



A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

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Cynthia Shanahan
Director of Purchasing Resources, McMaster University

THE CUSTOMER

McMaster University, one of four Canadian universities listed among the Top 100 universities in the world, is renowned for its innovation in both learning and discovery. It has a student population of 24,000, and more than 140,000 alumni in 128 countries and is located in Hamilton, Ontario.



THE NEED

Streamline office supplies procurement, reduce cardboard, reduce deliveries to and on campus, realize monetary savings, promote sustainable procurement practices, the purchase of environmentally preferable office supplies, all resulting in a reduced carbon footprint

THE SOLUTION

Grand & Toy's lifecycle approach to sustainable procurement

THE RESULTS

- Weekly delivery frequency decreased from five per week to once a week
- Decreased amount of on campus stops from 3 locations to 2 locations
- The combined decrease of weekly delivery and on campus stops represented a yearly reduction from 780 stops at 3 locations to 104 stops at 2 locations on campus
- 20,000 fewer cardboard boxes destined for the waste stream, resulting from the substitution of secure, reusable plastic containers and reusable fabric totebags instead of cardboard packaging. This represents a 44% reduction in the use of corrugated boxes.
- Fewer trucks on road makes the campus more pedestrian-friendly, reduces noise and lowers greenhouse emissions
- McMaster will help Grand & Toy reduce the GHG emissions resulting from McMaster-specific deliveries by 62%

McMaster University, located in Hamilton, Ont., is a comprehensive research-intensive university with more than 24,000 full-time undergraduate, full-time graduate and part-time students and 7500 faculty and staff.

Founded in 1887 by Senator William McMaster, the university is renowned for its academic strengths and offers undergraduate and graduate programs in Health Sciences, Engineering, Business, Humanities, Science and Social Science. McMaster has been named as one of the Top 100 universities in the world and ranks first in the country in research intensity.

MULTIPLE WEEKLY STOPS AND TOO MUCH PACKAGING

As an academic institution committed to building leaders, McMaster encourages faculty, administrators and other employees to build their leadership skills. One such avenue is McMaster's Certificate for Advanced Leadership Management (CALM), where participants are divided into teams and assigned projects that add value to the university as part of the certificate's curriculum. Recently, one group of the CALM program decided to tackle McMaster recycling efforts and set up a meeting with the university's Purchasing Resources to discuss ideas. Together, they took a detailed look at the University's supply chain process and found that there was the possibility of making changes to the process that supported the University's goals on sustainability. They focused on making improvements to the office supply ordering and delivery system.



Under the previous system, multiple stops, every day of the week, were made to different buildings on campus, including hospitals affiliated with McMaster – representing 780 delivery-stops per year. The team also sought to reduce the amount of packaging used for these deliveries.

“Sustainability means meeting the economic and social needs of today while improving the natural environment and allowing future generations to meet their economic and social needs to the same, if not higher, degree tomorrow,” says Cynthia Shanahan, Director of Purchasing Resources at McMaster University. “As such, our goal was to support waste reduction through the development and delivery of processes to improve efficiencies in the supply chain management of commonly or routinely ordered office supplies.”

SUSTAINABILITY AS A BEST PRACTICE

After collaborating with internal stakeholders from administration, faculty, Media Production Services, Facility Services and the Office of Sustainability, Purchasing Resources issued a Request for Proposal with clearly stated objectives relating to delivery type, frequency and method. For instance, deliveries would be restricted to once a week rather than daily. Items could only be delivered to a central depot on campus, where McMaster staff would disseminate orders to the various buildings. Only original packaging would be accepted and all items had to be received in secure, reusable containers. Electronic ordering and invoicing was critical as a sustainable best practice to speed ordering and payment processes and reduce paper.

In addition, the successful vendor had to be just as devoted to corporate social responsibility (CSR) as McMaster is, with the ability to propose and provide sustainable office products and with an established sustainability framework in place affecting employees, customers, suppliers and the community.

As McMaster’s longstanding office products supplier, Grand & Toy clearly understood the University’s needs and challenges and was well positioned to guide Purchasing Resources in streamlining the procurement process. The two organizations worked together as true partners to determine the most effective procurement and sustainability solutions to fit McMaster’s business model.

With one of the most diversified portfolio of office solutions in the industry, Grand & Toy takes a lifecycle approach to sustainable procurement, spanning ordering and product selection to delivery frequency, e-invoicing, responsible product disposal and employee safety, helping organizations such as McMaster make smarter choices and increase overall savings in the process. By streamlining procurement in this way, organizations make processes more efficient by identifying previously unrecognized opportunities to save and maximize buying power. Supplier rationalization reduces the supplier management burden and keeps organizations in control of total office spend, while gaining efficiencies and keeping an eye on their sustainability efforts.

“We want to align with companies that share the same philosophy as McMaster,” explains Ms. Shanahan. “Grand & Toy has excellent representation on campus, is committed to ethical purchasing and a streamlined supply chain, and is passionate about community service and employee engagement. It was logical to award the business to a company that had so much success with us in the past and one that served as a true partner in meeting our current and future strategic procurement goals.”



REUSABLE FABRIC TOTE BAG MAKES THE GRADE

Rather than packaged orders in cardboard boxes, Grand & Toy recommended that a reusable fabric tote bag be used for all orders. The partners worked together to develop the idea and design the final product. Today, Grand & Toy receives McMaster's orders and packages them in reusable fabric tote bags. Each tote bag is cinched tight with a drawstring and then sealed with a label indicating the customer's exact location on campus. Grand & Toy then places the tote bags in a large secure, reusable container and delivers them to the University's central receiving depot. McMaster personnel deliver the tote bags to identified customers, who return the tote bags to the central depot by putting them in the internal mail system. When next on campus, Grand & Toy picks up the tote bags from McMaster's Mail Services and reuses them for the next week's orders. Grand & Toy and McMaster also collaborated on the design of dollies to transport the empty plastic containers to and from buildings and back to the depot.

The process has certainly paid off. By moving to a reusable fabric tote bag, McMaster has met its goal of reducing cardboard packaging by as much as 20,000 boxes per year. With fewer delivery trucks on the road, the University has reduced its carbon emissions and made the campus more pedestrian-friendly. With orders arriving from Grand & Toy labeled and pre-sorted by building and floor in the plastic reusable containers, the process is more efficient and orders are delivered faster and easier.

To further its sustainability goals, McMaster plans to utilize e-invoicing. Grand & Toy's e-invoicing solution allows Purchasing Resources to view, manage and download all invoices through the grandandtoy.com portal. Not only is it fast and efficient but it also reduces paper, postage and associated costs.

"With Grand & Toy as our partner, there is not a goal we did not meet or exceed," says Ms. Shanahan.

NEW OUTLOOK ON DELIVERY

One of the project's success factors was internal communication, especially since there would be a change in the frequency of deliveries. The new supply chain strategy and related goals and objectives were communicated via the McMaster web site and e-mail to all faculty and staff. Grand & Toy led three information sessions so employees across campus could understand the new ordering process. Purchasing Resources piloted the project at two departments and quickly noticed employees banding together to yield larger, higher-dollar orders.

"Society says we need everything the next day," says Ms. Shanahan. "This project proved that's not true – we just need to plan better."

NEXT STEPS

McMaster plans to undergo an annual review of its supply chain to further streamline its strategic procurement efforts. The next phase will focus on identifying more sustainable product choices. By driving compliance to core product lists including environmentally preferable products, the University can reduce costs and minimize its environmental impact even more.

Grand & Toy, of course, will be there every step of the way. Says Ms. Shanahan: "We envision this to be a very long-term relationship."