

Summary of Customer Insight Case Study

Carried out Summer 2010 by Southampton City Council & Partners

The project used customer insight to tackle waste management & recycling issues, as well as collaboration between practitioners in those two areas.

Project Objective

By developing insight into and understanding of residents' behaviour with regard to recycling, the partners hoped to remove the barriers and issues that residents experience. Specifically, the insight enabled a more direct targeting of customers who did not recycle or who contaminated their bins, thereby reducing the need for more generic campaigns.

The insight also helped shape more relevant and accessible communication, both in terms of methods of contact, and the content of the message.

Project Outcomes

- **Household waste:** Between April 2010 and April 2012, household waste sent for disposal was reduced by 18%, or 17,000 tonnes.
- **Waste disposal:** By reducing household waste by 9,426 tonnes between 2010 and 2011, and by a further 7,154 the following year, the partners saved a total of £546,708 and £486,472 respectively each year in waste disposal costs.
- **CO₂ Emissions** reduced by 2,272 tonnes, vastly exceeding the projects original target of 150 tonnes.
- **Contamination of recycling** reduced by 3 – 5%

Project Method

The project proceeded through the following steps and phases:

- Socio demographic profiling
- Focus groups with users
- A 'Behaviour change' campaign
- Monitoring and evaluation.

1. Socio Demographic Profiling

The project combined a customised set of socio-demographic profiles that had been developed based on Mosaic UK¹ with existing waste management data, and was cross-referenced with information concerning environmental behaviour.

The analysis indicated the specific geographical areas of each authority that most needed to improve recycling, and highlighted customer segments that were strong recyclers versus poor recyclers.

The project also cross-referenced their existing social demographic profiles against Experian's 'Green Segments'², which classifies every UK individual and household into ten distinct groups according to both attitude to, and understanding of the environment and climate change. Each segment is mapped at individual, household and postcode level.

The Ten Green Segments are:

- i. Eco-evangelists (people most likely to support 'green' causes and who believe in the power of consumer action to make a difference to climate change)
- ii. Convinced consumers
- iii. Green but doubtful
- iv. Confused but well-behaved
- v. Doing their best
- vi. Sceptical libertarians
- vii. Too busy to change
- viii. Why should I bother?
- ix. Constrained by price
- x. Wasteful and unconvinced (people who have no interest in changing lifestyles and are more wasteful as a result).

As part of the project, the percentage of each of the socio demographic profiles was identified against their attitudinal traits.

Decisions regarding where to focus the behaviour change campaign were based on the population volumes of each group and the propensity of each group to change its behaviour.

¹ A unique consumer classification based on in-depth demographic data – see www.experian.co.uk/business-strategies/mosaic-uk.html

² Originally developed in collaboration with the Stockholm Environment Institute and available as part of Experian's 'Green Aware' product.

Based on an analysis of the cross-referencing, it was concluded that socio demographic groups with a high number of residents in the Green Segmentation described as 'Eco-Evangelists' (characteristic of profiles such as C 'Wealthy people in the most sought after neighbourhood' and D 'Successful professionals') were already likely to be conscientious recyclers and thus were not targeted by the campaigns.

It was also concluded that those groups described as 'Wasteful and unconvinced' or 'Constrained by Price' were unlikely to be receptive to the Partnership's message. These included the groups:

- Lower income workers in urban terraces.
- Young people renting flats in high demand social housing.
- Families in low rise social housing with high levels of benefit need.

The campaigning resources were therefore focused on low to medium recyclers described in the Green Segmentation as:

- green but doubtful – despite being well informed they remain unconvinced about green issues, although they are surprisingly responsible with their behaviours.
- confused but well behaved – these have an extreme concern for climate change and are willing to demonstrate green behaviours, but are held back by a lack of information.
- doing their best – these are concerned about environmental issues despite a lack of information.

Socio-demographic profiling also indicated the various customer segments' preferred communication channels for interacting with local public services (see table shown at Annex B1). The project also mapped the socio-demographic profile to the waste and recycling collection day routes in order to facilitate a face-to-face campaign (see 'Doorstepping' below).

2. Focus Groups

The project used focus groups to explore and understand the experiences, motivations and requirements of the target population. The focus groups comprised 8 to 12 people. Five group sessions were held. Each lasted for up to an hour and a half and was led by a trained facilitator using a topic guide.

Participants were recruited based on mosaic segmentation and invited by post to attend the groups. To supplement the numbers recruited in this way,

Southampton City Council deployed officers to local shopping precincts with the aim of recruiting residents directly.

Focus groups followed the following structure:

- An introductory discussion of participants' perspectives on waste and recycling
- A brief discussion on participants' motivations and barriers to recycling
- An open discussion based on the 'Twin Bin Game', whereby the facilitator held up a selection of materials with the group having to decide which items could be recycled and which could not
- Participants were then invited to offer feedback on the council's current approach to communication
- Participants were also invited to volunteer ideas on how the council could help them to recycle more effectively, e.g. would incentives make a difference?
- The closing exercise was a roundtable discussion where participants were posed the question "If you could give the council one message regarding waste and/or recycling, what would it be?"

Focus Groups Findings

Recycling Knowledge

During each session, participants' knowledge of recycling was tested and themes emerging from the sessions were compared.

Motivations & Barriers to Recycling

Social conditioning, convenience and information were felt to be the biggest drivers to recycling, with the absence of the latter two constituting a significant de-motivating factor. Participants were more likely to recycle if they both understood the rationale for doing so and if the process could be undertaken, without making a specific effort.

Parents attending felt that their children provided the main motivator for them to recycle. Having learnt about recycling at school, they brought their knowledge and enthusiasm home with them.

Lack of information was also seen as a significant barrier to good recycling habits. When information was displayed in close proximity to sites where waste was sorted, residents would be more likely not only to recycle but also to recycle the correct things.

Effective Communication

Having considered a range of communication materials, participants concluded that the most effective aide memoir tools were those that could be displayed conveniently, referred to easily and absorbed quickly. For this reason, fridge magnets were by far the preferred option (being both durable and straightforward to display) followed by flyers which advertised their message on one side only (the other being out of view if/when pinned up). Stickers displayed on bins were seen as another good example of an effective method of delivering a message both quickly and clearly.

Participants felt that the Council produced too many leaflets that essentially displayed the same or similar messages. What they actually wanted was one or two durable items that contained key points. They felt pictures worked best, as they could be understood by everyone (including young children and residents who speak little English) and their message is easily relayed via only a quick glance. Long, wordy leaflets, whilst useful in communicating the rationale and practicalities behind recycling, were of no value as a quick reference guide. It was felt that most people would not take the time to read them.

One of the findings that came out of the focus groups was that residents in Southampton who lived in flats did not like the blue bag that they were provided with for recycling. Respondents in the focus groups commented that the blue bag looked tacky, and had a tendency to tip over. "If you're very proud of your kitchen, you don't want some old tacky bag stuck in the corner!" As a result, Southampton City Council now offers a more aesthetically pleasing bag that more reliably stands upright.

The student focus group also remarked that flyers posted through the door tended to get lost within a pile of junk mail and therefore ignored. They suggested communication materials placed in an envelope, branded with the Council logo, would be more likely to actually receive their attention, and make them take note.

All the groups also felt that there should be more consideration of when communication is undertaken – with once or twice a year being the stated preference. For example, the Christmas period was viewed by residents as a profitable time, as people are creating more waste. Similarly the early autumn term for students, preferably at a juncture when they are already aware of local 'rules', but not so early that the message gets lost amongst a wider barrage of information.

3. Behaviour Change Campaigns

Communications Strategy

The socio-demographic analysis and focus groups helped Southampton City Council and partners to develop a rich understanding of current behaviours and barriers, and shaped the messages and tactics for a communications campaign.

Based on these insights a communication strategy was developed which focused on specific groups (summarised in the table shown in Annex B2). A mix of different media including a radio campaign, and a number of door-stepping campaigns focused on specific groups, was used in order to encourage an increase in recycling.

Radio & Mail

Southampton ran a radio advertising campaign to promote recycling, and undertook a direct mail campaign to 31,000 households, using mosaic analysis. The campaign focused on residents who did recycle but who were classified as confused or doubtful regarding some aspects of it. These residents were known to be more receptive to information received by post. The direct mail was a letter, with recycling information carried on the back.

Doorstepping

A number of 'doorstepping' campaigns were carried out. These were based on a consideration of the mosaic profile at postcode level - and what these profiles indicated in terms of residents preferred communication channels - namely information by face to face contact – coupled with the mapping of social demographic data to the waste and recycling collection routes.

The Recycling Advisors (Council Officers) attended a doorstepper training day and were given an induction and health and safety briefing. The advisors were given the rounds list, area map and told which roads were to receive a leaflet and which were to be directly spoken to but were left to work out their own route to minimise officer time spent on the project.

The doorsteppers spoke directly to up to 30 per cent of residents in the target group – largely through knocking on people's doors. This provided an opportunity for advisors to explain more fully what recycling means and to emphasise the importance of keeping residual waste out of recycling bins. By splitting roads according to location reference, doorsteppers did not spend time visiting properties that were unlikely to respond to door stepping tactics.

The Advisors were made aware of specific issues in the target area but were not given a script. This allowed the advisors to tackle the most common issues but also gave the residents a chance to steer the conversation in

another direction if they needed to. The Advisors recorded comments and complaints from each household to be analysed for commonalities.

177 streets across the city were targeted and 8,850 households visited and took approximately 120 staff hours to complete, including travel and reporting time. The hours worked were also flexible to allow for poor weather and other commitments. They were therefore able to work 4 hours on one day but 6 hours on another so they made up for the time, as long as both agreed to it. This led to good morale in the advisors and the success rate did not seem to change from one time of day to another.

Feedback from the Doorstepping Campaigns

The doorsteppers provided the following feedback on what residents identified as the key issues:

- Mixed plastics is the key issue (plastic packaging) – people feel that plastic is plastic
- People are confused when items state on their packaging that they can be recycled, when in fact they can't e.g. tetrapaks. This confusion is compounded by awareness that other areas recycle a wider range of materials e.g. mixed plastics Messages about what can/can't be recycled and why are quite technical/in-depth in nature – It was found however that residents do want to know exactly why things cannot be recycled On the whole people are receptive to the recycling message and do wish to do the right thing
- Residents were very keen to see glass recycling collections, particularly as a number of glass banks have been removed. Collections would also assist residents without a car who find this a major barrier to the recycling of glass
- Glass and textiles in recycling bins was not really found to be a problem
- There were some misconceptions/mistrust regarding what happens to recycling and a belief amongst some that it all ends up being incinerated or dumped 'in the sea'. We were able to disprove/allay these fears.

Following the doorstepping, SCC conducted a small visual audit of seven roads to check how messages had been received from face to face contact and the information left with residents. Out of 68 properties visited, 20 households had continued to contaminate their recycling bin. However, the remaining households (71%) had made changes to their recycling behaviours. Although this is a small sample, it did appear that the strategy had proved successful.

Calling Card Campaign

YOUR RECYCLING BIN



✓ YES PLEASE

 paper	 cardboard	 food tins, drink cans & aerosols	 plastic bottles
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Please place your recycling clean and loose in the bin provided – no carrier bags or black sacks.

✗ NO THANKS

 plastic packaging	 shredded paper	 gift wrap	 drinks cartons
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Recycling - let's get it sorted!

Hello,

We called today to talk to you about recycling. We know recycling can seem confusing but it's really important that you put the right things in your recycling bin. Sorting out the wrong items wastes time and money and can sometimes prevent the right things from being recycled.

We've produced a handy guide explaining what to put in your recycling bin on the back of this card which we hope you'll find useful.

Did you know it takes just 7 days to recycle your old newspaper into a new one!



Gosport currently recycles nearly 26% of household waste, and with your help, we know we can do more!



For more information, please call the Streetscene team on 08000 198 598 or visit www.gosport.gov.uk/recycling



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The roads targeted were based on mosaic analysis and the key focus was medium recyclers whose preferred communication channel was 'face to face'. The mosaic segments used were 1, 2 & 3. These were:

- financially secure older couples living in owner occupied properties
- elderly singles with low mobility, reliant on public services for support
- low income older couples approaching retirement, living in low rise council housing.

The project found the main contamination items to be carrier bags and plastic packaging such as pots, tubs, trays and wrappers. Each interaction was recorded and all properties in 155 roads were visited if they had contaminated recycling bins. Contamination was defined as incorrect materials being placed in the recycling bins, e.g. bags of rubbish, plastic bags, glass, textiles, wood, 'wrong' plastics etc.

Where residents were at home, the team spoke to them about the 'wrong' items in their recycling bin. This was recorded and information cards were left at the property (a recycling card). In cases where residents were not available, the type of contamination was again noted and a recycling card put through the door, with the appropriate 'wrong' item circled on the card. A sticker was also placed on contaminated bins, which highlighted that plastic bags and sacks should not be placed in recycling bins.

Schools recycling pack

Given the potential role of 'Pester Power' in influencing the behaviour of some of the target segments – particularly families with young children, SCC created a recycling pack comprising teachers notes, an interactive presentation, postcards and a recycling letter given to children to take home to their parents explaining what they had learnt.

Postcards

This was another idea generated by the focus groups, aimed to act as a reminder of what could and couldn't be recycled– highlighting aerosols, cans and plastic bags. On the reverse was an explanation of what happens to recycling – again focusing on the main messages from the focus groups.

Fridge magnets

5000 'reminder' A6 fridge magnets were provided during October as students moved into new properties. These highlighted what could and couldn't be recycled along with collection day information. These could also be useful for low recyclers who are confused about recycling collection days. This tactic was requested by green credentials focus groups as a good reminder – for keeping the issue at the top of their mind.

Guide to Recycling for Students

One of the findings of the focus groups was that students were already inundated with leaflets from pubs, clubs and takeaways - and consequently a leaflet from the Council would be highly likely be lost or ignored. A number of student attendees to the focus groups highlighted that if relevant information was presented in the form of a mini guidebook and enclosed in an envelope it would be much more likely to be looked at and read.

Southampton Solent University produced the guide which can be viewed at:

<http://portal.solent.ac.uk/support/policies-andprocedures/student-handbook/resources/student-survival-guide-2011.pdf>