

CASE STUDY



Solving the Dining Room Trash Dilemma

Minnesota McDonald's franchisee sees big return using dining room trash compactors.

By Richard Slawsky | Contributing writer, FastCasual.com

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The Players

Patrick Duval owns and operates 12 McDonald's restaurants in the St. Paul area of Minnesota. One of his restaurants does an average \$1.7 million in sales, with 70 percent generated via the drive-thru. The restaurant had five trash cans in the dining room when a representative from Compaction Technologies, Inc. (CTI) contacted Duval with an idea.

The cans were emptied five times throughout the day, often times while customers were eating in the dining room within sight of the cans being emptied and bags of trash being hauled through the dining area. It was unsightly and could cause hazardous conditions with leaking bags tracked through to the dumpster.

Compaction Technologies Inc., based in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, is a maker of Original ecotrash® compactors; a front-of-house trash compaction technology that can reduce the number of trash containers needed in quick-serve (QSR) and fast casual restaurants by compacting trash at its source in dining rooms, cafeterias, mall food courts, and anywhere there is high volume, low density trash. The idea and the potential cost savings intrigued Duval.

The Challenge

The mess, disruption and cost in labor and equipment was a problem Duval wanted to solve. This particular McDonald's used nearly 900 trash bags a month at a cost of \$107. It took 30 minutes for workers to perform each trash run – costing Duval's restaurant up to \$638 per month in labor, and \$654 per month for 20 pickups. The total cost for trash handling per month was just shy of \$1,400.

Staff spent 55 hours each month handling dining room trash duties – time not spent doing other, more customer-friendly tasks like helping customers. Instead, employees were spending time lifting leaky bags, hauling them through the dining area and heading out the back door during a busy lunch or dinner rush. Not only was that a waste of energy, it was a risk for store security and safety.

Those issues combined with the notoriously tight margins restaurant operators face prompted Duval to rethink handling trash.



The Solution

The answer to the problem came in the form of a pitch from a company headquartered near Duval's restaurants: Brooklyn Park, Minnesota-based Compaction Technologies, Inc.

Compaction Technologies' flagship offering is the Original ecotrash, a dining room trash compactor that helps keep a restaurant's dining room clean while improving the guest experience and cutting operating costs. With Original ecotrash compactors, the volume of six loose trash bags is reduced to one. At the same time, one Original ecotrash compactor can replace three traditional trash containers, saving space in the dining area.

Original ecotrash is available in a variety of finishes and can be custom designed, meaning it will blend in with nearly any décor. The unit features hands-free, motion-sensor activation and reduced noise levels so customers aren't distracted by the sound. Compacted and bagged trash is contained in a wheeled dolly within the compactor, which eliminates leaks and allows employees to wheel the trash to the dumpster much like a rolling suitcase. Employees can then focus on taking care of customers instead of trash.

"Obviously, removing trash in the front-of-house area has always been an unwelcome task, especially with the amount of volume at a McDonald's," Duval said.

"When Compaction Technologies reached out to me and asked if I'd be interested in trying the ecotrash," he said. "We went for it, and my managers loved it."

The Results

Since that unit was installed in 2010, Duval purchased an existing restaurant that already had an Original ecotrash unit installed, so the company continued with that contract. He also installed Original ecotrash units when he built a new restaurant in 2013.

Employees now need to empty trash just twice a day, thanks to Original ecotrash. The move has enabled Duval to save \$55 a month in bag costs alone, \$468 per month in labor costs, and reduced the number of dumpster pickups each month from 20 to 12, for a savings of \$118 per month.

Placing Original ecotrash in the dining room of a single restaurant has reduced overall trash handling costs per month to \$759, delivering a bottom-line savings of \$640 per month. Because Duval leases the devices from Compaction Technologies there's no concern about maintenance and upgrades.

Still, the key aspect of restaurant operation is delivering an outstanding customer experience, and Original ecotrash makes that easier.

"Eliminating the need to carry bags of trash through the dining room several times a day helps us convey to customers how clean our restaurants are," Duval said. "It's also allowed us to increase our focus on customer service. And our workers love them!"



About the sponsor:

Compaction Technologies, Inc., based in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota makes:

- *The Guest Experience better for QSR and Fast Casual Restaurants*
- *Labor more efficient and able to help guests*
- *The Environment a better place by saving millions of trash bags from entering the waste stream*

This is all accomplished with Original ecotrash compactors for front-of-house applications where guests are depositing high volumes of trash.