Chapter Two

Waste Prevention

1. Introduction

Waste Prevention

In the United States, each person uses, directly or indirectly, about 125 pounds of material every day. That amounts to 23 tons per year per person. U.S. citizens constitute about five percent of the world population but use 25 percent of the natural resources. U.S. national waste equals at least 250 trillion pounds and only five percent of that is recycled. For every 100 pounds of product manufactured, 3,200 pounds becomes waste through natural resource extraction and processing. It appears to be easier to create waste than to create products.

Solid waste generation in Linn and Benton Counties is beginning to decrease. Figure II-1 illustrates the per capita waste generation rates from 1998-2012.

The question: What can be done to further check the flow of garbage?

Recycling and composting reduce waste. However, preventing waste before it enters the home is one of the most effective ways to decrease household garbage. It is easier to manage garbage by preventing it than to deal with it once it is created. Reducing waste this way is called waste prevention, sometimes referred to as precycling. In the hierarchy of solid waste

Terms introduced in this chapter include:

- Waste Prevention
- Precycling
- Consumerism
- Eco-marketing
- Degradable
- Recyclable
- Consumable products
- Durable products
- Planned obsolescence
- Mixed-material package
- Composite material packaging
- Disposable product
- The Natural Step
- Sustainability
- Source reduction
- Selective shopping
- Bulk buying

Figure II-1. Per capita waste generation rates 1998-2012. DEQ 2012 report.
management techniques, this is the first step.

The goal of waste prevention is to save landfill space and, even more, to save natural resources and energy. Whenever one buys a product, one impacts the earth. However, if one buys products that are made to last, repairs what is bought, reuses what one has, and selects products with minimal packaging, one has less impact. These steps save resources and energy, and avert the pollution caused by extraction, manufacturing, and disposal.

Before addressing specific ways to prevent waste, here are some factors that shape purchasing habits.

2. Consumption

As consumers living in a market economy, one needs to be aware of influences on product purchasing decisions, types of packaging, and the purpose for which packages are designed.

A. Consumerism and Advertising

U.S. culture says that the well being of the economy is linked to consumption of goods. The media says that higher levels of consumption lead to a higher quality of life. “Feeling bad? Take this pill! Drink this to be more popular with the ladies, or smoke these and you’ll be cool. Wear clothes with this label to be sexier. Buy this and she’ll love you more!” The goal of advertising is to generate the purchase of products or services, but it also produces a primary belief system that dictates the way persons should behave and function. All consumption contributes to the gross national product (GNP), the total value of all goods and services produced in the economy in one year. Because economists use GNP as an indicator of the strength of the national economy, it appears that the more products and services consumed, the better off the economy will be.

While advertising DOES provide consumers with information about new and improved products, it can also influence individuals to buy things they do not need. The September 2007 U.S. trade deficit (the difference between how much the U.S. buys from other countries and the amount other countries buy from the U.S.) was 56.5 billion dollars. The other countries spent the dollars to buy U.S. debt securities, like Treasury Bills, which puts them in the position of financing the massive personal and governmental debt which have been incurred. Economists say that this level of consumption is both environmentally and economically unsustainable.

As in the examples above, advertisers rely on many themes: happiness, youth, status, fulfilling relationships, success, luxury, convenience, comfort, and beauty. Marketing products for convenience, like paper towels or plastic wrap, is especially alluring. "Time-saving" instant/micro wavable meals (many of which still include non-reusable microwave dishes) are common on the grocery shelves. Linking this theme with ease of disposability, from a marketing point of view, is a golden egg. It ties the act of using with the act of using up. Thus, culturally, waste becomes an integral part of the consumption process.

Now that many consumers are more environmentally conscious, industries have launched eco-marketing campaigns that often have little bearing on the environmental soundness of the products or their packaging. They use terms such as:

- Biodegradable
- Photodegradable
- Recyclable
- Environmentally friendly
- Earth-friendly
- Bio-green
- Made of recycled content

Degradability has been an eco-marketing theme for plastic bags and disposable diapers for years, yet studies show that bags claiming to be photodegradable did not degrade after 10 weeks of exposure to sunlight. In bags that contain starch to promote biodegradability, only the starch degraded. Many forms of packaging do not degrade in the anaerobic environment of a landfill where they may be buried at least 20 feet deep.

A recycling symbol on a product label or package can mislead recyclers. The symbol may attempt to indicate that a product or package is re-
cyclable, but because local market conditions vary, the packaging material may not be recyclable in a particular community, rendering the item NON-recyclable.

Recyclability requires collection, processing, and manufacturing systems. The absence of this recycling infrastructure is a common problem with plastics. Many markets that exist in the Willamette Valley do not exist in Central or Eastern Oregon. It is therefore wise to become aware of local recycling markets, and to consider these when making purchases.

Eco-marketing, the method of making packages look "green" or eco-conscious, may be a misleading strategy. Read the fine print and be familiar with the eco-marketing terms listed above. "Environmentally friendly," "earth-friendly," and "bio-green" are meaningless terms. Until standards are set for such terms, they may continue to be used as advertising gimmicks.

However, not ALL eco-marketing is misleading. For example, packaging which states that its material is made with pre- or post-consumer content is usually legitimate, and both help to prevent waste AND provide markets for the material one wishes to recycle.

B. Types of Products

There are three types of products produced and then purchased by consumers: consumable products, durable products, and disposable products.

**Consumable products** include items like food and fuel. When consumed, these products are permanently transformed into energy and waste. Gasoline is an example of a consumable product that propels cars while it produces waste that pollutes the air.

**Durable products** include clothing, furniture, and tools. These products can be used over and over again and can be maintained and repaired to sustain their life. Only at the end of their useful lives do the majority wind up in the solid waste stream. For example, a sweater can be maintained by washing and be repaired by darning to last for many years. How well a product has been made and maintained influences how long it endures.

**Disposable products** like paper and plastic dishware and utensils, non-rechargeable batteries, and personal-hygiene items are designed and produced for limited-time use. Among the first disposables on the market were hospital supplies such as syringes and gloves. They were promoted as being more sanitary than their durable counterparts so their use became widely accepted.

Use of disposables has spread from the hospital into the home with home products being designed more for convenience than hygiene. They were originally intended as backups to durables, not substitutes. Paper towels, for example, were designed for the occasional big spill, but today, paper towels have replaced reusable cloth towels in most homes. Toilet bowl scrubbers, mops and dusters are other household products that are being replaced with disposable counterparts.

C. Product Obsolescence

Another, more subtle, form of the disposable product is the durable product designed for obsolescence. There is quite a difference between a product that is obsolete because it is truly worn out and a product that is obsolete because it is out of fashion. The latter, planned obsolescence, is the work of marketing.

An advertising executive, Earnest Calkins, is often given credit for introducing the strategy of rapid, planned stylistic changes into 20th century business thinking. "The purpose is to make the customer discontented with his old type of fountain pen, kitchen utensil, bathroom, or motor car, because it is old-fashioned, out-of-date. The technical term for this idea is obsoletism. We no longer wait for things to wear out. We displace them with others that are not more effective but more attractive." (Modern Publicity, 1930) This strategy of planned obsolescence is common in many industries, most notably computers, clothing, sporting equipment, home interiors, and automobile design.

Annually, clothing manufacturers forecast popular colors and styles for the upcoming season. Year after year, consumers purchase fashion that is "in." Louis Cheskin of the Color Research Institute says "most design changes are not made
### How Long Does Litter Last?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAPER</td>
<td>2-4 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANANA PEEL</td>
<td>3-5 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROPE</td>
<td>3-14 Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOOL CAP</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIGARETTE BUTT</td>
<td>2-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISPOSABLE DIAPER</td>
<td>10-20 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARD PLASTIC CONTAINER</td>
<td>20-30 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUBBER BOOT SOLE</td>
<td>50-80 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIN CAN</td>
<td>80-100 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALUMINUM CAN</td>
<td>200-400 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLASTIC 6-PACK HOLDER</td>
<td>450 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLASS BOTTLES</td>
<td>Many, Many Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure II-2. How Long Does Litter Last, Source: "Recycling Bright Ideas" by Phoenix Clean and Beautiful; and, Bureau of Land Management. Online. Internet. Available at: http://www.blm.gov/education/int/background/packing.htm*
for improving the product either aesthetically or functionally, but for making it obsolete."

While design and marketing for obsolescence increases sales for manufacturers, it has the ultimate effect of turning durable products into commodities that are replaced in a matter of months or years. Planned product obsolescence contributes to the garbage problem and increases consumption of energy and natural resources. This is a problem that has a solution—purchasing only what is needed and resisting influence from advertising and other people.

3. The Wrap on Packaging

Packaging is a major focus of solid waste planners and consumers because it adds so significantly to the household waste stream and is increasing in volume. According to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), waste composition studies in 2009 show that packaging made up over 18% of the weight of the municipal waste stream in Oregon.

From 1980 to 1986, the amount of money industry spent on packaging doubled from $32 billion to $65 billion, and according to Packaging magazine, the 100 corporations spending the most money on packaging "spend more than $3 million every hour of every business day" on packaging. In many cases, the cost of the product inside the package is only a fraction of the combined costs of manufacturing, packaging, and advertising. An aluminum can costs more than the soda pop inside the can.

A. Purpose of Packaging

Packaging has different purposes and functions. Some are essential. Here are a few:

Product protection. Sealed glass jars prevent spoilage or contamination of foods; plastic wrap on vitamin containers prevents tampering; wax, cellophane, and plastic wrap prevent loss of moisture. Rigid foam, cardboard, and paper padding keep delicate products from being damaged during shipping. Compact Disks come on large plastic boards to be more noticeable and thus prevent theft.

Identification. Packaging may serve to identify the product or to fulfill legal requirements that a product list its contents and nutritional value.

Convenience. Containers for ready-to-eat salads, other fast foods, and microwavable dinners are seen as time-savers.

Marketing. Packaging is designed to sell the product by making it look more desirable than its competitors. Marketing is the precursor to over-packing. One brand of pantyhose comes in oversized plastic eggs to attract attention. It is easier to attract children to toys that they can see through hard plastic boxes.

B. Packaging Materials

There are five main materials used in packaging today: glass, paper, plastic, aluminum, and steel. Each material can be used in single-material packaging as well as mixed-material packaging.

A good example of a single-material package is the aluminum can, made from only one type of material. Single-material packages are generally easier to recycle and use less packaging than mixed-material packaging.

A mixed-material package is made of more than one type of material. Most consumer products come in mixed-material packaging. Beverages, for example, are often sold in bottles made of glass covered with a paper or plastic label and sealed with a metal cap lined with plastic -- four different types of materials.

There are two types of mixed-material packaging. The first includes combinations of materials that are easy to separate like bottles whose caps are easy to remove. Another example is the cereal box. The plastic liner can be easily removed from the paperboard.

A second type of mixed-material packaging is made from materials that are inseparable by consumers---composite materials. Examples are milk cartons made of plastic-coated paper, and individual-sized juice containers ("brick packs" or aseptic boxes) fabricated from plastic-coated paper with aluminum foil backing and crimped metal ends. It is often too expensive for the recycling industry to separate the plastic coating from the paper or the paper from the foil in order to recover the recycling value of the materials.
to recycle the different materials. Some communities DO have access to recycling markets for this type of packaging, but most do not. In some states, such as Maine, the threat of legislative pressure to penalize for not providing aseptic recycling opportunities has led manufacturers to create and support aseptic recycling markets.

Packaging trends are toward more lightweight plastic, aluminum, and composite-material and away from the heavier glass and steel. Additionally, manufacturers now prefer cheaper and more versatile plastic to the more costly aluminum.

C. Effect of Packaging on Cost

Today, for every $10 Americans spend on food, about $1.00 pays for the packaging. Packaging waste makes up a significant portion of landfill and waste-to-energy facility waste.

Although its share of the Oregon waste stream has decreased from 32 percent in 2000 to around 16 percent in 2009, it is still a large component of household waste. Packaging also accounts for a significant portion of a family’s food costs.

D. Packaging Legislation

Oregon's most successful packaging legislation is the 1971 Bottle Bill which set a five-cent deposit on all beer and carbonated beverage containers. This bill also banned detachable metal pull-tabs and, by a 1977 amendment, required that plastic 6-pack rings decompose within four months. The Bottle Bill was an instant success: in the years right after its passage, over 90 percent of beverage containers were returned to the store. When the Bill was passed, many of the glass bottles went back to the bottlers to be refilled, but now only a few brands have refillable bottles. The others are returned to the distributor's warehouse or to a beverage container recycling service company and prepared for recycling.

In April 2007 a small change was added to the Bottle Bill. Beginning in 2009 a deposit was added to water and flavored water bottles.

In 1985, Oregon's Recycling Opportunity Act (SB 405) made it more convenient for consumers to recycle glass, tin, and aluminum by requiring a depot at every landfill and transfer station. The Act also required curbside collection in cities with populations over 4,000. "Recyclable materials" accepted are fixed by state rules. A recyclable material is defined as any material or group of materials for which the cost of collection and recycling is equal to or less than collection and disposal. The Oregon DEQ designated an array of recyclable materials to support SB 405. In some parts of Oregon, costs of transportation to markets is so high that glass and tin cans are not on the recyclable material list. SB405 also requires that each local government and recycling service company provide recycling education and promotion.

High cost of collection and poor markets can make it difficult to recycle plastic containers. In Oregon, PET bottles and HDPE milk jugs have the highest plastic container recycling rates. PET soft drink containers that require a deposit enjoy the highest recovery rate. Senate Bill 66, passed in 1990, required that rigid plastic containers have a recycled content of 25 percent (or reach a 25 percent recycling rate) by 1995. Due to the high recovery rate of milk jugs and deposit soft drink bottles, the Oregon rigid plastic container-recycling rate has stayed above 25%.

SB 66 also required that glass containers have a recycled content of 35 percent by 1995 and 50 percent by 2000. Oregon glass container manufacturers met this high recycled content requirement. Additionally, the Senate Bill requires that retailers who use plastic bags must offer customers the choice of paper bags. Newsprint and phone books are also required to meet recycled content standards.

Recycling and waste prevention were further strengthened with the passing of House Bill 3744 in 2001 (see Chapter I). The 1988 Legislature passed a law prohibiting state agencies from purchasing food containers that are not biodegradable or recyclable.

Several local governments have restricted the use of polystyrene foam. In 1990, The City of Portland prohibited restaurants and retail food vendors from serving food in polystyrene foam containers. This ban is still in place today, and since 1990, the use of alternative containers has become common in Portland. Ashland has a similar ordinance. Unincorporated Multnomah County prohibits the use of polystyrene contain-
ers unless they are being recycled.

In Oregon a packaging tax was proposed to the state Legislature for manufacturers who use excessive or non-recyclable packaging. Florida levies an advanced disposal fee for problem packaging. Containers that did not reach a 50 percent recycling rate by October 1992 were assessed a fee of 1 cent per container. In many European countries, manufacturers of both products and packaging must have either take-back or recycling solutions in place for every product and package they sell. In Germany, the Grun Punct (Green Point) program mandates that the cost of the recycling be built into the cost of the product and packaging and that both must be returned to the manufacturers. German beer bottles are going back to the breweries to be washed and refilled. Similar programs are being considered in Canada.

Package labeling is another area for potential legislation, i.e. labeling that states whether a product is made from recycled material, packaged in recycled material, or is recyclable should be made more conspicuous for the consumer or purchaser.

Sorting machines/facilities in Oregon are able to accept mixed plastic bottles. This helped meet recycling goals because it increased the recycling rate for rigid plastic containers. Also, the recent addition of curbside co-mingling collection in some Oregon municipalities has increased participation up to 20% which has helped to increase the volume of plastic container recycling. (For more on co-mingling, refer to Chapter 1 section 4.D. in this manual)

4. Using Sustainable Resources

Questions one might ask include: “What can I do to increase sustainable use of resources in my life? What daily influences shape my purchasing choices and which ones discourage waste prevention behavior?” Whether one engages in waste prevention, source reduction, or recycling, the result is the same. These are activities that prevent waste at its source. Everyone can choose to prevent waste. Awareness is the precursor to behavioral change. Once individuals commit to change, they are ready to adopt alternative behaviors.

The process of waste reduction, or source reduction, starts at home when one decides what one wants to buy and at the store where one selects among products. First is a decision about what is needed. Second, is identifying alternatives to buying new products. Third, is selecting the best product to meet the need. Most of the time, little time, thought, or planning is given to these decisions. As a result one ends up with products that are less useful than expected. They become clutter and eventually waste that contributes to excess use of resources and increases garbage.

A. Step One: Deciding What Is Needed

Marketing campaigns target consumers to make them think they really need a particular product. When the "urge to buy" strikes, it is important to distinguish between what is really needed and what advertising messages say is needed. In taking time to decide one might ask the following questions:

- Why do I want this?
- How often will I use it?
- Can I get along without it?
- What are my alternatives?

B. Step Two: Choosing Alternatives to New Products

Once a need has been determined, there may be some alternatives to buying a new product—renting or borrowing, making it at home, repairing or reused what is already available.

Reuse is an important aspect of waste reduction and has three components: (1) reuse what is available, (2) give stuff to someone else to reuse via a charity, a garage sale, or a consignment shop, and (3) buy used goods.

Before purchasing a new item, ask these questions as appropriate:

- Is there something I already have that would serve the same purpose?
- Can I make it from things I have at home?
Can I borrow or rent it?

Can I buy it used?

C. Step Three: Selecting the Product and the Package

If a new product is the best option, select the product and package carefully in order to minimize waste. This is called selective shopping.

Since all manufacturers tend to say that their product is the best, use independent criteria by asking the following questions before making a purchase:

- How long will this product last? Some toys, for example, can be passed from child to child; others break before the first child tires of them.
- Is it repairable? For example, can the shoes be resoled? Are new parts available for the appliance?
- Is it a classic I will be happy with years from now when new styles and models come out?
- What will happen to it at the end of its life? Is it made out of materials that can be safely returned to the natural environment?
- Is there unnecessary packaging? Is the package refillable? Is it recyclable? Is it at least compostable?

Waste prevention involves preventing waste at the source by pre-thinking purchases. Current society has replaced the old saying, "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without" with marketing that stimulates impulse buying.

People acting together make a difference. For example, if every household in the U.S. replaced one roll of 120-sheet virgin paper towels with 100% recycled ones, 340 million gallons of water would be saved. (Seventh Generation Products www.seventhgen.com).

The following strategies are a way to combat the influence of the marketplace. Individuals can adopt these strategies and spread the word to others.

SPEAK UP. Have baggers use bags brought from home. Ask clerks not to double bag purchases. Tell store managers about preferred products and packaging. Contact companies whose products do not last or who wrap their products in excessive or non-recyclable packaging. Let them know their products will receive consideration when they adopt better stewardship practices. When enough people do this, manufacturers DO respond.

REWARD companies who are already doing the right thing. Thank them by calling or writing. Hearing from an appreciative consumer reinforces the choices the company has made and encourages them to continue making similar decisions!
Source reduction is an activity that prevents waste at its source. It may also be referred to as waste prevention. Virtually everyone can make the choice to prevent waste. In a sense, people are the source of waste. It is through human activities that waste is generated or prevented.

Source reduction includes:

**Reducing** the amount and/or the toxicity of material used to accomplish any task.

**Reuse** of a product in its original form.

Use of **repairable, refillable, durable** products that have longer useful lives.

It also includes designing, manufacturing and using materials and products in a way that reduces their life cycle toxicity.
Table II-1. Selective Shopping Tips
To be a selective shopper:
1. Start with a shopping list and stick to it.
2. Buy long-lasting products that can be repaired.
3. Avoid disposables by buying reusable alternatives.
4. Carry a reusable bag for purchases.
5. Shop where bulk purchases are possible.
6. Be picky about packaging:
   - Select products in packaging easy to recycle.
   - Choose packages with at least 50 percent recycled content.
   - Avoid individually packaged products, each for a single serving or use.
   - Avoid packages made of composite materials.
   - Say "no" to unneeded bags. Reuse or recycle bags that were used.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>REUSE ACTIONS</strong></th>
<th><strong>EXAMPLES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make it at home</td>
<td>Scrap paper for note pads, canisters from glass jars or plastic tubs, relabeled envelopes and notebooks, greeting cards from old cards and colored paper, crocheted or woven rugs from old socks, quilts from worn-out non-reusable clothing, candle wax from used candles melted into new candles with new wicks, quilt batting from old wool blankets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent or borrow</td>
<td>Ladders, slide projectors, party supplies, yard care and camping equipment, books and tapes from the library, wedding gowns, card tables and chairs, furniture dollies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain and repair</td>
<td>Automobiles, bicycles, shoes, clothing, appliances, furniture, tools, handbags, knapsacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy used or resell</td>
<td>Kitchenware, appliances/tools, clothing, furniture, toys, music, books, sports and camping equipment, computers, toner cartridges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donate or resell</td>
<td>Charitable organizations offering pick-up services or drop boxes, rummage or yard sales, consignment and thrift shops, classified ads, “free” signs, computers, cell phones for battered women’s programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reuse</td>
<td>Clean sides of ledger paper can be used for drafts in Ink Jet printers or for children to color pictures; fold used shopping bags, insert them in a bag with handles, and take them to the store to use again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Use online and local building material exchanges to give away what you no longer need or acquire what you do need</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SELECTIVE SHOPPING TERMS</strong></th>
<th><strong>EXAMPLES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recyclable products</td>
<td>Cardboard and brown paper bags, aluminum cans, glass jars and bottles, tin cans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycled content</td>
<td>Greeting cards, paper, glass jars, aluminum cans, many paperboard cereal and cake boxes, toilet paper, plastic soap or detergent bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durable products</td>
<td>Cloth diapers, refillable razors and pens, cloth napkins, towels, and rags, covered food containers, travel mugs, rechargeable batteries, well-made products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal packaging</td>
<td>Unpackaged produce, hamburger wrapped in thin paper rather than a foam clam shell, cookies on paperboard wrapped with cellophane rather than in a molded plastic tray in a box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk buying</td>
<td>Loose produce, meat from a meat counter, cookies you bag yourself, grains and other food from self-serve bins, unpackaged hardware supplies, large packages such as blocks of cheese, bags of rice or cereal, cans of vegetable oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grown or made locally</td>
<td>Articles and foodstuffs from Saturday markets like hormone-free and antibiotic-free beef, lamb, poultry, eggs, and cheese; organically raised produce; bird houses made out of scrap lumber; handcrafted goods made from yarn spun from locally raised fleece of llamas, alpacas, and sheep; CDs from local musical groups; glass tiles and Christmas ornaments from 100% recycled glass made by artisans at the Saint Vincent de Paul Aurora Glass foundry in Eugene</td>
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</table>
Waste Reduction at the Office

The best way to reduce waste, is to not create it in the first place.

Every workday each of us makes hundreds of decisions that affect global warming, water quality, air pollution, and landfills. Many of these choices are tiny, others are more substantial. In every case though, the decisions make a difference for better or for worse.

The paperless office is still more promise than reality. With today’s new technologies it is closer. For efficient paper use, follow the environmental standard: reduce, reuse, and recycle. Improving in each of these areas will bring paper cost savings and cut the need for storage space.

Paper Use Reduction

- Offices use nearly 1.5 pounds of paper per person per day, according to a survey of Los Angeles offices. You can cut this number by using less paper, reusing paper where appropriate, and recycling. Create hard copies only when absolutely necessary.

- In many cases you do not need a paper copy of a document. An electronic copy may be fine. Electronic copies save storage space, paper, and postage. They also allow electronic search capabilities you do not have with paper documents. Electronic filing and retrieval can save time when you need the document again.

- Review and edit draft documents on the screen rather than on paper. If you need to print large reports, consider adjusting margins, line spacing, and page settings to fit more information on each page. Use e-mail to share documents and ideas. If possible, bookmark web pages rather than printing them out. Only print emails and Internet documents when necessary.

- Office paper has a large embodied energy content. Use double-sided printing and photocopying. Encourage other employees and consider changing computer defaults to double-sided printing.

- The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 90 billion pieces of “direct mail” every year. An average of 675 pieces of junk mail end up in every mailbox each year. Reduce the amount of junk mail you receive by writing to the Direct Marketing As-

The Five Key Questions to Reduce Waste and Buy Recycled

1. Where can you reduce the amount of material you use?
2. What could you buy in a reusable form that you are currently disposing?
3. Are there repairable, refillable or more durable products that would give a longer, more useful life?
4. Where can you reduce the toxicity of the material you use?
5. What could you buy that is made of recycled material?
association and asking that you and/or your business be removed from mailing lists. Address: Direct Marketing Association, Mail Preference Service, P. O. Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512. This effort will not stop mail from companies with whom you have already done business or local businesses who are already sending mail to you. Call local businesses whose mail you do not wish to receive. Nearly every piece of mail you receive will have an address, phone number, or email address you can contact.

- Keep customer mailing lists current. This saves paper and postage!

- Contact the Federal Government website to get on the national do-not-contact lists.

- Open your junk mail. Find the portion with your name, address, code numbers, and bar code and line through that data so that a scanner cannot read it. In the white space around your personal data, write: REMOVE MY NAME AND ADDRESS PERMANENTLY FROM YOUR SOLICITATION LIST AND DO NOT RENT OR SELL MY INFO TO ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION. Initial and date your note. Stuff that note into the postage-paid envelope of the solicitor and mail it back to them. If this does not get the mail stopped, contact the Attorney General of the state from which the mail has come and file a complaint. You can find Attorney General data on Internet search engines.

- Catalogs: Use their 800 number to call their customer service department. Ask them to remove you from their mailing lists and not to rent or sell your name to others. It usually takes three to six months to stop catalogs because most are printed and mailed well in advance of the time they arrive in your mailbox. Federal laws require solicitors to cooperate with your requests or suffer costly fines.

Post-Consumer Recycled Content

- Natural systems ultimately recycle everything. We can do the same with resources such as paper. Paper is a large component of the waste going into landfills and offices are a primary source of that paper. Consider using recycled paper. The term “recycled” is often used to describe paper that includes scraps and wastes generated in the paper production process. Post-consumer fiber content is what really counts. Look for post-consumer content that is at least 30 percent or more. There are a number of paper products with 100 percent post-consumer content. Also, consider buying paper made from hemp or kenaf fibers. Both are grown fast and sustainably. Hemp is grown free of all chemical pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and irrigation, and does not deplete the soil.

- How many toner cartridges do you go through in a year? Waste disposal volumes and costs can be reduced with the use of re-manufactured toner cartridges for printers, copiers, and fax machines. Many office equipment suppliers will take back old toner cartridges when supplying a re-manufactured replacement.

Unbleached and Uncolored Paper

Paper manufacturers use chlorine to bleach paper bright white. This chlorine seeps into the environment and releases dioxins, which cause cancers, birth defects, immune system damage, facial disfigurations, and other health problems. Paper produced without bleach performs just as well as bleached paper.

- Unbleached paper alternatives are available for a wide range of paper products. This
includes writing paper, copier paper, printing paper, toilet paper, paper towels and napkins, file folders, note pads, and even cash register tape. Unbleached papers are whitened with other, more benign chemicals. Some brands are available in brightnesses comparable to standard chlorine-bleached stock. They are competitively priced and suitable for a wide range of printing applications.

- Think about your need for colored paper. Darkly colored paper is harder to recycle. If you do not really need it, stick to white or off-white papers. If you do need some colored paper stock, use the lightly colored (pastel) papers.

Recycling Paper/Reducing Packaging

A ton of 100 percent recycled paper saves the equivalent of 4,100 kWh of energy, 7,000 gallons of water, 60 pounds of air emissions, and three cubic yards of landfill space. Conserving energy and natural resources can be as simple as recycling and buying recycled paper products. Look for the recycling symbol.

- In Linn and Benton Counties, nearly all paper products are recyclable. Letterhead and white copy paper have the most value, but you can also recycle colored paper, magazines, newsprint, and corrugated cardboard. Almost all of the waste stream from a typical office can be recycled. Less waste means smaller garbage containers and lower garbage bills. Place your recycling containers so that they are convenient—next to desks, in work areas, and near copying machines.

- Another way to cut down on waste is buying products in bulk. Bulk purchases minimize packaging and are often less expensive than smaller, individually packaged items. When bulk items are not available, suppliers may be able to eliminate extraneous packaging if asked. It usually saves them money too. If you are shipping or mailing materials from your office, you can find similar savings as well.

- Negotiate with suppliers to provide goods in reusable, returnable, or recyclable packaging. Some local area suppliers and distributors are back-hauling boxes, containers, and pallets for re-use. Request returnable containers for deliveries.

Office Equipment

Traditionally, office equipment purchase decisions have been based primarily on considerations of capital cost and performance. Environmental benefits or costs have not been explicitly considered. Look at all the costs and benefits of proposed alternatives, not just the capital cost. Buy equipment that is repairable. Repair rather than replace equipment. For infrequently used equipment, rent rather than buy. Sharing equipment with an adjacent office is another option.

Surplus or Overstocked Items

- Your trash might be someone else’s treasure, and visa versa. Advertise surplus and reusable waste items through the Nickel Ads or a commercial waste exchange such as the Northwest Materials Exchange at www.nwmaterialsmbart.org.

- Reuse materials within the business. Have a “clean out your desk/supply cabinet day” with a give-and-take area set up for extra, unwanted items.

Other Ideas
Think about what you buy. Do not buy foil-laminated, waxed, or plastic-coated paper products. They are not recyclable.

Eliminate use of plastic trash liners in cans where no wet trash is disposed.

Encourage employees to use permanent coffee mugs instead of disposable cups. Invest in a set of mugs and glasses for visitors.

Instead of paper, use cloth towels, tablecloths, and napkins.

Choose a landscape design that needs low maintenance and little water. When mowing, use a mulching mower that leaves grass clippings to naturally decompose. Grass clippings no longer need to be bagged and hauled away. Or, compost grass clippings and leaves.

Educate, educate, educate… let people know what they can do to reduce waste and recycle.

What Can You Recycle?
In Linn and Benton Counties, in addition to being able to recycle the “standard” items, such as paper, businesses can also recycle:

- Computers, monitors, printers, modems, mice, graphics/sound cards, keyboards, scanners, and other computer related peripherals can be recycled at the recycling depots at the Republic Services offices and at Coffin Butte Landfill.

- Printer (ink jet and laser) and toner cartridges can be recycled at the Corvallis Republic Services office.

- Dry cell batteries and cell phones can also be recycled at the Corvallis Republic Services office.

Waste reduction, as well as energy-efficiency, water conservation, and other resource-efficient practices are better for the environment and your bottom line.

Adapted from: Green Office Guide, Portland Office of Sustainable Development, September 2003
STOP JUNKMAIL (a.k.a. “Direct mailings”)

There are a few simple steps you can take to remove your name from the direct mailing lists and stop receiving junkmail.

Why? The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 90 billion pieces of “direct mail” every year, weighing 4 million tons! An average of 675 pieces of junk mail end up in every mailbox each year and it’s on the rise! In addition to wasting your time, junk mail is a waste of resources. Even if you recycle all of it, there are still enormous environmental costs in terms of ink, energy to produce, deliver and recycle the paper and loss of pristine forests to create the high quality glossy paper much of the junk mail uses.

What? Your name, address, telephone number, email address and buying habits are a commodity that is regularly sold and traded on the open market. Many companies sell your name to businesses that attempt to maximize their marketing dollars by targeting their advertisements to the most likely customers.

How long will it take for it to stop coming? On average, it takes three to six months for these companies to clear your name off of all of the lists that they manage.

In the meantime, please recycle your junk mail. Make sure to destroy any confidential information. There is no need to remove the plastic window in the envelope.

How? Most companies that do direct marketing subscribe to the Mail Preference Service. If you send them a letter or postcard requesting to be removed, you can cut down on national mailings by up to 75%. Simply fill out a separate postcard for each person in your house or write separate letters
with the following information:

Mail it to:  
Direct Marketing Association 
Mail Preference Service 
P.O. Box 643 
Carmel, NY 10512 

There are many other companies that sell your name to direct mailers. If you are determined to stop virtually all junk mail, you should contact the companies listed on the following page and read the tips that follow. Some of them may be called toll-free and others require written letters. If you write one generic form letter (that includes the information below) and are willing to spend some money on stamps, you can eliminate virtually all of the junk mail that you receive. Simply call or write these companies with the following information:

- “Please remove my name from your mailing list(s)”
- The date
- All variations of your name and your signature
- Your full address

Tips on how to keep from getting added to “junk mail” lists:

- If you write to the companies above, most of them will keep your name and address off of their lists for five years. Repeat this procedure again in five years.

- Whenever you donate money, order a product or service, or fill out a warranty card, write in large letters, "Please do not sell my name or address". Most organizations will properly mark your name in the computer.

- Avoid returning warranty cards. Product warranty cards are often used to collect information on your habits and income, for the sole purpose of targeting direct mail. They are not required in most situations.

- On the telephone, say, "Please mark my account so that my name is not traded or sold to other companies".

- Your credit card company and bank probably sell your name the most often. Ask them to stop.
In accordance with a 1997 federal law, the nation’s major consumer credit bureaus have established this #. The recording will ask for your name, address, telephone # & Soc. Security # (they already have access to people’s SS#’s & say that they need them to confirm the requests. Use at your discretion.)

Talk to your Postal Carrier to let them know that you are taking steps to reduce the amount of junk mail. Ask for tips. Also be sure to directly contact the companies that send you unwanted catalogs. Call their 800 customer service number or write to them. If you write to them, include the label that is printed on the cover in your letter.

L&BC MR class accepts no responsibility for the legitimacy of these companies and provides this list as a courtesy to individuals interested in reducing the amount of direct mailings that they receive. Please use this information at your own discretion.

Some of the material was adapted from: Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, San Diego, CA; Good Advice Press, Elizaville, NY; Minnesota Office of Env. Assistance, St. Paul, MN; King County, METRO, Seattle, WA; Univ. of S.C., Recycling Program; METRO Waste Prevention, Portland, OR; www.cpsr.org; and www.obviously.com

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<th><strong>Equifax/Trans Union/Novus/Experian</strong></th>
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<td>1-888-567-8688</td>
<td>1-800-645-9242</td>
<td>1-800-228-4571 Ext. 4633</td>
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<td>Oregon Dept. of Transportation (503) 945-7853</td>
<td>ACXIOM 1-877-774-2094</td>
<td>America Family Sweepstakes 1-800-237-2400</td>
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<td><strong>Mail Preference Service</strong></td>
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<td><strong>PO Box 643</strong></td>
<td><strong>Val Pak Direct Marketing Sys. 8605 Largo Lakes Dr. Largo, FL 33773</strong></td>
<td>*<em>Stop Junk Mail Association 3020 Bridgeway #150 Sausalito, CA 94965 (800) 827-5549 <em>Fees may apply</em></em></td>
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<td><strong>Carmel, NY 10512</strong></td>
<td><strong>Donnelley Marketing 1235 North Ave. Nevada, IA 50201-1419</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Database America Compilation Dept. 100 Paragon Ave. Montvale, NJ 07645</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ADVO, Inc.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Metro Mail Corp. List Maintenance 901 W. Bond Lincoln, NE 68521-3694</strong></td>
<td><strong>Val Pak Coupons Address Info. Dept. PO Box 13428 St. Petersburg, FL 33733</strong></td>
<td><strong>TRW-NCAN Marketing Service 701 TRW Parkway Allen, TX 75002</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Trans Union Transmark</strong></td>
<td><strong>Equifax Options Marketing Decision Sys. PO Box 740123 Atlanta, GA 30374</strong></td>
<td><strong>Money Mailer 14271 Corporate Dr. Garden Grove, CA 92643-4994</strong></td>
<td><strong>Contact local grocery and department stores by calling the numbers on their publications.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>555 W. Adams St. Chicago, IL 60661-3601</strong></td>
<td><strong>Equifax Options Marketing Decision Sys. PO Box 740123 Atlanta, GA 30374</strong></td>
<td><strong>Money Mailer 14271 Corporate Dr. Garden Grove, CA 92643-4994</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Nat. Demographics &amp; Lifestyle List Order Serv. 1621 18th St. Denver, CO 80202</strong></td>
<td><strong>ChoicePoint Option PO Box 105108 Atlanta, GA 30348-5108</strong></td>
<td><strong>US SEARCH.COM INC 5401 Beethoven St. Los Angeles, CA 90066-7016</strong></td>
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<td><strong>This site has printable forms.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Also be sure to directly contact the companies that send you unwanted catalogs. Call their 800 customer service number or write to them. If you write to them, include the label that is printed on the cover in your letter.</strong></td>
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• "Contests" where you fill in a little entry blank are almost always fishing expeditions for names. If you fill one out at a football game, for example, expect to get a catalog of football merchandise within a few months. Avoid these if you don't want the mail.

• When you receive mailings with return envelopes, return them with a written request to have your name removed from their list.

STOP THIS... BY DOING THIS...

Stop “Courtesy Calls”? It’s as easy as 1,2,3!

Write a letter or postcard with your complete telephone number, area code, address, names and signatures of people receiving calls and the following statement: “I do not want to receive unsolicited telephone calls. Please activate the telephone preference service and remove my name from your list(s).”

Send it to: Direct Marketing Association; Telephone Preference Service; PO Box 643; Carmel, NY 10512

When a telemarketer calls you, simply interrupt them and say, “Please permanently remove me from your calling list.” Remember that they just interrupted you. If they are resistant in any way, read the following to them:

*Federal law prohibits telemarketers from initiating an outbound telephone call to a person when that person previously has stated that he or she does not wish to receive an outbound telephone call made by or on behalf of the seller whose goods or services are being offered.*

If you wish to quote the Federal law to the telemarketer, look at the “Federal Trade Commission’s Telemarketing Sales Rule” on this web site: http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/telemark/rule.htm

Consider purchasing an electronic device, such as “The Zapper”, that eliminates telemarketing solicitations. They can be purchased at electronic stores & cost from $30 to $50.

Stop Unwanted Electronic Mail (“SPAM”)

It is very hard to effectively combat junk electronic mail. It costs nothing to send out a few million email messages, so there is no disincentive for people to do so. Most SPAM mailers create false headers, email return addresses and sending machine names because they are sick of reading the thousands of inevitable complaints. The offers to remove your name from a list are generally untrue, and often result in your name getting added to yet another list. Many internet providers have policies against
SPAM, and will take action.

There are ways you can reduce exposure and complain:

- Never reply to a SPAM Email.
- Visit http://www.networkadvertising.org and “opt out” to easily cut down on Spam.
- Consider using a program that filters out unwanted Email, like Spam Cop at http://spamcop.net/
- Don’t believe the “Get Rich Quick” Schemes: If you suspect fraud, send a copy of the mail to the National Fraud Information Center at http://www.fraud.net or, if it relates to selling stocks, send to the Securities and Exchange Commission at https://tts.sec.gov/oiea/Complaint.html
- Secure your computer: If your PC is running a mail server (such as Sendmail or Exchange) it may be used by spammers. Spammers often hijack innocent machines. Check yourself at ORDB at: http://www.ordb.org/about
Article 1

News Release
For release: Nov. 18, 2009

Contacts:
David Allaway, Solid Waste Policy Analyst, Portland, (503) 229-5479
Abby Boudouris, Solid Waste Specialist, Portland, (503) 229-6108

DEQ Study Confirms “Reduce First, then Recycle” Environmental Ethic

Analysis of delivering drinking water shows that tap water is a far better environmental choice than recycling single-use bottles

A study commissioned by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to assess drinking water delivery systems helps bolster the principle that “reducing first, then recycling” is the best environmental path to follow.

The study, “Life Cycle Assessment of Drinking Water Delivery Systems: Bottled Water, Tap Water and Home/Office Delivery Water,” concludes that drinking tap water in refillable bottles is the more environmentally friendly action when compared to other forms of obtaining and consuming drinking water, including buying water in bottles and recycling them.

DEQ commissioned the study to provide information that consumers and producers can use to voluntarily reduce their environmental impacts. The full study is available on DEQ’s website at: http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/sw/wasteprevention/drinkingwater.htm.

“For consumers, the most important message is: reduce first, then recycle,” says David Allaway, DEQ solid waste senior policy analyst. “Drinking tap water and recycling single-use bottles are equally effective ways of keeping waste out of landfills and incinerators, but DEQ’s study shows that most effects on the environment from bottled water occur from manufacturing and transportation, not disposal. Recycling single-use water bottles, at best, offers only moderate reductions in environmental impacts.”

“If you have single-use water bottles, please recycle them. But it’s better to avoid them in the first place,” Allaway adds. “Just because a product can be recycled doesn’t necessarily make it the best environmental choice.”

DEQ periodically uses life cycle assessments to help determine the potential environmental impacts of products, processes or services through production, usage and disposal. Such assessments help DEQ estimate, for example, possible impacts on greenhouse gas and toxic emissions, and help provide useful information to both consumers and producers of goods.

This DEQ study compares 48 different scenarios and examines a range of environmental effects across the entire life cycle of single-use, five-gallon reusable and tap water delivery methods. The “life cycle” includes extracting raw materials from the earth (coal, oil, minerals, etc.), producing energy resources and packaging materials, water treatment, bottling, transportation, consumer transport, dishwasher use, and disposal, recycling and composting.
**Highlights for consumers**

This study provides several useful conclusions for consumers:

- Recycling water bottles offers moderate environmental benefits, and consumers who choose to drink from single-serve bottles should continue to recycle. DEQ’s study finds that purchasing and recycling a typical water bottle reduces energy consumption by 24 percent and greenhouse gas emissions by 16 percent over the entire life cycle, compared against purchasing and disposing of the same water bottle.

- In contrast, consuming the same quantity of water from the tap in an average reusable bottle, even if washed frequently in a highly inefficient dishwasher, reduces energy consumption by 85 percent and greenhouse gases by 79 percent (again compared against purchasing bottled water and disposing of each bottle).

- Even the best performing bottled water scenario, which uses and recycles a light-weighted bottle not even available in Oregon yet, has global warming effects 46 times greater than the best performing tap water scenario evaluated in DEQ’s study.

- For individuals drinking water from the tap, environmental impacts are typically small and dominated by the energy used to heat water for washing reusable bottles or cups. Using energy-efficient appliances, washing less often, and only running the dishwasher when full are the most environmentally significant behaviors for these individuals.

- If bottled water must be purchased, DEQ recommends using the thinnest bottles and purchasing water that is bottled locally. Impacts of driving to the store can also be large, so avoiding extra shopping trips helps, as does recycling when the single-use bottles are emptied.

[Source: http://www.deq.state.or.us/news/prDisplay.asp?docID=3149]

**Article 2**

**The Psychology Of Materialism, And Why It's Making You Unhappy**  
The Huffington Post | By Carolyn Gregoire  
Posted: 12/15/2013 10:00 am EST

More money, more problems? It might just be true. Americans today, compared to 55 years ago, own twice as many cars and eat out twice as much per person, but we don't seem to be any happier because of it. Rather than rising levels of well-being, we’ve seen mounting credit card debt and increasing numbers of self-storage facilities to house the things we compulsively buy.

The holidays in particular have become a time when consumer culture comes out in full force. Black Friday, the annual post-Thanksgiving discount shopping spree, results each year in multiple deaths and injuries of consumers trampled by crowds in stores and shopping malls.

In a poignant, viral Huffington Post blog last month, "If You Shop On Thanksgiving, You're Part Of The Problem," writer Matt Walsh cast a harsh light on what the holiday shopping frenzy really says about our culture:

*That's our entire economic system: buy things. Everybody buy. It doesn't matter what you*
buy. Just buy. It doesn't matter if you don't have money. Just buy. Our entire civilization now rests on the assumption that, no matter what else happens, we will all continue to buy lots and lots of things. Buy, buy, buy, buy, buy. And then buy a little more. Don't create, or produce, or discover -- just buy. Never save, never invest, never cut back -- just buy. Buy what you don't need with money you don't have... Buy like you breathe, only more frequently.

To some extent, most of us participate in consumer culture and value material possessions, and that's perfectly fine. But in excess, materialism can take a toll on your well-being, relationships and quality of life. Here are six things you should know about the psychology of consumption -- and strategies to find freedom from materialism.

**Consumer culture may be harming individual well-being.**

Research suggests that Americans' well-being has, if anything, declined since the 1950s, according to the American Psychological Association, while our consumption has only increased.

"Compared with their grandparents, today's young adults have grown up with much more affluence, slightly less happiness and much greater risk of depression and assorted social pathology," David G. Myers, author of The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty, wrote in an American Psychologist article. "Our becoming much better off over the last four decades has not been accompanied by one iota of increased subjective well-being."

The materialistic values that consumer cultures support may be to blame. Those who pursue wealth and material possessions tend to be less satisfied and experience fewer positive emotions each day. On the other hand, research has found that life satisfaction -- surprise, surprise -- is correlated with having less materialistic values.

**Materialist values are linked to Type-A behavior.**

Are you highly ambitious and competitive? It could mean you're also more materialistic. Australian research from the 1990s found materialist values and a possessions-based definition of success share common characteristics with type-A behaviors, including competitiveness and aggression. A 2008 study published in the Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology reiterated the finding that the desire to accumulate wealth and possessions is related to Type-A qualities.

**Money really can't buy you happiness.**

The Beatles wisely noted that money can't buy love, and we'd do well to remember that money can't buy happiness, either. Research has shown that there is no direct correlation between income and happiness. Once our basic needs are met, wealth makes very little difference to one's overall well-being and happiness. And in fact, extremely wealthy people actually suffer from higher rates of depression.

“The failure of additional wealth and consumption to help people have satisfying lives may be the most eloquent argument for reevaluating our current approach to consumption,” the authors of Worldwatch Institute's 2011 State of Consumption report wrote.

Some data, however, has suggested that there could be a link between higher income and increased life satisfaction. It seems that it may not be the money itself that leads to dissatisfaction, but rather, the continual striving for greater wealth and more possessions that is linked to unhappiness.

**Materialism could ruin your relationships.**

Can money buy you love? Not so much, and according to a study published in the Journal Of Couple & Marriage Therapy, materialism is actually correlated with unhappiness in marriages. Researchers studied more than 1,700 couples to find that those in which both partners had high levels of materialism
exhibited lower marital quality than couples with lower materialism scores. Previous studies have found that students with higher extrinsic, materialistic values tend to have lower-quality relationships, and to feel less connected to others.

Materialistic people also typically have less pro-social and empathetic qualities, both towards others and towards the environment.

**Consumer cultures may breed narcissistic personalities.**

Some psychologists have suggested that consumer cultures may contribute to the development of narcissistic personalities and behaviors, "by focusing individuals on the glorification of consumption," psychologist Tim Kasser wrote in The High Price Of Materialism. Narcissists generally act with arrogance and are deeply concerned with issues of personal adequacy, seeking power and prestige to cover for feelings of inner emptiness and low-self worth, Kasser explains.

"Narcissists' desire for external validation fits well with our conception of materialistic values as extrinsic and focused on others' praise," he writes. "Thus it was not surprising to find that students with strong materialistic tendencies scored high on a standard measure of narcissism, agreeing with statements such as 'I am more capable than other people' ... 'I wish somebody would write my biography someday.'"

**Consumerism is fueled by insecurity -- and remedied by mindfulness.**

Research suggests that materialistic values are fueled by insecurity. A 2002 study published in the journal Psychology and Marketing found that those who chronically doubt themselves and their own self-worth tend to be more materialistic.

Consumerism -- which has been called a "modern religion" -- tends to capitalize on this insecurity and use it to sell products.

"In a practical sense, consumerism is a belief system and culture that promotes consuming as the path to self- and social improvement," Stephanie Kaza, University of Vermont Environment Professor and Buddhism practitioner, wrote in Tricycle: The Buddhist Review. "As a dominant cultural force, consumerism offers products to address every dissatisfaction."

So what's the antidote? Mindfulness -- the focused awareness on the present moment, which can be cultivated through meditation and contemplative practice -- may be an effective remedy to empty or compulsive consumption. As beat writer and American Buddhist thinker Allen Ginsberg put it in a 1966 letter to the Washington Post: "You own twice as much rug if you're twice as aware of the rug."

**Americans are redefining success beyond money and power.**

Our collective definition of the American Dream is slowly starting to change from one of materialism to a more purposeful idea of what it means to live the good life. According to the 2013 LifeTwist study, only around one-quarter of Americans still believe that wealth determines success.

"Dozens of the survey’s findings reflect a new American notion of success, but perhaps none more starkly than the sentiment that Americans ranked 'having a lot of money' 20th on a list of 22 possible contributors to having a successful life," the LifeTwist Study's authors wrote in a press release. "This sentiment mirrors the steadily rising trend ... that Americans are increasingly placing greater priority on living a fulfilling life — in which being wealthy is not the most significant factor."

[Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/15/psychology-materialism_n_4425982.html]
The Benefits and Virtues of Voluntary Simplicity
*Simplify Your Life!*

Spark People | By Dean Anderson, Behavioral Psychology Expert

You probably know that carrying around extra weight can have negative effects on your health and happiness. But have you ever wondered how all the other “extras” in your life might be affecting you?

My good friend owns a successful real estate business, has a family with two young children, good health, and all the creature comforts he wants—a nice home, new cars every few years, and plenty of discretionary income. The last time I saw him, he looked extremely unhappy so I asked him what was going on. He told me he had just seen a family portrait that his 8-year-old daughter had drawn in school. The family was seated around the dinner table eating dinner—everyone, that is, except him. When he asked his daughter why he wasn’t in the picture, she said, “Daddy, you’re never home at dinner time. You don’t get home until bedtime.”

My friend was devastated. He suddenly felt that everything he had worked so hard to achieve was meaningless—that he had failed his family. Over the next few months, he was able to develop more balanced perspective and recognize that some things needed to change. His work took way too much of his time and energy, and the material benefits his work provided were turning out to be no substitute for the other things his family needed from him—and no substitute for what he needed from them, either.

Does some variation of this story apply to your own life? Whether due to work, shopping, debt, overeating or something else, when things can get out of balance, you (and often the people you care about the most) suffer as a result. This suffering can take the form of depression, anxiety, self-defeating behaviors, or a vague sense of unhappiness—even when on the surface, you seem to be doing well by society’s standards.

The real problem may be that you’ve been living according to limited cultural stereotypes of what’s important, rather than finding out what’s really important to you and living according to those values and needs. The question is this: how do you give yourself the opportunity to live intentionally, according to your own priorities when there are so many competing demands on your time and energy?

More and more people are turning to the concept and the practice of voluntary simplicity to find practical and meaningful answers to this question.

**What is Voluntary Simplicity?**

Voluntary simplicity may conjure up images of people quitting their jobs, moving back to the land, growing their own food, making their own clothes, and doing without most of the products of modern technology. Well, that may work for some people, but voluntary simplicity has come a long way since those early expressions of it.

These days, voluntary simplicity is less about doing without certain things, and more about having just enough. It’s about living a full life by intentionally designing your life so that you don’t have to sacrifice anything important or waste your time, energy or material resources on things you don’t really need or cherish. It’s also about integrating basic ethical concerns such as fair distribution of labor and resources and the well-being of the natural world into your personal choices.

There is no one-size-fits-all definition of voluntary simplicity, or a single set of rules to follow. It means different things to different people and in different situations. What you might find comfortable...
or enriching could be a life of deprivation and boredom to someone else. Your level of simplicity also depends on your existing responsibilities to other people—it does not mean abandoning legitimate commitments and starting over, or imposing your values on other people.

**Moving Towards Voluntary Simplicity**

The first step towards constructing a voluntarily simple life is to gradually begin paring your life down to basic essentials—the things, activities and relationships that you truly need or genuinely cherish. For most people, this takes time and careful planning. Abrupt or poorly-planned changes, like quitting a job with nothing else lined up, can result in disaster. The goal here is to unburden yourself of possessions and activities that lock you into the “rat race” of earning more and more money to pay for more and more things you don’t really need; and to free up more time, resources, and energy for things that add real quality and meaning to your life.

Here’s a short list that many people focus on while trying to move towards voluntary simplicity:

- Limiting material possessions to what is needed and/or cherished
- Meaningful work, whether paid or volunteer
- Quality time with friends and family
- Joyful and pleasurable leisure activities
- A conscious and comfortable relationship with money, charting a course between deprivation and excessive accumulation
- Connection to community, but not necessarily in formal organizations
- Sustainable spending and consumption practices, such as recycling and supporting local, community-based businesses with fair labor and environmental practices
- A healthy lifestyle, including exercise, adequate sleep, and nutritious food
- Practices that foster personal growth, an inner life, or spirituality, such as yoga, meditation, prayer, religious ceremonies, journaling, and/or spiritual reading
- A connection to nature, such as spending time outdoors regularly
- Aesthetic beauty in personal environment

**The “Secret Ingredient”**

There are several good books about voluntary simplicity and intentional living. One of my favorites is *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*, by Duane Elgin. Elgin suggests that the practice of voluntary simplicity helps us make the shift from “embedded consciousness” to “self-reflective consciousness,” which is crucial for personal growth and the well-being of self and society.

When you operate out of embedded consciousness, most of your values and priorities are coming from outside of your self—from society, peers, the media, etc. Examples include: losing weight because it’s fashionable to be thin, or because it will make you more attractive to others; working too many hours because it’s considered a sign of adult responsibility, or because having things that money can buy indicates your importance, competence, or social status. Under embedded consciousness, you are guided mostly by concerns over what others think of you.

When you operate out of self-reflective consciousness, you are guided by what you think of yourself, based on your own conscience and values. This is not a matter of automatically rejecting cultural values just because they come from outside of you, or insisting on being completely unique and different. It’s about seeing how you are influenced by cultural values—how they shape our thoughts, perceptions, and feelings—and giving yourself the option of accepting those that you find helpful, and changing those that cause problems. This can give you the rewarding sense of living your own life, making it possible for you to really contribute to the health of society.
The practice of voluntary simplicity helps you reduce the influence and power of unhelpful cultural biases and habits, and gives you room to develop better alternatives for yourself and others. The better you become at simplifying your life and letting go of what’s not important and what you can’t control, the better you'll be able to fully experience what you are doing in the moment, and take what it offers you without being distracted by worries about what happened earlier or what might happen next. Almost always, it’s the worry and the desire to be elsewhere that makes people unhappy—not what they are actually doing.

When you think about it, making the most out of what you are doing right in this moment is the only way you ever can be happy and satisfied, because this moment is the only one you ever really have. By clearing out all the clutter and distractions, it's much easier to create (and enjoy) the life you truly want.

[Source: http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/wellness_articles.asp?id=733]

**Reflection Questions for Articles**

Please consider these questions prior to discussion in class.

1. Did the findings of the DEQ study surprise you? If so, how?
2. What disposable items (even those that are recyclable or compostable) do you purchase/use in your everyday life? Could you be purchasing less of them? What are the alternatives?
3. Do you ever find yourself thinking that buying more will make you happier? Do you think it’s true? Why or why not?
4. The 3rd reading states, “The first step towards constructing a voluntarily simple life is to gradually begin paring your life down to basic essentials—the things, activities and relationships that you truly need or genuinely cherish.” What do you truly need or genuinely cherish?
5. What in these readings resonated with you the most? Surprised you the most?
6. How might you apply what you read to outreach you work on after completing this course?
Chapter II
Waste Prevention

Focusing on the Other R’s (Reduce, Reuse)

PREFLECTION – Complete the Lifestyle Assessment Questionnaire on the next page.

ACTION – Develop a plan for reducing or reusing in one aspect of your life.

List some consumables (e.g. paper cups/plates/napkins; printer ink; gasoline) that are a part of your life at home, work, school, or volunteer setting.
Choose two of these consumables and identify reasons it makes sense to change and reasons it would be difficult to change to reusables or to reduce the amount consumed.
Choose one area for reduction or reuse and consider the financial implications.
If this is for a work or volunteer setting, write a sample policy and outline procedures for implementing the change.

REFLECTION – Ask yourself these questions:

What resistance am I likely to encounter to changes required by a decision to reduce/reuse?
What costs (monetary, space, human resource) might there be apart from the actual cost of replacing consumable with reusable products?

RE-ACTION – Expand reduction and reuse.

Look around your home for things you unconsciously reuse. Celebrate! Then share the idea with someone else.
Ask family and friends if they have a use for items about which you think, “Surely, somebody could use this.”
Search for places in the community where gently used items can be offered for someone else to treasure.
How Earth-Friendly Are You?
A Lifestyle Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Before you go shopping, the folks at the Simple Living Network ask to think about the following items.

1. **These are the things I consider before I buy an item:**
   - ___ Do I need it?
   - ___ Do I want it?
   - ___ How long will it last?
   - ___ Can I get along without buying it?
   - ___ Are the resources that went into it renewable or nonrenewable?
   - ___ Is it made of recycled materials, and is it recyclable?
   - ___ Will I be able to fix it?
   - ___ How will I dispose of it when I'm done using it?
   - ___ Have I researched to get the best cost and quality?
   - ___ Am I willing to maintain it?

2. **How much more am I willing to pay for items I think are kinder to the planet?**
   - ___ Nothing
   - ___ 10%
   - ___ 20%
   - ___ 50%
   - ___ Cost is no object

3. **With regard to price, my policy is:**
   - ___ Buy name brand -- you can trust it
   - ___ I buy from local merchants no matter what the cost
   - ___ I buy on sale whenever possible
   - ___ I buy the lowest cost item no matter what the environmental cost
   - ___ I buy what I want and don't consider price
   - ___ It doesn't matter if I go into debt to get what I want
   - ___ I'd rather repair an item than buy something new
   - ___ I'd rather buy used to save money and resources
   - ___ It's wrong to buy what you can't pay cash

4. **My belief about consumption is:**
   - ___ If I have the money, I can buy what I want
   - ___ Whoever dies with the most toys wins
   - ___ I only buy what I really need
   - ___ Over-consumption is a major factor in the planet's problems
   - ___ If I recycle, it's okay to consume as much as I want

5. **I'm proud to say that I do most of my shopping at:**
   - ___ Department stores
   - ___ Through catalogs
   - ___ Exclusive shops
   - ___ Thrift stores
   - ___ Garage sales
   - ___ Discount stores

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**INVOLVE YOUR CHILDREN**
Talk with your children about the questions in item #1 the next time they want to buy something.