



# Behaviour Change Tools for Workplace Recycling

It's plain good sense to recycle and the recycling system is in place. So why is the oil soaked pizza box, with dried cheese, in the recycling box and the glass bottle in the rubbish bin? And how can that behaviour be changed?

Bringing about behaviour change is very difficult, even with sound reasons for the change and the systems to help it. People respond to different messages, hold different values and have different levels of knowledge, so one method of inducing change won't work for everyone.

Behaviour change is a long-term project, and waste in particular is high maintenance; it cannot be 'automated' like some aspects of energy and water use (with sensors, low flow fixtures). Successful waste management and recycling relies entirely on people, from staff to cleaners, being aware of, understanding, being willing to participate in and knowing how to use the systems.

What is the culture in your workplace? How large and widespread is it? Do people respond to 'green' messages, cost saving messages or efficiency messages? Do they care at all about recycling? The answers to these questions will inform the solution that has everyone 'buy in' to the workplace recycling system.

The work of three leading behaviour change thinkers can help people to change what they do. Doug Mackenzie-Mohr is noted for his work on community based social marketing; David Engwicht focuses his behaviour change theory and practice on traffic taming and street reclaiming; and Fran Peavey developed the concept of strategic questioning.

Community based social marketing targets the specific behaviour changes required (knowing what to put into each bin and remembering to do it, rather than just 'recycle'); identifies barriers and benefits (e.g. the barrier of forgetting will need a prompt); develops strategies such as making recycling more attractive; runs a pilot; fine tunes and then rolls out the full scheme.

Mackenzie Mohr stresses that we cannot assume what the barriers are. They should be unearthed by observation, group discussions with specific questions and surveys that will distinguish participants from non-participants. He then specifies the types of tool to bring down specific barriers.

David Engwicht believes that change is an emotional journey, not a rational one. He suggests triggering change through play and celebration, not work.

Fran Peavey's strategic questioning creates a dynamic conversation with options. It is empowering and opens up people to what they might come to know. It uses many types of questions but usually not those

**AVOID • REDUCE • REUSE • RECYCLE**

[www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au](http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au) or call 08 8204 2051



that ask 'why?'. Visioning questions might include 'How would you like it to be?' and change questions could include 'Who can make a difference?' and 'How did those changes come about?'

The work of behaviour change and embedding the system as part of normal business in your workplace is up to you and your colleagues.

'(Behaviour change is) like dancing - you don't come up to someone doing salsa, and insist they do a waltz with you. I think it's the same with people's behaviour. Meet them in the middle, then move from there.'

- paraphrased from a message to Fostering Sustainable Behaviour listserv.

**Further Information: [www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au](http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au)**

**AVOID • REDUCE • REUSE • RECYCLE**

[www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au](http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au) or call 08 8204 2051