



RESEARCH RESULTS SUMMARY

For Recycling Motivation Research
Conducted Q4 2007

Prepared for

B E S M A R T

Think a Little About Waste Reduction. It Can Save a Lot.

December 26, 2007



Executive Summary

This research was to conducted assess and verify consumers’ attitudes and behaviors regarding recycling as well as underlying factors affecting their current recycling practices. This information is being used to establish an effective communication strategy for the Wisconsin BeSMART Coalition’s Recycle More communications campaign. The research program had two components: 1.) a series of four focus groups conducted with a total of 44 participants and 2.) An online survey administered to a random sample of Coalition residents, which garnered 404 responses. This document primarily summarizes survey results as the survey was designed to refine and verify the focus group findings.

Key Recycling Behaviors

After answering a series of questions on demographics, respondents were asked about their current level of household recycling, and how much more they felt they could do. The inset graphic illustrates current recycling levels within Coalition residents. On a 10-point scale where a ten indicated “I always recycle everything”, Coalition residents rated their current recycling level as well as noted what they felt was a reasonable goal for a recycling increase in their household. Based on response, 59% were categorized as “Always” recyclers, 36% as “Sometimes” and only 5% as “Never” recyclers. These definitions are consistent with terms used in the recent National Recycling Coalition Recycling Behavioral Study. An analysis of the potential recycling increases by

Recycling Categories	% of Pop.	Avg. Current Score	Avg. Goal Score	%Increase
"Always" Recyclers	59%	9.6	9.8	2%
"Sometimes" Recyclers	36%	6.8	8.3	22%
"Never" Recyclers	5%	1.5	5.3	263%

household and the frequencies in which they occur in the general population shows that “Sometimes” recyclers hold approximately two thirds of the potential for recycling increases within Coalition households.

Respondents identified their top reasons for recycling as well as the top barriers to them recycling more often. The top five reasons people recycle listed in the graphic on the left included four of five

Top Recycling Motivators

I'm concerned about the environment.	26%
New things can be made out of recycled materials/supports industry.	21%
I want to make a positive impact on the world around me.	12%
I strive to have as small as possible negative impact on the environment.	11%
I'm concerned about my children's future.	10%

statements voicing a strong concern for the environment.





While many respondents indicated they felt there were no mentionable barriers inhibiting their recycling level, the top five barriers that were mentioned included concerns over space requirements in containers and the home as well as a lack of understanding of what can and cannot be recycled. Another barrier that was discussed often but not listed here was the concern that the items set aside for recycling were not recycled by the municipality.

Top Barriers to Recycling

I don't have enough room in my recycle bins.	14%
I don't understand what can and can't be recycled.	10%
It's too much work.	5%
They make preparing the items for pick-up too complicated.	5%
I do not have space for recycling in my house or garage.	5%

Based on focus group discussion and response, four “message” themes were created and evaluated by survey respondents. Each of the messaging options received favorable feedback, and respondents were asked to choose the message that would most

Most Effective Message Options...

		All Resp.	Recycling Levels		
			Always	Sometimes	Never
	It's your choice	#1	#2	#1	#4*
	Increase your impact	#2	#1	#2	#4*
	It all comes back	#3	#3	#3	#1
	Every item helps	#4	#4	#4	#4*

*3-way tie for #4

motivate them to recycle more materials more often. The inset table summarizes top choice among the four themes overall and within each recycling level.

Key Insights – Dealing with Barriers to Recycling

“I don’t have enough room in my recycle bins.”

- To encourage increased participation, municipalities should consider offering larger bins or making two bins readily available or the “standard” automatically distributed to residents

“I don’t understand what can and can’t be recycled.”

- Education/communications campaign should include information on recycling requirements of any given community
- Encourage development of regulations and guidelines locally and statewide about the type of plastics that can be used for food items.

“I’m not sure that they really recycle the materials anyway.”

- Educate residents on all aspects of the process – the top explanation of mistrust was that they had not been educated on what happens!
- Education/communications campaign should include information on the recycling process including an explanation of:
 - The recycling process in a given community
 - The companies that purchase recycled products, the monetary impact, and products made
 - How residents can support the use of recycled products
- Considering how recycling pick up appears to residents of an area. Through the appearance of and actions of workers that do the door-to-door pick up

Key Insights – Marketing & Communications

- Target the “sometimes recyclers” rather than “never” recyclers, educating them and inspiring them to recycle more items, more often
- Make information that supports this educational effort easily accessible, complete and understandable

- Establish an identity beyond that of Be SMART that clearly corresponds to the act of recycling and is simple and memorable. It is this identity that the communication campaign will be attributed to and serve as a friendly informational resource for residents of participating municipalities. Wisconsin Recycles!
<Wisconsinrecycles.org>
- Begin using this logo on materials throughout the municipalities, suggesting that it is a location for what you want to know about recycling, but for details pertinent to your area specifically, direct residents to your municipal site
- In ads and all communication materials, use easily understood terms to quantify the environmental impact of their recycling contributions - trees saved, energy saved, materials made, landfill space conserved, money saved
- Consider creating a statewide goal or goal for all participating municipalities combined, presenting it as a challenge to motivate residents to step up their recycling efforts and become more conscious
- Convey this goal as a large, statewide effort, but reinforce and promote this challenge on a municipal level through communication materials, cross-promoting on municipal Web sites and through media coverage
- Clearly illustrate the impact of any set goals that are established for the state, or each municipality as part of the larger goal
- Potentially use a recognizable WI figure to communicate and support the challenge in public service announcements and at coordinated media events to allow us to continually seek media coverage.
- Create a video introducing residents to the recycling process and what happens from the point at which an individual's recycling is picked up. In the meantime, begin clearly communicating to residents how they can find out details of your municipality's process right now, whether it is by calling, visiting a site or taking a tour. Addressing the desire for this information with an "open-door" policy should help dispel thoughts that the city does not recycle or follow through with the process
- Consider creating a refrigerator magnet that clearly indicates what items are recyclable in your area
- Develop a Web site that will effectively address the questions and informational needs of residents. This will be the location to which we drive residents for information, such as:
 - The recycling requirements and information about what is recyclable that is common for all municipalities involved
 - Specific information describing the entire recycling process, potentially utilizing video
 - In easily understood terms, convey the environmental impact of the recycling contribution of individuals
 - Cost and benefit comparisons of recycling versus trash collection
 - A distinct page for each municipality with the most critical information conveyed and links to each municipality's site for very specific information
 - Beyond recycling – information on how to reduce and reuse as an individual or household
 - Lists and information on manufacturers and products that use Wisconsin's recycled materials
 - A section for Coalition members to post and share communication materials, artwork and eventually a place for us to house informational templates, logo artwork, etc. for each municipality to customize their materials and reinforce the overriding campaign message and graphics – a password-protected material template library on the server
 - If we are to proceed with a statewide challenge to meet a recycling goal, consider adding a barometer showing how close Wisconsin is to meeting its goal and showing how much tonnage each municipality is contributing to the overall goal
- Devising ways for the coalition to gain corporate support for Web development and advertising, such as:
- Offering companies the opportunity to be noted as a sponsor on ads
- Recognize manufacturers that use recycled materials and/or specific products on the site for a contribution, offer links to their site



- Consider creating materials illustrating the creative direction and communicating sponsorship opportunities which would be presented to businesses
- Each municipality should consider communicating how money earned from recycling is used within the area to its residents
- Rely mainly on printed materials – mailed or distributed by your pick up employees to communicate with residents, but drive them to the site for detailed information, to learn the process, etc.
- Compile tax dollars saved numbers by local municipality, equated and released as a PR effort on a quarterly basis through news releases with the local community newspapers and included in mailers from local municipal and city officials

Key Insights – Messages/Communications Points

- Recycle more items, more often
- Know what can be recycled, educate yourself
- Everything you contribute makes a difference, each individual can make an impact – this is what your contributions amount to: _____.
- Recycling is not only about making new things or just conserving resources, there are an endless list of benefits
- “Wisconsin Recycles!” is your one-stop, recycling information resource