

Chapter Eight

Master Recyclers & Community Outreach

1. Introduction

Nine in ten adults (87%) report that they recycle, though only half recycle every day, according to a national survey of over 1,000 U.S. adults conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs on behalf of Yesterday's News in 2011. Roughly a third tend to recycle less frequently, while 13% admit that they never recycle.

Those surveyed see a variety of benefits of recycling— that it helps to reduce landfills (81%), saves trees (69%), and conserves energy (62%).

Though many acknowledge the many benefits of recycling, they cite a variety of barriers that prevent them from recycling more, with the top reason being that it is not accessible or convenient where they live (25%). Others report that it is too time consuming (10%), that they forget (10%), that they aren't sure what is recyclable (8%), or the cost is too high (6%). At the same time, a majority (52%) reports that none of these barriers prevent them from recycling.

As Master Recyclers you are able to supply people with much of the information they need to practice waste reduction.

However, information is not enough. Current research into recycling behavior shows that two other factors are important in motivating people to recycle. The first is an awareness of the consequences of action (or inaction). The second is a sense of personal responsibility--the feeling that action makes a difference.

When speaking to people it is important to stress that if they have the power they must also share in the responsibility of change.

The rest of this chapter provides resources and some communication and motivation tips.

2. Master Recycler: Educator and Resource

As a Master Recycler, part of your job is to spread the word about the personal and social benefits of recycling, composting and earth-wise shopping. You will help people find out what steps they can take to reduce the amount of waste they put in the trash and increase recycling. You will provide information based on your own experience and on what you learned in the training.

When you volunteered to become a master recycler, you made a commitment to work actively to make the world a better place. It is the responsibility of your training and support team to provide you with the resources to help you fulfill your commitment and to offer feedback.

3. Master Recycler: Motivator

Many of you will be called upon to speak to groups as part of your outreach commitment. Others will talk with people at outreach events or while organizing and carrying out special projects. As a Master Recycler, part of your job is to motivate people to change their ideas and behavior relating to waste. This is a big job. To do it effectively, it is helpful to keep certain ideas in mind.

The following communication guidelines are particularly useful for planning a presentation, but they are basics that also can be used effectively in one-on-one communication.

A. Give People A Reason to Care. If you are going to motivate people to change you will need to give them a reason to care. When you talk about the results of our consumption-based lifestyle, appeal to their feelings of fairness, their responsibility to future generations, or to their dislike of waste. Place the wasteful (or non-wasteful) behavior of an individual within the larger scheme of things. Appeal to the emotional as well as the factual side of the individual.

Seldom does just one thing motivate people. An individual's primary concern may be to save money on the garbage bill. Other concerns, however, may be to save Brazilian rain forests, have less toxic waste in the environment, or have fewer waste facilities to pay for.

B. Use Concrete Examples. When talking about the consequences of actions, don't talk about millions of tons of garbage and abstract facts. Set the stage with images listeners can see, feel or specifically imagine. Talk about the number of truck loads of garbage sent to the Coffin Butte daily. Help listeners to think about the resources involved. Avoid technical overload. Abstract information does not motivate people.

C. Address Listeners' Concerns. Everyone has felt trapped by a speaker who talked on and on about interesting things that were not personally useful. A presenter who is actively listening will learn from partners in conversation what is important to them. A good presenter will then zero in on the information that matters and acknowledge that learning is a two-way street.

In a larger group it is possible to make a guess about interest areas by knowing the membership of the group. Parents who attend elementary school PTA meetings will have different interests than people attending a discussion at a Senior Center. Talking about packaging school lunches with the parents is appropriate, while talking about effective food storage with the seniors will be more useful to them.

D. Tailor Information To The Knowledge Level Of Your Audience. In a day of outreach there will be varied levels of awareness and action. Some people will already be working on recycling projects in their homes and offices, and others will think that recycling is something that can only be done to newspapers (and only then by fanatics)! Be flexible and present the information in an understandable way.

E. Empower Listeners. After providing background information, empower listeners by letting them know that they can make a difference. Stress that the choices they make as consumers and voters have a direct impact on the producers. Consumer power in the marketplace is an important tool to change the use of re-

sources. That tool is available every time people shop, reuse or recycle.

F. Promote Active Involvement in problem solving or information exchange. Help people generate and share ideas about actions they presently take or might take to affect their area of interest. Encourage whatever positive steps they are taking. If they have an objection to a line of activity, help them think of alternatives. Encourage creativity.

G. Suggest Specific Actions to reduce waste, lower costs or influence manufacturers--whatever the area of interest may be. Stress simple, low-cost and immediate actions.

4. Communication Guidelines

Public speaking trainer Dale Carnegie said, "The way you say it is as important as what you are saying." Be aware of communication styles with people when doing outreach. Some general guidelines for effective outreach communications include:

A. Take initiative to start conversations with people at events. It is hard for some people to break the ice, but a simple lead-in such as, "Do you want any information about recycling or composting?" can get people started.

B. Be aware of body language. People often make assumptions from non-verbal clues. For example:

- ◆ Looking people in the eyes tells them that you are interested in what they are saying.
- ◆ Open, upright posture signals that you are confident in your knowledge. Slouching indicates that you are bored. Arms folded across your chest signals that you are defensive.
- ◆ Attentiveness to people and activities around you shows that you are eager to talk. Reading a book or otherwise ignoring people at an outreach event signals that you don't have anything to share.

C. Show an interest. Even if it's the hundredth time the same question has been asked

today, it's the first time for the person asking it.

D. Be honest and sincere. Don't wing it. Guessing the answer to a question can do more harm than good. Remember, it's okay to say, "I don't have the answer to that one, but I'll find out," or telling them where they can find the answer. If appropriate, take the person's phone number and call back with the information as quickly as possible.

5. Example Outreach Scenarios

The following are examples of scenarios you may encounter while speaking with the public during your payback hours, along with tips and examples on how you might best respond. These are most relevant to staffing a booth but most can apply to other forms of speaking with the public.

A. Your hook (the question or verbal prod you use to invite people to speak to you at your booth) doesn't work.

- ◆ Tip: Test out different wording and phrases a couple times to see what is most effective.
- ◆ Example: If you're tabling and educating people about recycling, try different introductory and identifying questions, such as: "What do you recycle at home?" "What city do you live in?" "Do you have curbside recycling at home?"

B. People decline to speak with you.

- ◆ Tip: Respect their decision, remain positive, and thank them. Also, if people are simply saying "no" to your "hook," then consider changing your hook so that it is not a yes or no question.
- ◆ Example: If your hook is "Have you heard about Corvallis' mixed organics program," and people are saying no and walking on by, consider using a hook that is not a yes/no question, like, "How do you dispose of food waste at your home?"
- ◆ Example: When someone declines to speak you you, remain positive by using phrases like: "no worries," "have a good day," and "take care," and then thank them.

C. People disagree with you or your message.

- ◆ Tip: Demonstrate that you hear them (listening, nodding, paraphrasing back to them, etc.). Use your own facts and talking

points if you have them. If you are spending a lot of time debating, consider if you should thank them and move on to someone else.

◆ Example:

- ◆ You: Hi there! Do you want to play a game to learn a little bit more about recycling?
- ◆ Patron: Oh, I don't recycle, I just burn everything
- ◆ You: Oh really? there are much better ways to handle these materials; why do you choose to burn?
- ◆ Patron: Why would I pay for service when I can just burn everything for free?
- ◆ You: While there is a cost to processing materials such as recyclables or yard debris, the benefits far exceed that of landfilling these items.
- ◆ Patron: There is no benefit to me personally to recycle, as opposed to burning it all. I'm not going to pay when I don't have to.
- ◆ [At this point, you could try and steer the conversation to a less heated topic but if the person has an agenda or seems intent on being in disagreement, you might bid them adieu and move on to another patron.]
- ◆ You: Well, we're here if you change your mind and would like any information on recycling. Thanks for stopping by, have a good day!

D. People are not that interested in what you have to say or appear to be in a rush.

- ◆ Tip: Cut to the chase - emphasize just one thing (your main goal/message) in very concise, but not rushed terms. In other words, instead of telling them everything and talking really fast, just tell them a boiled down version of what you're trying to communicate.
- ◆ Example:
 - ◆ You: Hi there, can you tell me how do you dispose of food waste at your home currently?
 - ◆ Patron: Uh, I'm kind of in a rush right now.
 - ◆ You: No problem, I'll make this quick. We're out here today to let Corvallis residents know they can compost food scraps in their curbside organics carts. Here's a handout you

can take with you for more details.
Have a great day!

E. People who think they already know everything (in terms of what you're trying to communicate with them).

- ◆ Example:
 - ◆ You: Hi there, would you like to play a sorting game to test your curbside recycling knowledge?
 - ◆ Patron: Oh no, I already know about all that, I recycle everything.
 - ◆ You: Wow, that's great. [Then move on to clarify what they mean and open a discussion with them, such as the 2 examples below.]
 - ◆ Example: What do you do with your [mention an item that's hard to recycle, or item that shouldn't go in the cart, such as medicine bottles, beer bottle caps, etc.]?
 - ◆ Example: What are some of the things you recycle besides these items (on display)?
- ◆ Other response ideas:
 - ◆ If you want to be less "confrontational" you could respond with more in-depth information to give them resources they might not be aware of or find some other things you could educate them on (talk about the first 2 R's for example).
 - ◆ Or, if you don't have more info to give (curbside was all you were talking about), then you could move on to the next patron.
 - ◆ Example: "Well thanks for stopping by to talk with us. Feel free to take any educational materials you'd like."

F. People who want to talk about something else (other than the topic you are focused on for that day).

- ◆ Tip: Redirect the conversation back to what you are focusing on. If it is particularly difficult to transition to refocus the conversation, thank them for their time and shift your focus to the next person who is passing by.
- ◆ Example:
 - ◆ Patron: What's the deal with the plastic bag ban? Aren't they perfectly re-

cyclable?

- ◆ You: They can be recycled if sorted out separately, but they cannot go into a home commingle bin. Can I tell you more about what's accepted in the commingle?
- ◆ Patron: But what I don't get is, why are paper bags better?
- ◆ You: I'm sorry, I'm not an expert in the ban or comparisons of paper versus plastic. I have lots of information about what's accepted in curbside recycling, which is what I am educating people about today. Is that a topic you're interested in learning more about?
- ◆ Patron: [Continues conversation off topic]
- ◆ You: I'm sorry I don't have information to share with you about that. I do need to focus on educating folks about curbside recycling today, but thanks for your interest in waste reduction. [Consider turning away from the individual and initiating a conversation with another passersby.]

G. When you don't know the answer.

- ◆ Tip: Admit you don't know and offer to follow-up (and exchange contact info).
- ◆ Example:
 - ◆ Patron: I was wondering how exactly a plastic bottle gets recycled?
 - ◆ You: You know, that's a really great question and actually I'm not quite sure how they get recycled. If you wanted to leave your phone number for me, I could find out and give you a call about it.
 - ◆ Patron: That would be great, thank you so much. [Take phone number]
 - ◆ You: Were there any other questions about curbside recycling that I could answer for you?

H. People who already agree with what you are promoting.

- ◆ Tip: If they already know about something or agree with what you are encouraging, be sure to cut to the chase (i.e. there's no need to give them the full "spiel"). Offer more in-depth information or opportunities (to further their knowledge or involvement).

- ◆ Example:
 - ◆ You: How are you disposing of food waste at your home currently?
 - ◆ Patron: I use my curbside yard debris cart in Corvallis. I'm so glad we can do that here!
 - ◆ You: Awesome! Glad to hear you know about the curbside program and are diverting your food scraps that way. Here is a handy guide of what can go in, should you need that for your household.
 - ◆ Patron: Thanks, I think my house is on board. I'm always getting my spouse and kids in line with the program.
 - ◆ You: Nice! You seem really interested in this kind of thing. Have you heard about the Master Recycler class?

6. Outreach Plans

You have committed to payback 30 hours of outreach. Activities can include:

- ◆ Giving waste reduction presentations to small groups
- ◆ Setting up a recycling program at your place of work
- ◆ Staffing display booths at events or fairs
- ◆ Devise a totally new activity. You can work individually or with a group of other Master Recyclers who have similar interests or complementary skills.

The choice is yours!

You may have a special project already in mind. If not, the Master Recycler Program Coordinators will be able to help you generate some ideas or can schedule you for activities that are already in process. Please remember that the activities you choose should be things you feel comfortable doing. It is always good to stretch and try new things, but if speaking in front of a group terrifies you, don't tie yourself to a schedule of speaking engagements. You should experience success in your outreach and enjoy doing it.

To be happiest with your participation, it is im-

portant that you develop a plan to clarify your goals and help you reach them. The coordinators are more than happy to help you develop your own outreach plan. It will be tailored to your interests and level of energy. It will state the who, what, how, when and where of your 30 hours of community activity. This plan will act as your guide, but don't allow it to limit you.

Stretching and extra enthusiasm encouraged!

The Outreach Plan (see the second-to-last page of this chapter) will include:

- ◆ Goal Statement - What you would like to accomplish.
- ◆ Activities - Specific things you would like to do.
- ◆ Work Plan (if applicable) - A plan with timelines and activities that will help you reach your goal.

All Outreach Plans must help the Master Recycler Program accomplish the following:

- ◆ Provide community outreach and education.
- ◆ Enhance the waste reduction knowledge and action of Master Recyclers.
- ◆ Provide Master Recyclers with skill-building outreach activities.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for staff and Master Recyclers to work for greater program effectiveness.
- ◆ Collect feedback from Master Recyclers and others about program effectiveness.
- ◆ Provide a rewarding, effective and informative program.

**Thank you for your
commitment!**

7. Payback Guidelines

To fulfill the goal of the Master Recycler program, payback activities must meet the following criteria:

1. Implement a system or program that diverts materials from the waste stream, **OR**
2. Provide one-on-one educational contact, **AND,**
3. Provide a meaningful educational and/or skill enhancing experience for the volunteer.

Payback activities can be self-generated in the form of an individual project created by the volunteer and approved by the Coordinator, or they may be generated by the Coordinator working in conjunction with other volunteers and with local educational and solid waste programs.

Prep/infrastructure hours contribute significantly to the quality and effectiveness of the program, but do not meet either #1 or #2 above. Prep time includes the creation or gathering of materials for presentations, workshops, or general distribution and training for specific outreach activities. Infrastructure time includes activities that serve to enhance the Master Recycler or any other existing solid waste programs: grant writing, developing an educational activity, working on the Master Recycler Newsletter, or coordinating volunteers, for example. The amount of time for these activities that will count toward payback will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Coordinator.

8. Reporting

Reporting is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Information required includes:

- ◆ Year you completed the course
- ◆ Your contact information
- ◆ Activity date(s)
- ◆ Number of outreach hours
- ◆ Short description of activity

You are responsible for reporting your payback hours and information to the Program Coordinator after each of your outreach activities. This should be submitted via the online form located at <http://tiny.cc/mr-hours>.

If you need an update on how many hours you have logged, contact the Program Coordinator.

9. Certification

To receive the Master Recycler certification, each volunteer must attend the training sessions and contribute 30 hours of community outreach over a twelve-month period. During this time you will be responsible for staying in close contact with the Program Coordinator. Display material and supplies are available for your use, but you must reserve display materials in advance and check them in and out through the Program Coordinator.

This formal training is just the beginning. Your outreach efforts will determine the impact of this educational program. In the end, you are the one who will make a difference--and shape a better world for us all.

MASTER RECYCLER OUTREACH PLAN



Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: Day _____ Evening _____

Goal Statement (What I want to accomplish with my outreach activity):

Outreach Activity Interests:

(Only 1/4 of required payback hours can be spent in research, writing or other program support activities. You can, of course, do more than the minimum 30 hours of payback!)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Check out the other side for a few ideas!

MASTER RECYCLER PROGRAM PAYBACK POSSIBILITIES

Possible payback options are outlined below. Please list the ones that most interest you. You will be contacted for scheduling as the payback opportunities become available.

Don't forget that you can develop your own Special Project. It could be major (like building your own Recycled materials demonstration house) or it could be a little less grand - like helping your apartment complex or workplace start a recycling program. It could even be as simple as getting organizations you work with to start printing their newsletters on recycled paper. If your projects educates, reduces waste, or creates markets - it's a winner!

Speaking Opportunities:

- Composting
- Vermicomposting
- Alternatives to Household Hazardous Waste
- Recycling Opportunities and Preparation in Linn or Benton County
- Buy Recycled, Less Toxic, Durable, Reuse, etc.
- Waste Prevention, Packaging Reduction, etc.
- Waste Free Gift Giving, Holiday Gift Ideas, etc.
- Making Crafts With "Garbage"
- Sustainable Building
- OTHER _____

Staff Booths/Displays

- Trade Shows / Fairs / Festivals
- Environmental Events / Earth Day Events
- Workplace Events (Environmental / Health Fairs)

Event Recycling

- DaVinci Days, River Rhythms, etc.

Self-Initiated Gatherings/Activities

- Hold a neighborhood Compost Education party
- Conduct an 'Alternatives to Buying New' Field Trip (shopping spree)
- Form a Tool Bank with neighbors/friends
- Help a local restaurant begin food waste composting
- Organize a Waste Awareness Day in your workplace, apartment or place of worship
- Other fun ideas? _____

Help With The Master Recycler Newsletter, Tabloid, or Newspaper Inserts

- Research and write articles
- Illustrate or photograph

Help Create A Display

- Booth
- Presentation kit
- Learning activity
- Other _____

Have FUN!!