Why Recycle? It Makes a Difference

Recycling has a big impact on businesses, the environment and you.

Consider these facts:

- Recycling is good corporate citizenship.
- Implementing effective environmental practices, such as recycling, can have economic rewards. And customers notice. Workplace recycling also helps communities meet recycling goals.
- Recyclables are the raw materials for new products. Recovered paper supplies more than 37 percent of the raw material used to make new paper products. More than 48 percent of the office papers were recovered for recycling in 2003 and turned into products like cereal boxes, tissue and more printing and writing papers.
- Recyclables have monetary value.
- Every ton of paper recycled saves 3.3 cubic yards of landfill space. Currently more paper is recovered for recycling than land-filled.
- Of all discarded products in an average office, about 62 percent is recyclable paper, 9 percent is corrugated packaging and 29 percent are other materials.
- A typical business generates about 1.7 pounds of material per employee per day, much of it recyclable, high-grade paper.

What Gets Recycled?
American’s recycled 30 percent of materials and products from the municipal solid waste stream in 2001, diverting 51 million tons of paper to recycling. Here’s what was recovered according to the U.S. EPA:
Steps to Workplace Recycling

1 Select a Recycling Committee

A Recycling Committee will be responsible for implementation and education of a workplace recycling program. A successful program involves employees at all levels of the company. The Recycling Committee will coordinate the following:

1) The goals you want to accomplish
2) What you are able to recycle
3) How you will apply your recycling efforts

2 Gather the Facts

Assess the Waste
Conduct a waste audit to determine the amount and types of materials that are being discarded by your employees. For most offices this will mean a variety of papers. An audit also provides information about where most of the recyclables are generated in the company. For a complete Waste Audit Manual contact the District office at 800-678-9839.

Target Materials for Recycling
Identify all materials that are potentially recyclable (see Typical Office Recyclables chart). Evaluate how much could be recycled and how recyclables might best be separated for collection. Target those materials that are most abundant in the recycling stream and would be the easiest to separate for recovery.

Talk to a Recycler
A recycling company can provide information about the types of materials they accept for recycling. Work with them to determine the cost involved on starting a recycling program in your company. Smaller companies may also want to consider using a recycling drop-off location. Check online at http://www.timetorecycle.org/communityrecycling.php on a location in your area.

Typical Office Recyclables
- Office papers (copy paper, letterhead, notebook paper, envelopes, file folders)
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Shipping (corrugated boxes)
- Paperboard packaging
- Glass, plastic & aluminum cans
- Electronics (computers & cell phones)
- Printer Cartridges
- Packing materials
Specific Issues to Discuss With a Recycler
You should meet or speak with at least two or three recycling haulers and ask some or all of the following questions. Request a written proposal prior to signing an agreement.

- What are the potential costs and benefits of recycling?
- What types of recyclables does the company accept?
- Which materials can be recycled most cost effectively?
- Are the materials picked up on a schedule or on-call?
- How will materials need to be collected? What are the common contaminants of each material? Will we be notified if material is not accepted because of contamination?
- Will we receive updates on the quality and quantity of recyclables collected?
- Will additional containers or other equipment be required for the collection of recyclables?
- Does the company require a contract? Terms?
- Does the company provide payment for recyclable commodities?

3 Design a Recycling Program

Organize Collection Procedures
To improve participation and the quality of recyclable materials collected, create a convenient and efficient method for collecting recyclables. When designing collection procedures or attempting to improve the current recycling program, consider:

- **Containers** – Determine the size and number of containers needed to implement the program. Two containers at each desk – one for recycling and one for trash is optimal. Use color to help identify what goes in a bin. Designate different bins for different commodities to help prevent contamination of recyclables. You may also want to consider a beverage recycling container that only accepts bottles or cans.

- **Collection Locations** – Have at least one common area collection container for every 15 – 20 employees. As space permits, put containers in common areas near copiers, in mail rooms and at printer locations. Be sure to consider fire codes that may affect storing paper.

Keep It Clean
To ensure office paper is able to be recycled, keep contaminants out during collection. Common contaminants include:

- Food and items covered with food, such as cups, plates and wrappers
- Tapes, glue and adhesive labels
- Medical or hazardous waste
- Specialty papers, like photographs, blueprints and foil decals
- Deeply dyed papers (dark and neon)
- Tyvek envelopes, computer disks, slides, transparencies, rubber bands and metal fasteners
- Glass, aluminum and plastic packaging
■ **Signage** – Post signs on bins and above collection containers indicating what materials are acceptable and what should be kept out. Use pictures or other visuals when possible.

■ **Employee Participation** – Collection procedures should be as simple as possible to improve employee participation and to allow for the most effective separation of recyclables.

■ **Custodial Staff** – Determine who will be responsible for moving recyclables from offices to collection locations and eventually to large recycling containers. In most cases custodial staff will be responsible for some or all of this process. Staff and custodial teams will need to be trained in these new processes.

### Start It Up

For small organizations, it may be possible to start the recycling program all at once. For larger companies, begin with a short pilot or test the program in one department or floor. The will help iron out any problems before full implantation.

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<th><strong>Pilot Test</strong> the recycling program in a small area or division of the company. Check collection procedures, answer questions about what’s accepted in the program and monitor custodial staff. Resolve problems ahead of time to streamline the process before expanding to the entire company.</th>
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<th><strong>Phase-in</strong> the program one department or floor at a time. If your organization is large, begin with a floor a week or each month to ease into the program. This is also an opportunity to monitor employee response and gauge the amount of recyclables collected.</th>
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<th><strong>Plan a kick-off event.</strong> When you’re ready to begin the recycling program, start with a bang. Be sure to include management in the event. To make certain all employees understand the recycling program, use a variety of communications tools to get the message out.</th>
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### Educate Employees

Employees make a recycling program happen. They are a recycling program’s most valuable asset. Education the employees, talk up the recycling program and get the word out. Communicate positively, clearly and often. Consider these tips:

■ **Use Enthusiastic Employees** – Identify employees that are enthusiastic about the program and let them help you sell it to the other employees.

■ **Set Up Recycling Teams** – Form teams among departments, floors or company divisions. Organize competitions to determine which team is recycling the most. This will help spread the word about the program and generate enthusiasm.

■ **Include Information in Employee Orientation Materials** – Incorporate the company recycling guidelines into new employee orientation materials and presentations.
Use a Variety of Communication Tools
- E-mail recycling tips and reminders
- Post or distribute flyers
- Organize company-wide or division recycling education seminars
- Post signage in and around employee common areas
- Include recycling information in the company website, newsletter or other internal communication

Create Incentives – Motivate employees with contests and rewards for achieving recycling goals.

Monitor Recycling Bins Regularly – Inspect bins, create a system to remind employees about contamination and praise employees for a job well done.

Repeat – Circulate communications frequently about the recycling program and help reinforce employee recycling behaviors.

Measure and Share Results

Track results to show the merits of recycling and motivate employees. When management and employees see progress, momentum for the recycling program will take off. Achieving recycling goals, lowering costs, realizing environmental benefits or improving participation are all opportunities to show off program successes.

Keep Track
Track the amount recycling for each material (if possible). Work with the recycler to gather this information regularly, such as monthly. Use Excel or some other program to record and store data. Specific information that should be gathered includes:

- Quantity of Recyclables Collected by Material – The amount is typically reported in tons, although measuring pounds may be more realistic for your office. Totals by floor, department or other division may be useful. If the quantity of recyclables is recorded to your company in tons and you would like the amount in pounds – take the amount given to you in tons and multiply by 2,000 to get the amount in pounds.

- Quality of Recyclables Collection – Excess contamination can cause recyclables to be unmarketable to an end-use manufacturer. Get feedback on the amount and types of contamination from the recycler. Incorporate this into the employee education program.

- Additional Costs or Cost Savings to the Business – Recycling adds collection and processing services that may increase costs. More material going to recycling rather than disposal, however, may lower overall hauling costs. Be sure to also monitor any costs associated with operating the program.
Communicate Results
Spread the word about program achievement to:

- **Employees** – Success is a great reward. Watching the recycling program grow, reaching goals and creating benefits will motivate employees to participate.

- **The Community** – Announce the recycling program to the community. Show them the company’s commitment to the environment. Provide regular updates about program success through media articles, local recycling events and company outreach to the community. And, include the recycling initiative in company printed materials and on the website.

- **Nationally** – Enter the company’s recycling program in a national competition to bring additional recognition to the programs’ best practices and results.

Keep It Up
Sustaining a workplace recycling program takes ongoing effort

- **Make It Fun** – Create incentives and rewards to motivate employees.

- **Keep Up Communication** – Employee education is an ongoing activity. Don’t let it up. Keep it short, positive and engaging.

- **Make Adjustments as Necessary** – Things will likely change as the program grows. Build flexibility. Communicate any changes to employees and the reason for specific changes.

- **Get Employee Input** – Survey employees about the program. What’s working? What’s not? What would improve participation? Recognize employees that provide exceptional efforts to the program.

- **Set Achievable Goals** – Reaching goals and setting new ones builds progress and movement into the program.

- **Include Everyone** – Ensure that the program is not dependent on one person to succeed. A recycling program needs the participation of all employees.

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**Keep It Clean**
For security reasons, businesses may shred some office papers. Some paper mills won’t accept shredded office paper. Check with your recycler for specials instructions on recycling this material.
**Things to Consider**

**Property Management**
Businesses that share an office building with other tenants will likely need to work with a property management or leasing company to plan a recycling program, as these entities typically contract with the recycler. Property management would participate in program planning and help market the program to other businesses operating in the building.

**Custodial Staff**
Custodial staff is critical to the success of a recycling program. Ensure that the management clearly outlines their role in the program and communicates roles and responsibilities to cleaning staff. Build ongoing training into the program for building maintenance and other personnel who will be directly involved in recycling collection.

**Community Partnerships**
Reach out to the local recycling community and get their help. Assistance from community and business leaders that have experience and knowledge about workplace recycling will vastly enhance the value of the program. They can also be great advocates.

**Tips for Reducing Waste at Work**
- Buy in bulk or loose items
- Choose material’s when ordering supplies with little or no packaging
- Borrow, rent or share seldom-used items
- Maintain and repair products you own
- Replace disposable cups and dinnerware with reusable ones
- Make double-sided copies
- Use reusable toner or copier cartridges
- When taking phone messages or taking notes, use both sides of the paper
- Reuse containers, bags, bottles or boxes

**Find These Tools Online**
As you get ready to begin your recycling program you may want to check out online recycling resources. Below are a few places you can check out.

- Ohio Environmental Protection Agency - [http://www.epa.state.oh.us/](http://www.epa.state.oh.us/)
- United State Protection Agency - [http://www.epa.gov/](http://www.epa.gov/)