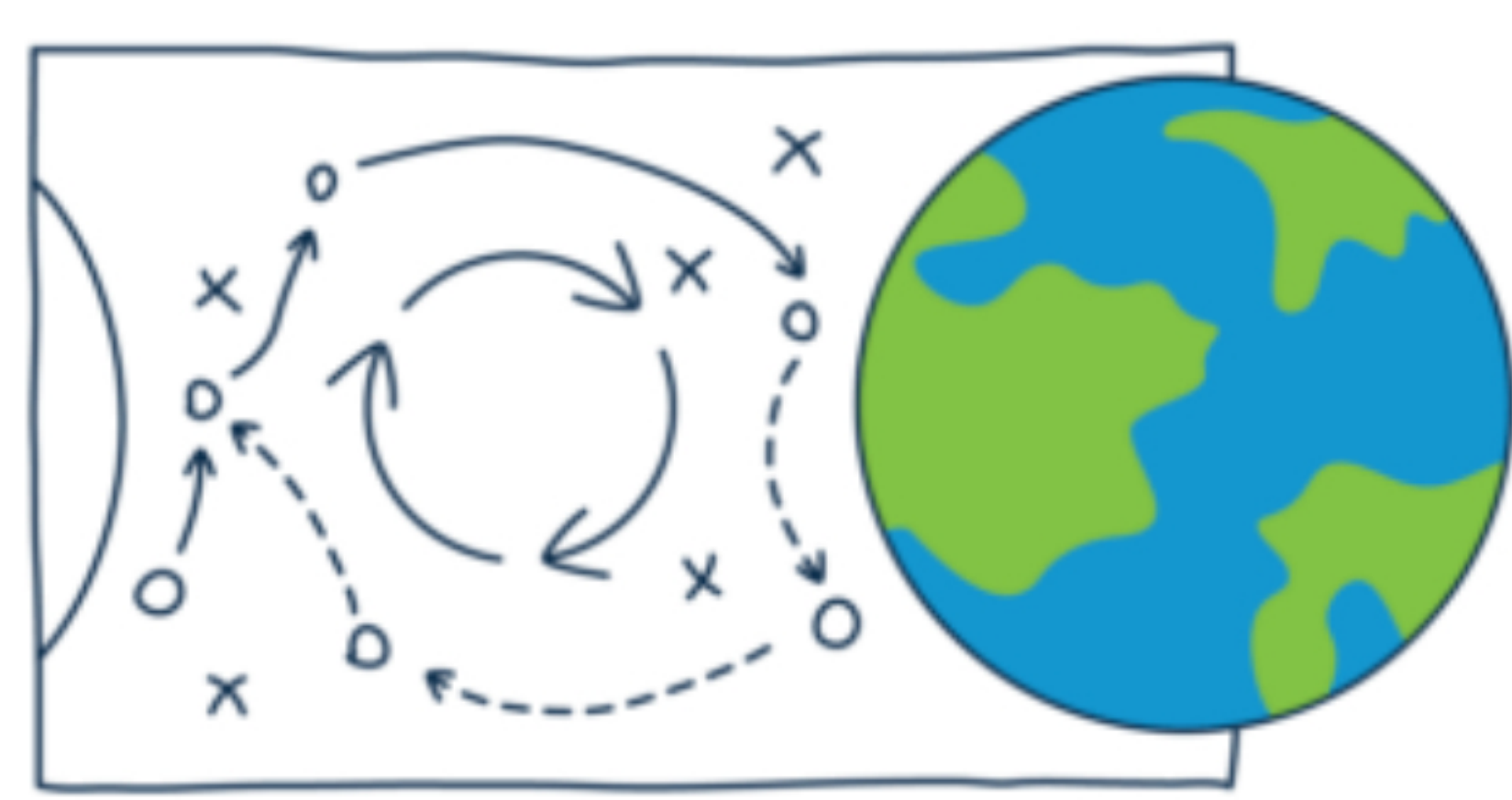
The resin from plastics used by consumers that have been recycled and are now ready to be used again.

POST-CONSUMER FIBER (PCF)

The fiber produced from paper products that have been recycled after being used by a consumer, for its intended purpose.

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In today's marketplace, pursuing "sustainability" is more important than ever. With growing concern over environmental issues, businesses and individuals are constantly seeking ways to reduce their environmental impact — particularly in packaging.



Below, we'll explore how different approaches to sustainability through various strategies can help decrease environmental impact and meet sustainable packaging goals, including downsizing, right-sizing, lightweighting, using recyclable materials, and incorporating recycled content.

Why sustainability matters in packaging

Sustainability in packaging is not just a buzzword; it's a necessity. As consumer awareness about environmental issues continues to rise, we're seeing a shift towards responsible and ethical business practices. Companies are under increasing pressure to adopt eco-friendly practices — but that doesn't necessarily mean there is a one-size-fits-all solution.

There are quite a few!

The sustainable benefits of downsizing or right-sizing packaging

One of the first steps toward sustainable packaging can be achieved through downsizing and [right-sizing](#): using packaging that is appropriate in size for the product it contains to help minimize material waste, transportation or shipping costs, and storage space requirements.

We've all purchased a small item online, only for it to arrive in an oversized box filled with excessive packaging material. Not only is this wasteful, but it also contributes to higher shipping costs and increased environmental impact. But by using packaging proportionate to your product's size, you can significantly reduce the ecological footprint associated with your packaging operations.

Consider light-weighting for sustainable packaging

Light-weighting is another strategy to reduce the environmental impact of your packaging significantly and involves using lighter materials that still provide adequate protection. For instance, switching from bubble or padded to flat poly or paper packaging when shipping soft goods (such as clothing) can substantially reduce weight and transportation emissions.

Choosing lighter materials reduces the amount of energy required for manufacturing, lowers transportation costs, and decreases greenhouse gas emissions associated with shipping.

Three ways to embrace eco-friendly packaging

A fundamental aspect of sustainable packaging lies in using recyclable materials. We suggest:

- **Choose recyclable shipping materials:** Ready-to-ship recyclable packaging made of paper and certain plastics are readily available and have established recycling infrastructures.
- **Incorporate recycled content into your packaging:** Recycled content can also be incorporated into various types of packaging to help keep products safe. Look for packaging advertised as made with recycled or post-consumer material.
- **Promote packaging reuse:** Customers can easily reuse the packaging for returns or other purposes by incorporating features like dual peel-and-seal closures.

Opting for packaging that can be easily recycled or reused ensures that the materials have the potential to be transformed into new products and reduces the strain on natural resources.

Remember to balance sustainability and product protection

It's important to note that sustainability efforts should not compromise the protection of the product — damaged products produce both negative customer experiences and environmental impact. Striking the right balance between sustainability and product protection is crucial for long-term success. Knowing your options allows you to design your [roadmap to decrease your environmental impact](#).

Sustainable packaging is vital to environmental responsibility in today's business landscape. Implementing strategies such as downsizing, right-sizing, light-weighting, using recyclable and recycled materials, and promoting packaging reuse can significantly decrease the environmental impact of packaging while maintaining product protection.

You can learn more about how PAC blends sustainability and customer satisfaction into our packaging solutions.

5 REASONS TO CHOOSE CERTIFIED MADE WITH RECYCLED CONTENT

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