



**Go Green⊕Save Green  
Business Recycling Workshop  
Focus Group Summary**

The purpose of this summary is to provide the data gathered from the discussions that can help lead to further communication and program development. The most important portion of the data is the barriers and the benefits from the perspective of the participants. The data is not quantitative and should not be interpreted as such. It is more qualitative, informal and hopefully candid and honest – so it may be more useful in the formation of messages and strategy.

From listening to peoples' statements and the fact that these groups were in a recycling workshop on a voluntary basis the data is very heavily weighted toward those who already recycle, lots of those in the room were in the business of recycling and little data is present from those businesses that need to be persuaded to recycle

The recordings captured facilitated discussion taking place in different groups. There are five compact discs, each with over an hour of recording on them (averaging about 1 hour 11 minutes each. Some of the discussion was very hard to hear, but overall the clarity was good.) The exact details of most of the discussions are less helpful than overall impression of barriers and benefits. The names are retrievable but not important.

Before we look at the captured data, there are a couple of overall comments that do not fit as well into the categories. One, the categories are named as they were presented to the groups, so they are not consistent across the groups. Networking came up in every group, often at different times and in different ways, but there was a consistent feeling that it was critical. Networking here is referred to as things like this conference – which was directly mentioned in almost every group - a one-stop place to get information, talk to potential vendors, meet others who have been through it.



## Group 1 of 5

### **Currently recycled materials:**

- Paper
- Fabric
- Reusable clean discards (a resale shop comment)
- Cardboard
- Office supplies (as described scavenged reuse – not collected for recycling)
- Pallets
- Paint
- Clothing (750,000 lbs collected curbside)
- Stuffed animal (for repair and give away)
- Shoes
- Printer cartridges
- White paper
- Cans
- Plastic bottles
- Stainless steel
- Copper wire
- Towels (for reuse at animal rescue)
- Wire hangers (for reuse at cleaners)

### **Barriers**

#### **Hardest to recycle:**

- Computer Monitors
- Railroad Ties
- Yard Waste
- Computer Parts
- Plastics – like binders
- Plastic bags – Implied other than normal grocery bags – but not clear)
- Plastic films from boxes

#### **Materials they would like to recycle next:**

- Styrofoam
- Poly styrene
- CD Cases
- Plastics (discussion of ignorance of what really could be recycled)
- Stadium Cups
- Tempered glass
- Used Oil
- Grease from restaurants

#### **What keeps your business from recycling these items?**

- Cost
- Need more networking (PR)



- Wake County needs to manage a network of what people have to get rid of and what people are looking for
- Wake County should become the E-Bay of recycling – needs to be free
  - (Someone mentioned there is an outfit called Waste Traders – but no one else knew about them)
- Engagement of people on floor
- Need trash buckets next to recycling containers for people to behave (separate) better
- Government does not do well at shredding (from the shredder company)
- Tipping fees to low (lots of agreement around table)

### **Incentives**

- Increase tipping fees to pay for recycling
- Agents to be provided by county assigned to businesses (especially small business) to help identify markets and then provide enforcement necessary.
- Networking (this term gets used a lot in a number of groups and gets used in two ways – one was like this Go Green session and the other is more like the Waste Traders concept) more comments on web page and ability to enter goods in Database
- Dumpster diving for employees (so they begin to understand what gets thrown away and that provide the incentive to participate)
- No one helping business people figure it out – they need help
- Helping businesses communicate directly to markets
- Advertise the network (like you did this conference)

### **Credible Sources**

- In Business (published by same publisher as Biocycle)
- News & Observer (locally)
- Waste Trader Magazine (for big industry)
- Wake County website (most had not seen)
- Triangle Business Journal

### **Group 2 of 5**

#### **Currently Recycling:**

- Cardboard
- Plastics
- Glass
- Shredding
- Cans
- Cartridges
- Drums
- All paper
- Wood pallets
- Shrink Wrap



- Metal
- Oil
- Green waste

### **Barriers**

- Cost
- Space
- Education
- Lack of cooperation between governments (ordinances are tough on dumpsters, space for materials, fencing around containers, makes businesses want to just throw out. Design approval should insist on place for trash and recycling!
- Language (often those who collect materials and trash in business speak Spanish or other language)

### **Difficult materials to recycle**

- Cell phones
- Microwaves
- Rubber gloves
- Stirrers and straws
- Plastics (those that are not 1s or 2s)
- Purple elephant for computers and printers (?)

### **Benefits**

- Financial benefit
- Environment
- Grants – meant no additional cost – why not do it
- Great marketing tool to customers

### **General discussion**

- Overcoming space problems – Increase grants for corrals for bins to meet ordinances
- All new construction should mandate space for recyclables and trash
- Passing out money from selling of recyclables as staff motivation
- Have staff go through trash as education in recycling
- Recognition

### **Sources you trust**

- Wake County Go Green Day – where you could get all the info
- Earth Day – info



- Mainly listen to other businesses
- No trade journals they really read
- Some read Triangle business journal
- Credible means someone who has to meet Bottom Line test (not government or nonprofit)
- No one watches community TV

### Group 3 of 5

#### **Currently Recycle**

- Cartridges
- Cans
- Paper
- Newspaper
- Chipboard/cardboard
- Plastic bottles
- Cardboard (have bailers)

#### **Barriers**

- Need 2,000 gallon tank to buy biodiesel
- Don't know where it goes (Both don't understand how it can be reused or recycled and markets)

#### **Is it in your interest to recycle?**

- We make money off it
- Competitive Advantage to recycle
- Employees really care – push internally
- We had 50% savings on our tipping fees due to steel and paper recycling

#### **Additional materials you would consider recycling:**

- Plastic containers
- Film, Shrink wrap
- Plastic bags
- Green Waste
- Wood (tub grinder would help rather than chipper but is expensive and high maintenance)
- Cell Phones (no stable market)

#### **Barriers**

- No market for Styrofoam
- Hard to get people to drop off cartridges
- Where do you start (often by just finding someone who will take – i.e. Metal)

#### **Overcoming Barriers**

- Why doesn't city pick up – like residences



- Get everyone – city, county, state to do the same thing
- Need a rolloff full of one product
- Plastics – large % of waste stream
- Composting

### **Incentives**

- Money – tax incentives, grants
- Convenience
- Community Help Line – waste traders

### **Trusted sources:**

- Resource Recycling Magazine
- Biocycle
- Internet
- Some Landscaping magazines

### **Credible Source**

- Businesses (only)

### **Radio Station in workplace**

- NPR

## **Group 4 of 5**

### **Currently recycling:**

- Plastics
- Paper
- Cans
- Cell phones
- Glass
- Coffee mugs (Starbucks is?)
- Milk Jugs

### **Barriers**

- Participation
- Inconvenience
- Perceived liability (for volunteers to carry out recyclables)
- Concentration of materials – not enough to justify pickups
- Contamination – even when well labeled
- Education
- Commitment

### **Incentives**

- Law against throwing away aluminum
- Mandate from Management



- Marketing efforts from the “market” for products
- Gift certificates for employees funded by proceeds of selling recyclables
- Grants – they really do help get programs up and going
- Awards for civic engagement

### Group 5 of 5

#### **Why Recycle**

- In our best interest to recycle – our product is packaged in recycled plastic
- It makes environment beautiful – recycling in our own best interest
- Ideological and customer support – not financial

#### **Barriers**

- Not cost effective
- Housekeeping staff do not speak English
- Start-up information and education are hard to get and to do

#### **Incentives**

- Increased Tipping Fees
- Gift Certificates

#### **Additional materials you would consider adding (All listed as interested but have many problems)**

- Styrofoam
- Plastics – multiple types a problem
- Bubble wrap

#### **Benefits**

- Peace of mind
- Personal pleasure

#### **Trade publications you read**

- None

#### **Radio you listen to at work**

- NPR

There was discussion that there is a real need for recycled products (products made of recycled goods) list.

