

eauc case study

CLASSIFICATION:
Waste
SUB CLASSIFICATION:
Operational

TITLE:

Implementing a Compulsory Recycling Scheme at the University of St Andrews

DATE:

October 2007

INSTITUTION PROFILE

HE

6808 FTE students

1804 staff

Rural

180 buildings

SUMMARY

The University of St Andrews implemented a compulsory in-house recycling scheme for staff and students. Working closely with the local authority they undertook a rationalisation process of external bins and uplifts and are making £100K per annum savings. Initially the scheme covered paper, cardboard, glass, aluminium cans, and plastic and now deals with office clearouts and refurbishments.

EAUC COMMENT

This is an excellent example of how a combination of partnership working and senior management support can actively influence a change in culture within an organisation.



PROJECT PARTNERS

University of St Andrews
Local Authority Fife Council
Scottish Waste Aware Group (SWAG)
Glasdon (recycling bins)
Smith Anderson (paper recycling service and bins)

THE PROBLEM

There were a number of problems associated with the way in which waste was being managed, including:

- A lack of accurate information on the numbers and sizes of bins allocated to each building and the number of uplifts received;
- Increasing costs for disposing of waste;
- Too much material was being thrown in the bin by staff and students when it could have been reused or recycled; and
- Fly-tipping from local businesses.

THE APPROACH

An audit of existing bins and uplifts was undertaken. The local authority provided external bins and uplifts free of charge. A paper bin was given to each employee and one or two general waste bins were allocated per office. Recycling bins were provided in main social areas. Students in self catering accommodation were given recycling boxes and bags and take these to an external recycling point. Paper was collected from student rooms in halls, and recycling bins were placed in kitchen areas. Wherever possible, external bins were removed, downsized or shared. Uplifts were reduced and a campaign was set up in partnership with SWAG.

GOALS

The main objective was to reduce the amount of commercial waste, construction and green waste being disposed to landfill, other goals included:

- Developing a waste data system with information on numbers of bins per building, size of bins, number/days of uplifts;
- Reducing the cost of waste disposal;
- Reducing the amount of waste being disposed of to landfill;
- Changing behaviour of staff and students.

OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

- Additional work for cleaners
- Getting support from cleaners and janitors
- Getting buy-in from staff
- Collection and handling of glass bottles inside buildings
- Staff continuing to place recyclable material in general waste bins
- Removed everyone's general waste bin and gave them a larger paper bin that didn't need to be emptied every day.
- Involved them from the start. They identified problems with different buildings and where bins should be located.
- Made it as easy as possible, undertook a trial and made changes before applying to other buildings.
- Removed risk by not placing glass recycling bins inside buildings. The Local Authority empties glass bins located outside buildings.
- Cleaners were given post-it notes to place on bins saying it would not be emptied until the material was removed.

PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

The University of St Andrews changed the way over 5000 people (those working and living in the University) deal with their waste. In the first academic year waste costs fell by around £100K (from an estimate of £300K/annum) and 22% of waste material was being recycled (excluding composting). In the previous year Scotland recycled 21% of municipal waste (including compost). A strong relationship with Fife Council was developed and the profile of Estates was raised across the University. Recycling uplifts are now provided for office clearouts, refurbishments and for other wastes such as mattresses and furniture.

LESSONS LEARNT

Commitment from senior management is essential for institutional wide change. If Estates departments are bold enough and have the leadership support from senior management they can influence the behaviour of the rest of the institution by changing the way they provide their services. Other lessons learned include:

- Providing clear simple instructions;
- Empowering staff to make change happen;
- Communicating the successes and failures of the project - be honest;
- Making things as easy as possible;
- Being flexible, every building is different; and
- Involving others it is essential that support services take the lead and own the system being implemented.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Fife Council
www.fife.gov.uk



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