

Recycling: Making it Work

by Gary Spaulding
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To remain competitive and viable, Fremont companies must adopt sustainable practices like recycling, paperless communication and water conservation. In fact, Time Magazine reports that, “the best companies can use the environment to do more than just stay competitive: they can use it to crush the competition.” (Walsh, 2007)

dB Control, a local defense manufacturer, started recycling as a way to give back to the community and build a responsible reputation. The initial process revealed challenges that other companies launching sustainable practices may face, including:

- Employees confuse recycling bins with regular garbage cans, despite large labels
- Lack of cooperation from the janitorial service (i.e., they put all garbage – including recycling bin contents – into the same bag/dumpster)
- Employees unknowingly shred non-confidential papers and toss them in shred bins, resulting in recycling bins with almost no paper

Whether your business is an administrative office, a manufacturing facility or a retail chain, there are a number of things you can do to encourage employees to willingly adopt new recycling guidelines, including:

- Have managers and supervisors speak to their staff about the importance of recycling. It helps if this is presented as an upbeat discussion instead of a lecture.



- Increase the number of recycling bins around the facility/office/store.
- Ensure that recycling bins are properly labeled (i.e., paper, cardboard, aluminum, glass, plastic).
- Regularly touch base with the janitorial company to ensure they are separating the recyclables from regular garbage.
- Suggest to employees that they take home their aluminum cans and plastic bottles so that they can collect the deposit themselves. Or encourage them to recycle by announcing that the money received from lunchroom recycling bins will be donated to charity.
- Offer additional recycling receptacles (i.e., batteries and fluorescent light bulbs) and allow employees to add their own batteries and bulbs from home.

It's also important to partner with companies who help green the supply chain. In dB Control's case, we work with hazardous materials companies that carefully dispose of materials we use in the manufacturing process, such as vacuum pump oil, cleaners, solvents and more. In fact, many of these materials are distilled, cleaned and then safely resold as reclaimed materials. If you'd like to learn more about how your company can start the recycling process, consult the city of Fremont's list of recycling services.

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