

CASE STATEMENT: REDUCING FOOD WASTE

Elephants Deli

Elephants Deli is a proud, certified B Corporation, meaning the company meets a higher standard of transparency, accountability, and performance to address social and economic issues.

In 2018, they were awarded a Best for the World Changemakers Award. This year, Elephants Deli celebrates forty years as a local changemaker and leader in sustainable business. Since 1979 the company has worked to purchase local produce, utilize sustainable transportation, and use recycled and alternative materials wherever possible. One component of that work is an ongoing effort to responsibly manage food waste.



The Opportunity

Brett Olsen, Special Projects Coordinator for Elephants, along with Russell Spees, Food and Beverage Director, Director of Operations, and the Roz Catania, Operations Trainer, helped champion an improved method for mitigating food waste. When Elephants started using a new point of sale system, they saw an opportunity to help the company better understand – and reduce – the amount of food that went unsold.

**Food Waste
Stops With Me**

FoodWasteStopsWithMe.org

The Process

Elephants found that their previous point of sale systems had become increasingly difficult to integrate with new technologies. Facing this dilemma and determined to choose a new system based on efficiency and results, Elephants' leadership team incorporated a system called InfoGenesis. This choice enabled them to track specific metrics—what kind of foods and ingredients were being used and which weren't—in order to take a proactive step toward preventing food from entering the waste stream.

The new POS system allowed Elephants to streamline reporting between different store locations, and more importantly, it changed the way they tracked food being used.

In stores, employees were able to use the system after just a brief, 20-minute training, making it a win in terms of a replicable and time efficient adjustment to business practices to mitigate food waste. Implementation was easy, Brett tells us, and there were surprise benefits.

The Deli is able to track items based on popularity and to stop purchasing them if they don't sell. The data provided by the point of sale system also allows store managers to modify food orders quickly, based on location, season, and day of the week.

Elephants' Food and Beverage Director, Nicholas Doughty, reviews this data and communicates it to store managers to help them adjust their orders to match demand. Managers who do a great job reducing unsold items at their stores are recognized at monthly meetings and are asked to share what they've learned.



Information on what's not selling well also informs the quarterly menu planning meeting, where chefs and managers consider food waste as they think about new items to add and old favorites to bring back.

For items that don't sell, Elephants has developed a robust food donation program – and they now use their point of sale system to track what goes to food rescue agencies. And for food that can't be donated? Employees can take it home, or it goes in the compost.

Finally, Elephants discovered that the new system correlated with a decrease in food packaging being used, furthering their commitment to excellence in sustainable practices.



The Results

- The new point of sale system has helped Elephants reduce food waste by approximately 10 percent.
- At the downtown Fox Tower location, staff now focus on merchandising longer-lasting items: When the lunch rush leaves the sandwich shelf empty, they fill it with drinks and baskets of grab-and-go cheeses and other packaged snacks.
- At the NW 22nd Avenue location, all hot foods are discounted in early evening—a very happy hour for neighbors looking for a hot meal on the go.
- The use of point of sale technology to track and manage food data is naturally aligned with Elephants' efforts to reduce food waste as part of their legacy of sustainable practices. The company, which employs 450 people, diverted 23,685 pounds of food from the waste stream between August and December 2017. Two years later, they show no signs of slowing down, preventing over 1,000 pounds of food from entering landfills each week.

