

Constructing a Culture of Recycling for Businesses: A Qualitative Study of Incentives, Supports and Barriers

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Overview

- Introduction
- Statement of the problem
- Review of the literature
- Theoretical perspective
- Methodology
- Findings/Results
- Conclusion

Introduction

- Qualitative research study
- Conducted in 2003
- Identify recycling themes in business sector for City of Escondido
- Practical application for developing and/or improving recycling services offered to businesses in Florida or any other State
- Hopeful that themes are consistent

Statement of the Problem

- Current State of Waste/Recycling Services
 - Room for improvement in residential arena but minimal
 - Small # of businesses contract with Disposal Co.
 - Some cities/counties do not offer assistance for businesses
 - Business generate ½ of waste
 - Business waste is diverse
- Recycling opportunities not consistent across all arenas
- Recycling not set up to assist businesses

Statement of the Problem

- Need to increase diversion of material from landfill
- Look past traditional barriers/obstacles of cost, time and space
- No documentation of business owner viewpoints-incentives, supports and barriers

Review of Literature

- Reasons/Predictors for Recycling Not Fully Understood
- **Derksen and Gartrell (1993)** – Importance of Social Context on Recycling Behavior: Support for Recycling, Few to No Barriers, Proximity to Receptacles, and Access to Services
- **Schultz and Oskamp (1996)** - Relationship between Strong Pro-Environmental Attitudes/Concern and Overcoming Barriers in High-Effort Situations
- **Hornik and Cherian (2002)** - Monetary and Public Recognition Incentives Motivate and Encourage Recycling Activities

Theoretical Perspective

- Gap in literature on business recycling
- Need to understand meanings that surround the act of recycling
- Need to understand decision-making surrounding business recycling

- **Mannheim (1936)**
 - Social Groups Provide Knowledge, Words, and Meanings
 - Influence How Individuals Think and Act
- **Mead (1934)**
 - Symbolic Interaction- Development of the Self from a Set of Written and/or Verbal Interactions That Hold Symbolism
 - Symbols Guide Everyday Actions, Behaviors within Social Structure
 - Meaning Given to Symbols Influences Behavior
- **Bell (1998)**
 - Circumstances Lead to Environmentally Conscious Decisions
 - Social Structural Organization of Daily Life-Useful for Policy and Programs

Methodology

- **Objective:** Understand social and interaction processes around recycling participation
- **Strategy:** To include a subset of businesses.
 - Presence of Containers (Paying for Pick-up/Not Participating)
 - Type & Size
 - Content of Waste and Amount
 - Interaction with Customers/General Public
- **Who:** Various types of businesses.
 - Restaurant (3)
 - Automotive (3)
 - Banking/Real Estate (3)
 - Retail (2)
 - Construction (1)

Methodology

- How:
 - 12 Qualitative, hour-long interviews with business owners and managers in Escondido/San Diego, CA
 - Interviews conducted primarily in English
 - Hand-delivered letter to ask for participation
 - Interviews transcribed and organized according to themes

Methodology

- Questions asked:
 - Experiences with recycling
 - What efforts had been made towards recycling
 - Changes since implementation
 - What led them to recycle
 - Level of recycling consciousness

Findings/Results

- 4 out of 12 businesses were under contract for material pick-up
- 6 out of 8 not under contract, yet recycled some of their waste
- Material for business recycling varies
 - Paper, Cans, Toner Cartridge, Concrete, Bottles, Oil, Cardboard
- Structural, relational, cultural obstacles
- Barriers prevent ideas from taking place
- Recycling collapses into trash structure because containers are not available

Recycling Obstacles

Structural Constraints:

- Economic Barriers to Recycling
 - Added cost/expense
 - Lack of convenient methods and accessible facilities
 - Not aware of cost reductions
 - No incentives
- Optional Recycling for Businesses
 - Not organized nor mandatory
 - Comparison to residential

Recycling Obstacles

Structural Constraints (cont.):

- Lack of Information
 - Unaware of services-no info describing/offering services
 - Unaware of types of things to recycle, the technique, and importance
- Lack of Space
 - Reduces customer parking spaces
 - No enclosed space outside
 - Inside storage
- Accessibility and Request for Containers
 - Second step storage
 - With containers, all agree 50-90% of trash could be recycled

Recycling Obstacles

Relational Barriers:

- Customer Behavior Obstacles
 - Customer beliefs/Interest
 - Lack of confidence in public
- Employee Obstacles
 - Extra work/Extra step
 - Employee attitudes/Laziness
- Janitor Obstacles
 - Change in procedures
 - Employee confidence in janitorial follow-through
- Lacking Top-Down Enforcement within Business
 - Company endorsement of recycling/Company philosophy
 - Educating and training
 - Enforcement/Reminders

Structural/Cultural Constraints

Economic Costs to Recycle/ Accessibility and Request for Containers

"That is the only thing. I don't want another expense to recycle my cardboard. If they are going to make me pay for a bin, I'm not going to do that. I have too many expenses as it is, but if there were a bin out there I would surely throw my recycling in there. Or if it became a block thing, where everybody paid a very small amount, I wouldn't whine over that."

Ideology not Located in Pop Culture/Customer Obstacles

"I think that all of the producers of cans and beverages...the coke, Pepsi advertisers, they should begin to say, "Recycle". "Recycle your plastic, recycle your aluminum." They can say it. They can advertise in the magazines like what we do with the cigarettes companies."

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What did we find out about those who did recycle?

- Had created a recycling infrastructure and culture
- Governmental reasons, i.e. they were forced to recycle, but received assistance
- Voluntary recycling
- Separate containers for material
- Designated employees
- Education, training techniques and top-down enforcement of employees, janitors, and customers
- Attempt to create cultural ideology

Note: Evidence that conditions of environment shape behavior

Developing a Recycling Infrastructure

Separating Material

"We have a lot of recycling bins set up... We have them in pretty much everybody's private offices. We try to have a trashcan designated for that in some of the open little cubicles out here. In the computer room we have four or five recycling bins under the computer workstations so we've put them there and we have tried to encourage people to put their paper in there."

Employee Training

"We told them, "This is how we do it." And some people, when they first start, they probably think, "God what's the deal here, are they really spooky or what?" We explain to them that all this paper has just been wasted and trees are going to get cut down for it and we could actually save money and fewer [trees]...so everyone is pretty much on line as far as the recycling."

What were the motivations to recycle?

- Environmental Influences
 - Ideology of culture supports recycling-Social influences
 - Parents/Boss/Previous owner
 - Kids bring home ideas learned at school
- Social Causes
 - Aquatics center fundraiser or other community group
 - Someone who could use the money
 - Higher likelihood of seeing benefit vs. abstract benefit such as helping the environment
- Incentives
 - Financial rewards (e.g. Pizza Funds, Slush Fund)
 - Social rewards or public recognition (e.g. Recycling Certificate)

Note: Are all techniques that can effect change through cultural norms

Key Concluding Finding

Business owners and managers in this study all agreed they would be highly likely to recycle if:

- Containers existed
- Help was provided to overcome barriers

Recommendations to City

- Development of a Recycling Culture
 - Provide containers and collection services to businesses
 - Education on the importance of recycling
 - Advertisement of recycling
 - Provide incentives for businesses
- Further Research Studies
- Recycling Liaison

What is the project significance?

- Provides Topics to Consider for Practical, Structural Changes and Program Development
 - Achieve recycling for businesses
 - Increase and improve rate of recycling
 - Divert waste from landfill
 - Positive effect on the environment
- Background for opening/Re-opening discussion between City and Disposal Company

In summary...

- When applied, these steps will provide more opportunities for consistent recycling behavior

Thank You!

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