

Benefits and Challenges of Using a Composting Service

Leggett & Platt, Branch ON64 – High Point Furniture Components

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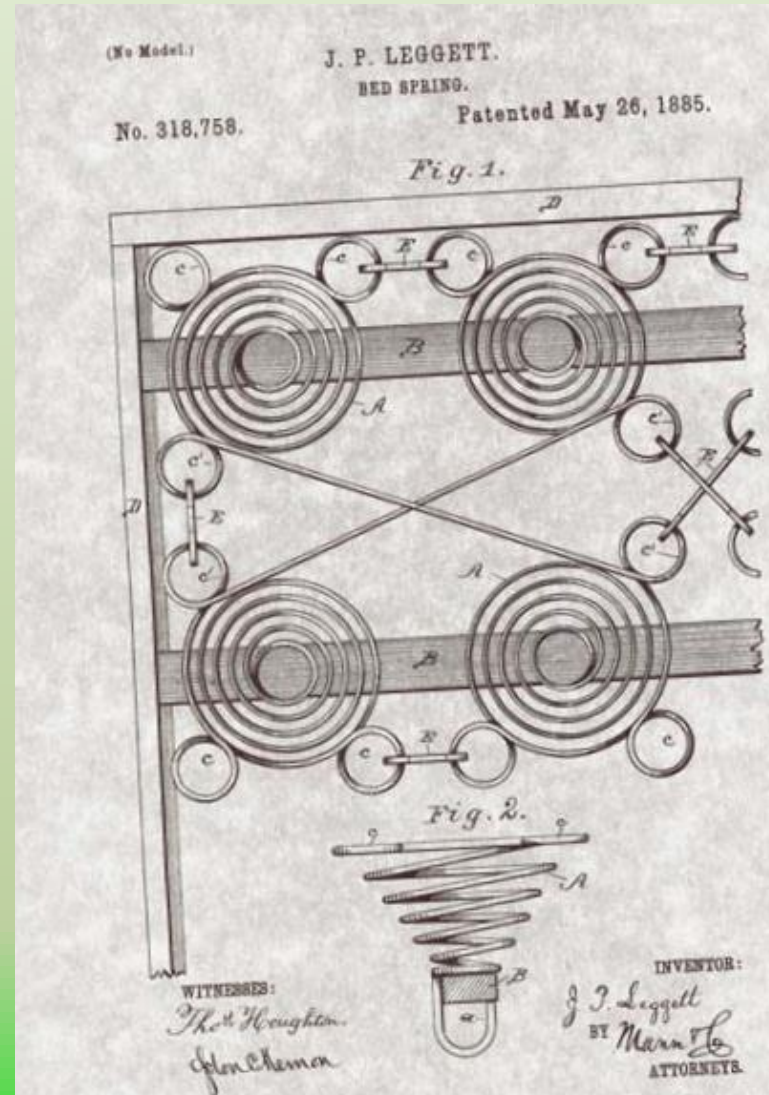


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Branch ON64 - High Point Furniture

Leggett & Platt is a Carthage, Missouri based manufacturer of engineered components used in homes, offices, automobiles, aircraft and retail stores. The 133 year-old company has approximately 130 manufacturing facilities in 18 countries and is a component company of the S&P 500 index.

The High Point Furniture branch is 220,000 square feet including manufacturing, warehousing, office and showroom space. The branch has 110 employees, operates on a single shift, and runs its own truck fleet for delivery to customers. Manufactured goods include a wide variety of seat springs, motion seating mechanisms, sofa sleeper beds and bedding products. A high degree of customization in the industry means the branch currently makes about 2,500 unique finished-goods SKUs.



We began implementation of our EMS late in 2009 and immediately focused on our 40 yard open top trash dumpster. An iterative process began of examining the dumpster, determining the most abundant material, and then figuring out what to do with the material. The process started out easy, but became progressively more challenging over the next few years. It looked something like this:

Iteration	Item	Ease of recycling for small quantities
1	Cardboard	Easy - bale/strap; plenty of recyclers
2	Stretch-film	Easy - bale/strap; plenty of recyclers
3	Wood	Moderate - box; pallet vendors make mulch
4	Paper	Easy - box; plenty of recyclers
5	Fiber	Moderate - cut down and box; plenty of recyclers
6	Nonwoven cloth	Hard - bale; difficult to find recyclers
7	Food Packaging (cans, bottles, etc.)	Moderate - lots of separation; easy to find recyclers
8	Paper towels from bathrooms	?

These sample pictures are from 2013. (Try to ignore the paper on the right!)
Clearly the most abundant material visually was white paper towels.



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Early in 2013 we had joined the NC Environmental Stewardship Initiative. Visits to other members' sites started us thinking about using a composting service.

Peer companies we talked to were primarily using composting for foods waste. We don't have a full service cafeteria or on-site food preparation, so we weren't sure if composting would be a substantial benefit for us.



Still, we were interested and paid a visit to Gallins Family Farm in Mocksville. We learned that they were looking for sources of carbon-rich “brown” dry materials to mix with the wet nitrogen-rich “green” materials like food waste. (As a bonus, we got to meet the chickens and goats.)



Problem solved ... almost.

The composting service did not want our white paper towels. White paper is white because it has been bleached. There may be residual chemicals from the bleach in the paper which are toxic to the microorganisms responsible for the composting process.

We switched to brown, unbleached paper towels and wondered why we hadn't made the switch before. Not only were brown towels suitable for composting, they were also 18% less expensive.

We began using the service in summer of 2013 and the paper towels virtually disappeared from our trash dumpster (thus exposing other materials to work on).



The service works well for us as a relatively small generator. We have three green 98 gallon totes provided by Gallins. They are generally picked up once per month, and are cleaned each time.

There is one problem with something that is essentially a trashcan. It looks like a trashcan. We (people) are awesome pattern recognition machines. If it looks like a trashcan, our nature is such that we generally don't think about it, don't second guess, don't look for confirmation. We just open the lid and chuck our twinkie wrapper.



Of course training and auditing are essential. Our recycling containers are checked as part of our zoned safety audits and 9001 internal audits. Generically, I suggest the following regimen for training and auditing:

Although primarily for paper towels, we also wanted to use the compost totes for food waste to the extent practical. Our EMS team had many discussions about whether or not to put a container in our main employee break room. For now, we've decided not to do so for several reasons:

- Difficult to monitor unless we're looking every day
- In our experience, people seem to have difficulty taking care to separate food from wrappers, utensils, straws, etc.
- Bugs [North Carolina fruit fly pictured]



We are collecting food waste in our office break room. This container is quite small; it uses 1 gallon compostable plastic bags, has a vented lid, and is emptied every day.

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Gallins provided this report for 2015. For the nature and size of our business, that 3 tons is very significant, particularly considering the rather low density of the material when we threw it in a big dumpster.

It was only after beginning to use the composting service that we began seriously discussing getting out of the landfills entirely.

We achieved zero-waste-to-landfill status on October 1, 2014.



All food waste was recycled into compost by

GALLINS FAMILY FARM

Mocksville, North Carolina | www.GallinsFarm.com

*All equivalencies calculated using <http://www3.epa.gov/warm/>

Thank you!

