
IRN - The Reuse Network

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Case Study in Reuse Citigroup, San Francisco, CA

Overview

Citigroup has a fundamental commitment to Sustainability, evidenced by the fact that it has been ranked the top financial services company in the U.S. and the world by the Dow Jones Sustainability Index.

So when Citigroup replaced about 500 task chairs from its regional headquarters in San Francisco, throwing them into a landfill was not an option. But at the same time the chairs had little or no resale value.

Citigroup turned to their longtime furniture dealer One Workplace for assistance, and One Workplace contacted IRN. IRN's mission is to match furniture that cannot be repurposed or resold with charities that can use the furniture for disaster relief and economic development. IRN has completed dozens of projects with One Workplace and other dealers, for clients across the United States. IRN is typically able to place over 90% of surplus furniture for reuse, and recycles the balance for metal and other material content. Less than half a percent of the material IRN handles is discarded.

When One Workplace called, IRN reached out to its network of charitable partners and identified users for Citigroup's seating. Four-hundred fifteen chairs were packed into two overseas shipping containers and provided to community development projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The remaining eighty chairs were transported by truck to a low-income assistance organization in Fresno, CA.

Implementation

The Citigroup Center is located in downtown San Francisco. Truck access is an issue, loading facilities are minimal, parking is nonexistent, and the building is shared with many other occupants. A big part of IRN's job is to make sure that handling items for reuse is as easy as throwing them away. In this situation, reuse was by far the simpler option, for several reasons:

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- **Reduced Traffic.** Disposing of the seating would have required 8-10 large dumpsters to be dropped off and later picked up. IRN needed just two trailers and a small box truck.
- **Smaller Project Footprint.** Dropping and removing a rolloff container requires nearly 100 feet of curb space. An IRN container needs about 40 feet less, and a box truck even less than that.
- **A Cleaner, Safer Jobsite.** When items are loaded for reuse, they are handled with care. Nothing is being tossed around, broken, or smashed.
- **No Additional Labor.** Across more than 2,000 projects, IRN has documented that reuse requires less labor than throwing items away. This is attributable to two facts. First, there is less time lost waiting for rolloff boxes to be swapped in and out. Second, a reuse project is better organized with a more efficient flow of workers and materials.
- **Flexible Schedule.** To avoid clashing with other occupants of the Citibank Center and with pedestrian and vehicle traffic, IRN scheduled its trucks to arrive at 7:00 PM on each of two successive Fridays.

A Better Impression, a Better Reality. A large, wealthy corporation throwing perfectly good furniture into a dumpster. It's hard to imagine a worse image. Through IRN and reuse, the alternative image is that of a large, wealthy corporation committed to conserving resources and helping people in need. The contrast is compelling.

Cost

Depending on material composition, project size and location, reuse typically costs 5% to 40% less than throwing furniture away. Labor is equivalent. Reuse requires some added time and cost for project management. This is because the inventory is treated as assets, not trash, and so requires tracking and documentation. The savings come in the cost of disposal. There's a cost for IRN's trucks or trailers, but it's much less than the cost of disposing of furniture in dumpsters. At Citigroup, the charge for IRN's trailers was nearly \$2,000 (or 30%) less than the cost of dumpsters. Including added cost for project management, reuse still had an advantage of more than \$1,000 compared to disposal. This advantage grows even wider on larger projects.



Chairs staged to be loaded, Citigroup Center, San Francisco



Chairs being loaded for shipment to a low-income assistance organization in Fresno.

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