

Solid Waste Communications in the Digital Age

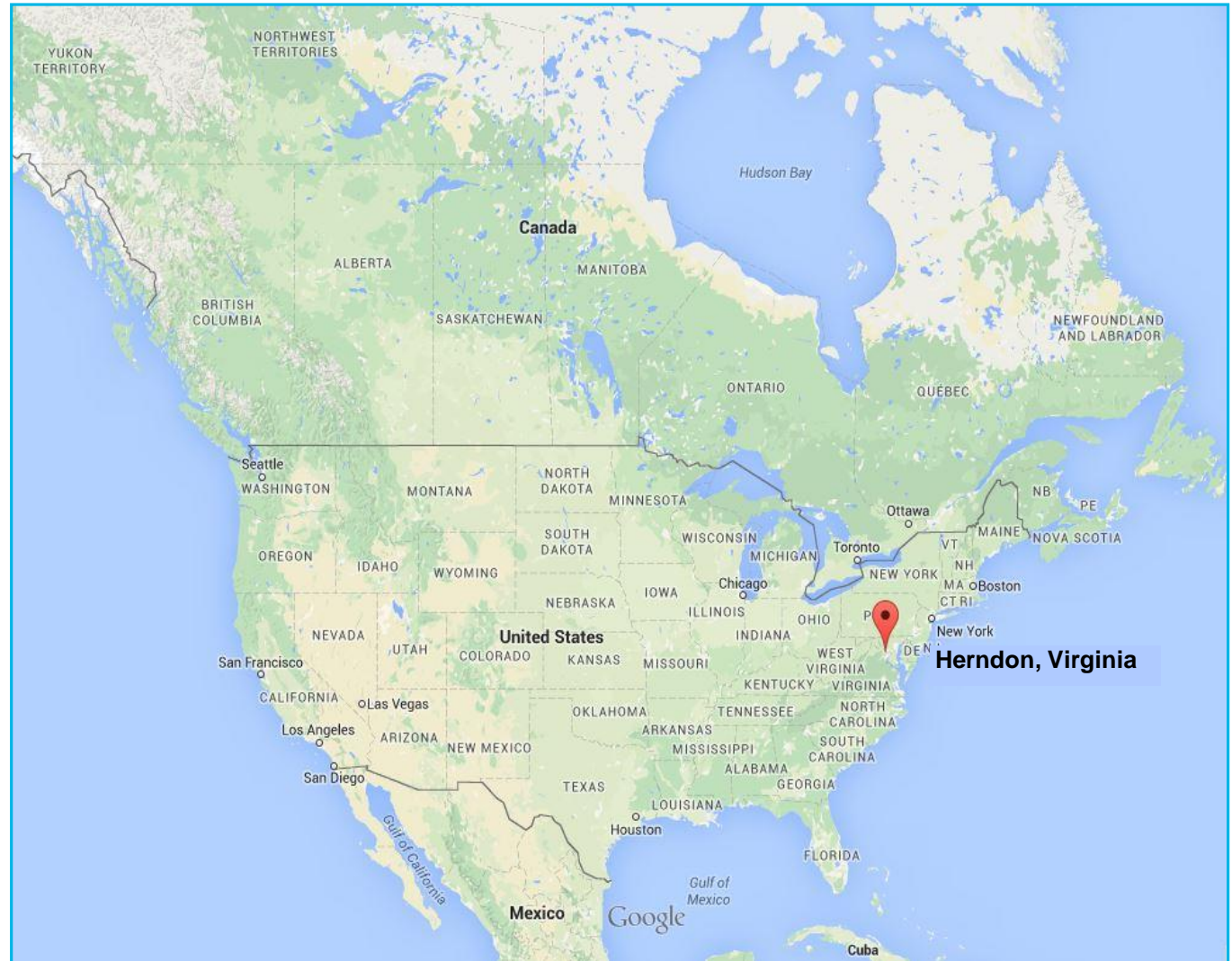
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Welcome

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Introduction

What are the best ways to get solid waste messages heard now that we are living in the digital age?

- Changes in communication methods (paper to electronic)
- Education strategies and their reliance on communication
- Social media based community “marketing”



Introduction (continued)



1. The Need to Communicate

- Waste-makers need to know what to do with their waste
- Waste-managers need to effectively and efficiently convey their message

2. Methods to Communicate the Message

- Traditional
- Electronic

3. What to Include in the Message?

- Content
- Amount

4. How to Monitor Effectiveness

- Baseline Information
- Check Progress

Why Do We Need to Communicate With People About Solid Waste?

Need to Communicate – Getting People to Do What You Want Them to Do



- What to do with trash?
- What is trash and what has value?
- Universal goals among waste managers
 - Reduce costs
 - Reduce amount of trash
 - Increase reuse/recycle/compost
 - Increase participation
 - Maintain safe and healthy conditions

Communication is Key

- Most people assume everything they don't want any more is trash
- Clear messages are needed that convey what items can be reused or recycled; what are trash; and what are banned from the landfill
- Well intended programs with beautiful collection systems will yield poor results if only a small percentage of the community knows what to do



Tell Them What You Want Them to Know, Then Tell Them Again and Again



- Example Issues:
 - A restaurant owner is unaware of a municipal requirement to recycle glass and metal
 - A landscaping business is unaware of a municipal ban on yard waste going to landfills
 - An auto repair shop is unaware of a landfill ban on tires
 - A community's largest waste generator is unaware of a state-mandated recycling rate at the local level

Give People Solutions – They Typically Want to do the Right Thing, but They are Busy

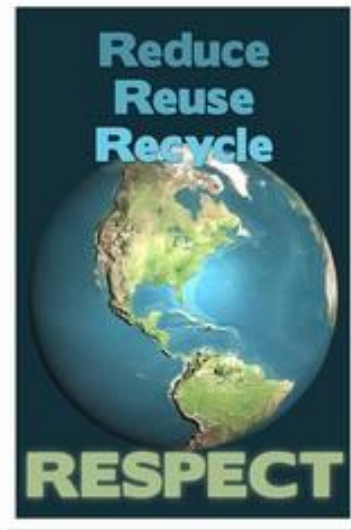
Example Solutions:

- An email is sent from the county permitting office to all food and beverage serving establishments
 - Why, where and how to recycle
- Printed bilingual materials are prepared informing readers of a municipal ban on yard waste going to landfills
 - Where to take yard waste; how to prepare it for the curbside pick up
- An email is sent from the county permitting office to all auto repair shops
 - Providing a link to outlets where they can take tires
- A private Facebook message is sent to community's largest waste generator informing it of the power it has to impact the community
 - Citing the County's recycling requirement and data to show how they could single-handedly raise the rate x percentage points



What Communication Methods Will You Use?

What Communication Methods Will You Use – There Are More Choices Than Ever



There are more lines of communication than ever, so this should be easy, right? Not necessarily

- Information overload is real and can result in the walling off of new information that isn't perceived as essential or particularly entertaining
- Traditional methods, such as flyers, posters, and training continue to be effective but can be labor intensive and costly
- Social media can be less expensive and reach larger audiences but can be lost in the volume of electronic input your target community is constantly navigating

Different Communication Methods Are More Effective for Different Segments of the Population



- Identify types, group them and determine their media soft spots
- Young school children with solid waste-related projects they must take home to complete, educates their parents, too
 - First step is non-electronic
 - Include links to sites as a part of the take home projects
- Busy older youth and twenty-somethings are better addressed via a variety of social media messages
 - Almost exclusively addressed via social media
 - Include “challenges” to share information

Different Communication Methods Are More Effective for Different Segments of the Population, continued



Identifying types, grouping them and determining their media soft spots can help

- Middle aged to older adults use Facebook and LinkedIn
- Older to senior adults that no longer get messages through the workplace may be best reached through more traditional means such as flyers and newspaper articles

Electronic Media is Central to a Communication Strategy – Not Only Social Media, but E-mail and Links are Useful

- The top five social media sites are:

1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. LinkedIn
4. Pinterest
5. Google



- Others, that are in the top 15 (excluding dating sites) include: Tumblr, Flickr, Vine, Ask and Classmates
- Beyond social media usage, email reminders and links to informative web sites are an important element of a communication strategy



Source: <http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/social-networking-websites>

The Right Mix of Communication Methods Will Change Over Time

Identifying types and grouping them and determining their media soft spots can help

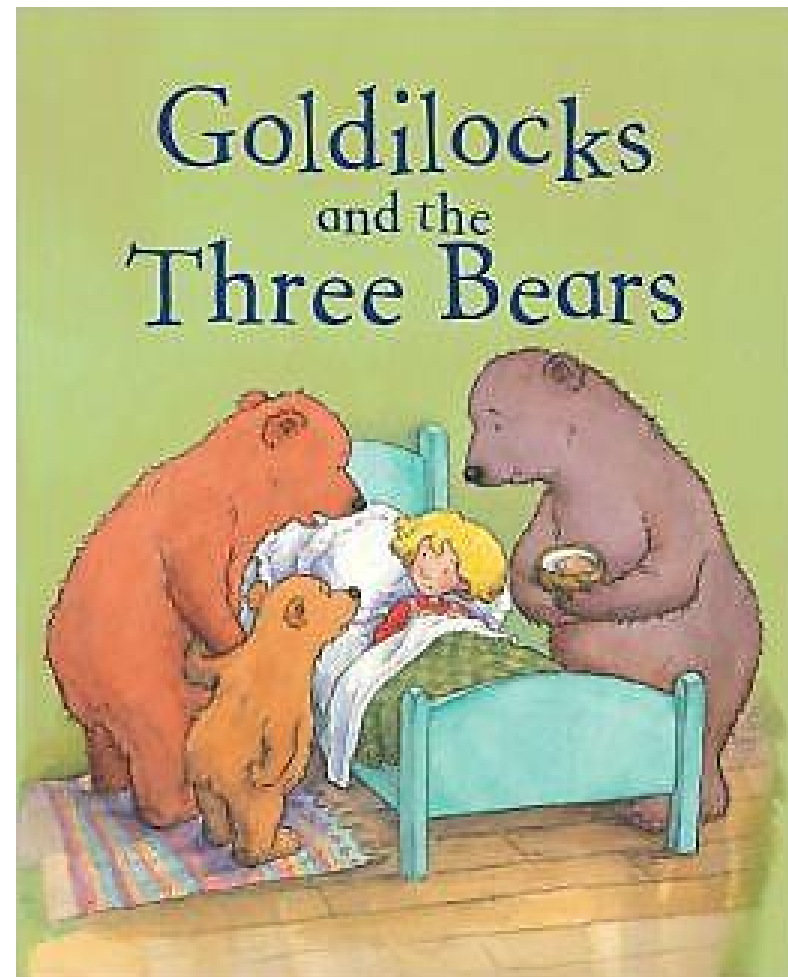
- A multimedia approach will be needed for years to come given the segmentation of our population when it comes to access and use of social media
- This will need to be revisited regularly to adjust for changes in demographics and changes in social media



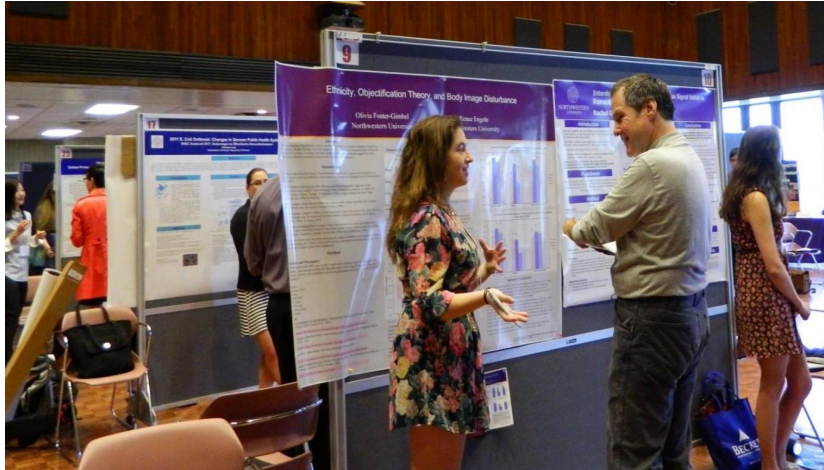
How Much Information Should I Include?

How Much Information – What to Include in Your Message?

- There is a wide range of what the public considers the right amount of information
- The Goldilocks phenomena – certain people are sensitive to the type and amount of information they are given on a subject
- Information overload can leave some stressed, angry, even sad from a feeling of being overwhelmed



Finding the Information Sweet Spot For Each Group



- The result can be they tune out; worse it can make them “anti” message and they actively resist the change
- Others are intrigued by the new options and want more details; they can be wonderful ambassadors of the new practices
- Your job is to strike a balanced message that will satisfy the greatest number of people in the community you are targeting – in other words ideal messages will vary from group to group and media to media

Finding the Information Sweet Spot For Each Group, continued

- Messages should be simple and positive
- Messages should be results oriented
- If your strategy includes opportunities for engagement with the community for events; several subsets of messages need to be developed, beyond what you have done for your different groups
- What kinds of community engagement might yield results?



How to Measure Success?

How to Measure Success – Or, How to Know if Your Message is Getting Through

Are you getting your message across?



Web Analytics Services:

- Help analyze web site visitor traffic and present a complete picture of the audience and their needs
- Track routes people take to reach the web site and the devices used to get there
- Provide information on what people are looking for and what they like that allows tailoring the marketing and site content for maximum impact



- is the most widely used web analytics service on the Internet, but there are others...

There Are Many Services Available to Assist You in Your Effort to Measure Success



In addition to Google Analytics, there are other tools to use

- Most are free or have monthly subscription rates of \$5-\$10
- These have been around for a while and have a track record

Source: <http://www.searchenginejournal.com/7-alternatives-to-google-analytics/38764/>

Measuring Success through Awards

- SWANA's Excellence Awards Program recognizes outstanding solid waste programs and facilities with environmentally and economically sound solid waste management practices.
- Winners demonstrate effective technologies and processes in system design and operations, worker and community health and safety, and **successful public education and outreach programs.**

Source: <https://swana.org/Awards/ExcellenceAwards/2015Winners.aspx>

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

[Gold – City of Largo, Florida “Largo Recycles More”](#)

[Silver – Wake County Solid Waste Management, North Carolina “86it Anti-Litter Campaign”](#)

[Bronze – Regional Municipality of York, Ontario “Better Blue Awareness Campaign”](#)

EDUCATION PROGRAM

[Gold – Waste Management, Inc. “Recycle Corps”](#)

[Silver – Montgomery County, Ohio, Environmental Learning Center](#)

[Bronze – Westchester County Department of Environmental Facilities, New York “Trash as Treasure Recycled Material Art”](#)

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND MARKETING TOOLS

[Gold – Niagara Region “Illegal Dumping On-line Reporting Tool”](#)

[Silver – City of Austin, Austin Resource Recovery “Universal Recycling Ordinance”](#)

[Bronze – Escambia County Perdido Landfill, Florida “Escambia Recycles Activity and Coloring Book”](#)

Innovation in Communication, Education and Marketing Waste Management, Inc. “Recycle Corps”

Measuring Success through Awards

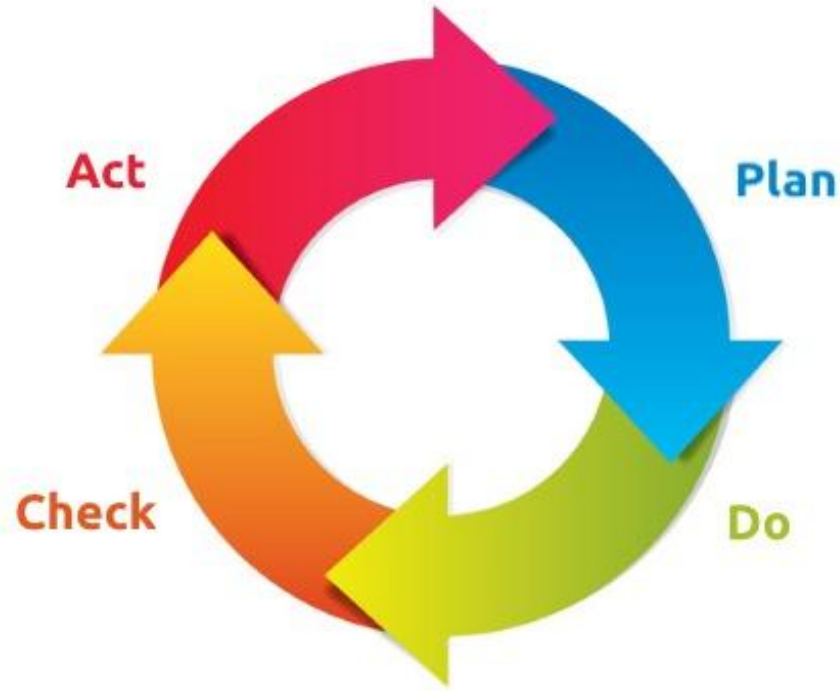
2015 SWANA Excellence Award AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Bronze – Regional Municipality of York, Ontario “Better Blue Awareness Campaign”



Source: <https://swana.org/Awards/ExcellenceAwards/2015Winners.aspx>

If at First You Don't Succeed, Then Try, Try Again



- Establish a baseline – where you are today/before you start your communications program
- Data may or may not be available or current; do the best you can and then at a minimum track the same variables you started with and add others over time
- Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle

Solid Waste Communications in the Digital Age

Case Studies and Research

Case Study - Zero Waste Scotland Communications Guidance

Improving Recycling Through Effective Communications



- Communications are an integral part of any local recycling program, to participate fully, residents need to know clearly
 - what their services are
 - what their service rules are
 - what happens to their recycling after it is collected
- This view is based on consumer feedback on the most important aspects of a waste collection program

Source: <http://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/>

Case Study - RE3.org: A Case Study of Using New Media To Promote Recycling in North Carolina



- The RE3.org recycling awareness campaign encourages recycling among North Carolinians ages 18 to 34
- To better reach this target audience, the campaign made use of new media, including websites, blogs, and social networking sites
- The campaign's TV ads received over 33,637 views on YouTube with virtually no additional campaign expenditures
- The RE3.org blog received 3,414 visits and was viewed by an average of 11 people per day

Source: www.casesjournal.org/volume2

Case Study - Promoting Sustainable Behavior A Guide to Successful Communication



- Attract Attention
 - Persuasive Messages
 - Strategy
- Nine strategies provided #8 – Feedback

“it reduces anxiety, reinforces behavior, and helps people know that they are making a difference.”

- Delivery
- Audience

Source: http://sustainability.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/Promoting_Sustain_Behavior_Primer.pdf

Conclusions

- Participation is central to a successful recycling program
- Participation rates are a factor of many things including simply knowing what to do
- Communication must be done on multiple fronts using multiple methods
- Using electronic media can help you to reach more people and keep costs down
- Electronic media alone will not be sufficient to build a program
- Monitor results to gauge success of the message

What effective practices and policies are there at the municipal level to increase participation in recycling?



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
EARTH ENGINEERING CENTER
Advancing Sustainable Waste Management



Thank You

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