

Business Recycling Case Study: South Jersey Healthcare

Organization: South Jersey Healthcare

Location: Vineland, New Jersey

Number of Employees: Approximately 3,000—made up of hospital staff from Bridgeton, Elmer, and Regional Medical Centers, various outpatient facilities, and volunteers from each.

Amount of paper recovered for recycling in 2008: 210 tons

Paper Grades Recovered for Recycling: direct mail, catalogs, old magazines (OMG), telephone books, office paper, and old newspapers (ONP)

Why was the Program Established?

In August of 2007 South Jersey Healthcare (SJH) employees voiced an interest in improving the organization's recycling program. Benchmarking and analysis laid the ground work for a new recycling initiative to improve paper, plastic, and glass recycling. The Environmental Services Department established a consortium with community businesses and the Cumberland County Improvement Authority to share "best practices" for recycling. The Environmental Services Department was challenged to not only implement the program, but also act as champions for the project. Personnel and other resources were allocated to help ensure a smooth implementation. Additional recycling champions were recruited from other departments to help raise awareness and excitement and to disseminate information.

The project was implemented in three phases.

- Phase One: distributed recycling containers for plastic, glass, aluminum, and tin to all staff lounges, report rooms, meeting rooms, utility rooms, cafeteria dish rooms for patient trays, and dining rooms.
- Phase Two: placed recycling containers for confidential paper at every nurse's station, in the medical records department, and in all areas where confidential paper might be generated.
- Phase Three: introduced the use of recycling containers for non-confidential office paper, direct mail, catalogs, old magazines, telephone books, and old newspapers in the nurses' stations, hospital and clinic lobbies, the mailroom, and outside of conference centers and offices. Each department was also given a 32-gallon container for staff to empty their desk-side recycling bins into.

To raise awareness and excitement, contests were held to promote the environmental and economic benefits of the new recycling program. These contests recognized the opportunity for improvement related to the amount of waste being generated, and the environmental and cost benefits to increased collection of recyclables. In August 2007 SJH also announced a big, hairy, audacious goal (BHAG) of increasing paper recovery by 50 percent by the end of 2008. The staff was educated through presentations,

flyers, information booths outside the cafeterias, and videos that promoted the environmental and economic benefits of recycling.

As a direct result of the recycling program and employee education, SJH reduced the amount of material sent to the landfill by **100 tons** in one year.

SJH far surpassed its big, hairy, audacious goal by increasing paper recovery by approximately 91 percent during the same time period. The recycling program saved the organization more than \$25,000 in waste disposal fees in 2008.

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How is the program administered?

The program is administered by the Environmental Services Department and the South Jersey Healthcare (SJH) Waste Reduction Team, the Green Team. All recyclables are collected by the housekeeper (custodial staff) assigned to each department and put into 32-gallon containers. The containers are then taken to the loading dock for collection by the hauler.

How are employees educated?

The South Jersey Healthcare (SJH) senior leadership and board of directors were the first to be educated on the potential fiscal and environmental benefits of recycling and the specifics of the proposed program. With their support and commitment, departmental leadership was educated with presentations, posters, and various media. A “No Waste Challenge” contest, designed to publicize the new recycling initiative, was also launched.

Further, the Environmental Services Department sponsors Environmental Services Week to educate SJH employees about the recycling program. Displays outside of cafeterias provide recycling information and encourage participation. The recycling initiative is a vital part of SJH’s corporate culture, and new employees are introduced to the program during orientation to ensure their commitment to the company-wide initiative.

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How have improvements been measured?

Each month Environmental Services Department monitors the volume of recyclables in proportion to the total amount of waste. That information is compared to previous months’ ratios to evaluate the benefit realized. The cost effectiveness is also calculated and compared to the cost of the improvement initiated to ensure that it is fiscally sound. The amount of recyclables collected is monitored with spreadsheets and graphs to measure the volumes and cost savings. The monthly recycling information is shared with senior managements, directors, managers, and staff for continued improvement.

Program improvements are evaluated through employee focus groups at staff and shared governance council meetings, where individuals can voice the benefits or

disadvantages of any modifications to the program. After evaluation, Green Team determines whether to permanently adopt any suggested program changes.

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What partnerships have been formed?

The Green Team, a partnership of senior leadership, management, and staff, addresses environmental concerns, waste reduction, hazardous material removal, and recycling within the organization. This group communicates regularly with department heads to disseminate information on program changes and/or improvements.

Partnerships have also been formed with local businesses and the county's Improvement Authority in order to ensure SJH's efforts are coordinated and in keeping with the local community recovery efforts. The Director of the Cumberland County Improvement Authority is a member of the Green Team and acts as a liaison to other community-based businesses by sharing recycling best practices.

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Additional Resources

- Cumberland County Improvement Authority [link to: <http://www.ccia-net.com/home.htm>]

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