



UniformReuse.co.uk Case Study

Nationwide Building Society



Key Facts

- Nationwide Building Society works closely with Incorporatewear to ensure that all garments are sourced and produced ethically.
- At end-of-service, garments that are in suitable condition are either donated to the charity Dress for Success in London, who help women in disadvantaged circumstances get back into the workforce, or are sent to developing countries for reuse via Wilcox.
- Design of Nationwide BS corporatewear is managed so as to keep company branding small and discreet, aiding reuse that can so often be hindered for other companies.
- Clothing that is not suitable for direct reuse is recycled (shredded into strips) and used in automotive accessories through Wilcox Industrial Supply.

Background

As the largest Building Society in the UK, Nationwide provides uniforms for nearly 8,000 employees, located across over 700 locations around the country. Most of the clothing provided is for customer-facing staff, and consists of smart trouser and skirt suits, with no heavy wear or protective garments required.

As a purchaser of clothing, Nationwide attempts to source items in the most ethically manageable way. Garments are supplied by Incorporatewear, who can offer organic and other sustainable, natural materials.

Initiatives

It was very important to Nationwide that all of its clothing could be diverted from landfill, ideally by reusing the garments as they are, but otherwise recycling the fabric to maintain some of the textile value. Wilcox Textile Reclaimers accept collections of both worn and unworn clothing, and ensures that it is recycled or reused and not land filled.

In an effort to prevent additional carbon emissions from collection rounds, Nationwide now have adapted its regular courier service route to pick up end-of-life garments every time the designs are changed i.e. every two years. The collection of textiles is therefore incorporated into routes already travelled, which avoids use of additional vehicles. Couriers pick up the worn attire in the bags supplied by Nationwide to each branch. Although stocks are reduced as much as possible, some stock is inevitably written off, and



is collected by Wilcox direct from the warehouse. The total mass of clothing is then stored together at one site.

In 2010, items of unworn clothing were selected to donate to the not-for-profit organisation Dress for Success in London. This charity aims to help disadvantaged women who are looking to achieve economic independence. By providing smart, interview-quality clothing, plus support and advice, Dress for Success are able to help women get into the workforce, and gain means to provide for themselves. Nationwide have supported this charity via this way for more than two years now and has donated around 500 garments,

The remaining end of life clothing is sent to Wilcox Industrial Supply. Any items that are still wearable are sent overseas for use by developing countries in greater need of quality clothing. Those that are too worn to wear further are broken down to material strips and used in automotive accessories, such as for soundproofing.



Uniformreuse is run by the CRR



CENTRE FOR REMANUFACTURING & REUSE



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Barriers to Reuse

One of the major barriers experienced by Nationwide was finding an organisation to process or reuse the end-of-life garments. Most recyclers felt corporatewear is far too difficult to distribute, and quote instances in which – though it is presumed developing countries will take anything – blatant branding, and too many of the same items (e.g. all the same type/colour of skirt) results in rejection at the far end.

Security is often felt to be a major issue for banks and similar establishments, but as all Nationwide branches across the network re-outfit at the same time, there is little risk of someone being able to impersonate a Nationwide worker by wearing the second-hand clothes.

If removal is not considered at design stage, tax tabs can hinder the reuse of corporatewear, as they can be difficult to remove, or, worse still, removal can cause damage to the garment and prevent reuse altogether. However, using logos which are subtle and simple to detach (without contravening taxation regulations) can be a viable approach for reuse.

Overcoming the Odds!

There are two critical reasons for the success of Nationwide's bid to allow recovery of their end-of-life corporate clothing. The first of these is perseverance: it was down to the individual persistence of staff, who are keen to prevent such valuable material ending up in landfill, that suitable textile recyclers and reusers could be located.

“At Nationwide we're committed to minimising the impact of our operations on the environment and ensuring that all corporate clothing is diverted from landfill. Sustainability and recycling is of great importance whether it's at home or at work.”

Shelley Arnett, Nationwide

The second factor is consideration of end-of-life at the design stage. Nationwide clothing is designed to be easily reused, with subtle tax tabs, which are either on excess material which can be conveniently removed, or partially masked by coloration (e.g. dark blue embroidery on the pocket of a dark blue suit).

As a purchaser of corporate clothing, Nationwide has been able to influence production, and if more purchasers were to push for this option, there would be greater incentive for more manufacturers to produce 'sustainable clothes'.

Additional Information

Websites

Nationwide
Dress for Success
Incorporatewear
Wilcox

www.nationwide.co.uk
www.dressforsuccess.org
www.incorporatewear.co.uk/
www.jmpwilcox.co.uk

For contact information please search the Directory on www.uniformreuse.co.uk/directory



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