

SKINNING A CAT THE GISBORNE WAY

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This paper outlines the Gisborne District Council behavioural change programme that accompanied the introduction of kerbside recycling last year. Details of the programme's components will be provided by way of presentation.

What Was The Cat Like?

Seven years ago our cat was a dog. So we produced a waste management strategy. It proved to be ahead of where both Council and the community at large were at. As a result any progress was stilted.

Three years later we had the opportunity to split a job position and in so doing developed a predominantly waste education part time role. This allowed us to progress our information delivery programme.

We decided right from the outset that education was not just about delivering information, it was actually about changing attitudes and behaviour. The first step was to facilitate community review of the solid waste component of this strategy. This took a year of intensive work and revealed a strong body of opinion in favour of minimising waste.

Alongside this, city residents were pushing for improved recycling facilities, Council was contemplating how to deal with drop off centres, which were being regularly abused and were in need of upgrading and the city landfill was filling rapidly.

So our dog had become a fairly mangy looking cat.

Do Cats Really Prefer Chef?

We are told that cats prefer Chef, but we don't actually know that they do until they decide to give it a go and then carry on eating it after that. But we needed to know that Gisborne people would all give recycling a go before we gave them the opportunity to prove it.

So we needed to get consumer buy in. How did we do that? Well, firstly we continued the dialogue from the strategy review.

Two surveys were carried out, along with publicity and information. The first produced a clear edict for kerbside recycling, even if this resulted in an increase in rates of up to \$20 a year. The second survey reinforced the first survey and also agreed, with a lessor majority, to associated refuse collection user charges (Appendix 1).

So the cat was saying "Change me" and we had produced an expectation that we would. All that was left for us was to help the cat to change, even though we knew that parts of it were not really willing.

Where To Start

We were starting from, at this stage, a reasonable knowledge base. This had been built up over several years and intensified in an increasing manner over the previous year or so. However, there was also a fairly low participation rate in recycling activities. Our objective was to obtain a sustained 90% participation in recycling from people who were happy to do this, thus presenting a spring board for further changes in managing waste.

Limitations

Before the strategy review commenced we had a very small budget and a small staff resource base of less than half of a person. There was also a poor image of the Council, a poor public image of waste and a poor Council image of waste.

Over the period of the strategy review and subsequent survey, our information, publicity and dialogue resulted in a slightly improving image of Council and waste. Also the budget was increased to \$30,000 and by rearranging priorities an increase in staff resources was obtained.

Using a team as opposed to an individual was considered important. Four people with differing personality traits were assigned to varying degrees to this project. Significantly three were women and all four had some degree of peacock in them.

The People's Choice

It was clear that what we were promoting was in fact a life style change. We wanted people to make a choice and we knew what we wanted that choice to be. This would be an inconvenience to them and some effort both in thought and in action would be required.

So why would they make such a choice? It is clear that most people consciously or sub consciously consider "What's in this for me". If there's nothing in it for them very few will make the choice that we would wish them to make.

So we considered the reasons – the what's in it for me's – we thought the Gisborne populace might change their behaviour. These were:

- ◆ Financial
- ◆ Environmental
- ◆ Wanting to be a team player

(a) Financial

The option we wished people to choose should preferably be cheaper than other options. If this was not possible then it should be close to the same price. Whilst our survey had shown that those responding were willing to pay up to \$20 extra for a kerbside recycling service, there was pressure coming for increases in rates in other areas. If we wished to obtain a high level of participation we also needed to get buy in from those who had not responded to the survey, who may be unwilling to spend that extra money.

(b) Environmental

In general people like to think that they're playing their part to either not cause further degradation of the environment or in some cases improving it. However this can often be conceptual and not result in action if any sort of behavioural change is required.

(c) **Team Player**

A significant number of people like to be considered a team player. If they like what is happening and feel that their participation is important they won't want to let the team down.

The reverse is true for all of these issues. People won't make the choice we wish them to make because of time, bother, cost, an anti Council feeling of them and us, or a feeling of being irrelevant to the overall scheme of things.

Basis Of The Programme

(a) **Vision**

Discontent → Better way → Pathway → Commitment

◆ **Discontent**

We clearly reflected back to the community their discontent with the current behaviour and environment. This had already been accepted by them and was being reinforced.

◆ **Better way**

We again reflected back to the community an expanded vision of what they wanted to change to.

◆ **Pathway**

The pathway was developed, integrated into a programme and released in stages. Critical parts of that programme were released at the beginning. The intention was that these, together with the picture of discontent and the vision of a better way, would lead to commitment by the majority of people.

(b) **Creating Change**

Awareness → Attitude → Behaviour

Prior to the review of the strategy there was a high level of awareness of waste minimisation amongst a small number of the populace. These were essentially some children and those interested in waste management matters. Through the period of strategy review, surveys and subsequent early educational work, awareness in waste minimisation grew. The challenge was to turn this awareness into an attitude which would then result in behavioural change.

We wanted to create urgency. Our waste education programme had been running for many years and we wanted to create an urgency so that participation in kerbside recycling would be significant. To do this we created an expectancy and then intensified our attitude change programme. Behavioural change education followed in the four weeks prior to the introduction of kerbside recycling. Positive reinforcement of behaviour was introduced throughout the months following, to ensure sustained change.

(c) **Components**

There are traditionally three components of behavioural change programmes. These are economic, education and regulation. We believe that facilities/services are also a critical part of any behavioural change programme and so we pursued all four of these aspects in tandem.

◆ **Economic**

Providing clear financial implications of different behaviours. Kerbside recycling is paid for as part of rates as is a certain volume of rubbish. After that it's 85 cents per 5 kg. We calculated that with landfilling operating on a total user charge basis, continuing a refuse collection as is would cost ratepayers up to \$8 a year more than the proposed dual system; provided that is, refuse was limited to 5 kg/week.

◆ **Education**

Providing clear messages, reasons to behave in a certain way and "peer pressure". Multi-method delivery of messages designed for target groups.

◆ **Regulation**

Providing easy to understand punitive measures. No sticker, no rubbish collection. Dumped rubbish \$100 fine.

◆ **Services**

Inform everyone what service is being provided and why, having incorporated their useful suggestions and where possible resolved their concerns.

It's no coincidence, no I tell a lie, it is a coincidence that the first letter of each of these components almost spells EARS. Well at least it sounds the same! Anyway, listening and ensuring that people feel that they have been heard is an over-riding aspect of these components.

Programme

(a) **Sound Data**

Data had been kept from a number of WAP surveys and other information gathered over several years. Further information was gathered throughout the process that enabled feedback to the public, to act as an incentive for ongoing participation and also to measure the success of the programme. Sound data was also essential to gaining Council's commitment and ongoing support. Financial data was particularly important, so that people could compare options.

(b) **Council Commitment**

We obtained Council decisions at each stage of the programme planning process. This avoided any possible veering from our stated intention as implementation neared. As part of this we needed to keep the Councillors well informed. Therefore, not only did we provide reports to Council meetings, but we supplied information packs and letters to the Councillors individually. When they had queries, questions or anything appeared in the media we would approach them directly to answer and address any issues they had.

Council staff were also targeted as they are influential in number and position in the community. Staff and politicians needed to be enthusiastic.

(c) **Commitment to Services and Incentives**

A process for confirming services and charges was determined more than six months prior to implementation. Once confirmed, a detailed implementation programme was drawn up and committed to by Council management and staff. Whilst it was important to have a fixed programme, some flexibility was necessary to deal with such challenges as multi-residence properties.

(d) **Well Informed Public, Users and Children**

To ensure behavioural change, those we wanted to participate needed to be well informed. This was a significant part of our programme designed to change attitudes which would then lead to behavioural change.

Group meetings were offered to any group, small and large, to explain the proposed changes and get feedback.

Key players and target groups were also identified and spoken to.

General and targeted pamphlet and leaflet drops ensured a regular flow on information and reinforcement of key messages. Precise timing was required for maximum impact and linking to provision of stickers, recycling bin, sample bags, magnet etc.

Enthusiastic children spread the word and encourage behavioural change probably more than any sector of our society other than TV/film/music stars. A comprehensive drama based school programme was entered into.

(e) **Positive Environment and Expectation**

The challenge was to cause people to look at the choices we wanted them to make, and Council who were asking them to make them, in a positive light, that they wanted to be involved and would play their part and be happy about it.

Delivery by women seemed to strike a chord with the public, possibly because of a connection between those who deal most with household waste.

Significant publicity of the programme beforehand and during implementation was undertaken. This involved a number of different components, *eg.* displays, posters, cartoon characters, radio publicity skits and jingle.

Part of this was continuity of message “Sort Yourself Out” and a logo.

(f) **Good Reporting Back on Successes**

It was important to feed back to participants on successes. Credible people telling their stories - people who others would identify with, someone like them. This would encourage “I am important”, “I can do it too”, “I will make a difference”.

Newspaper coverage was regular and positive over two or three months. It was important that this was from a variety of sources not just Council.

A highlight was a visit from the Minister for the Environment which was excellent for reinforcing the positive changes that were happening.

Outcome

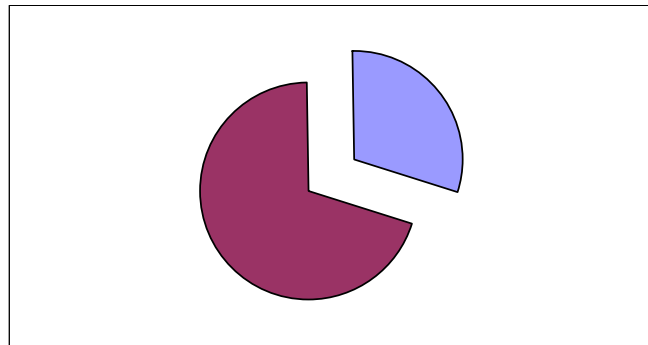
(a) What Behaviour Changed

Participation rates - A sustained participation in kerbside recycling of 80-90% averaging about 150 kg/household/year.

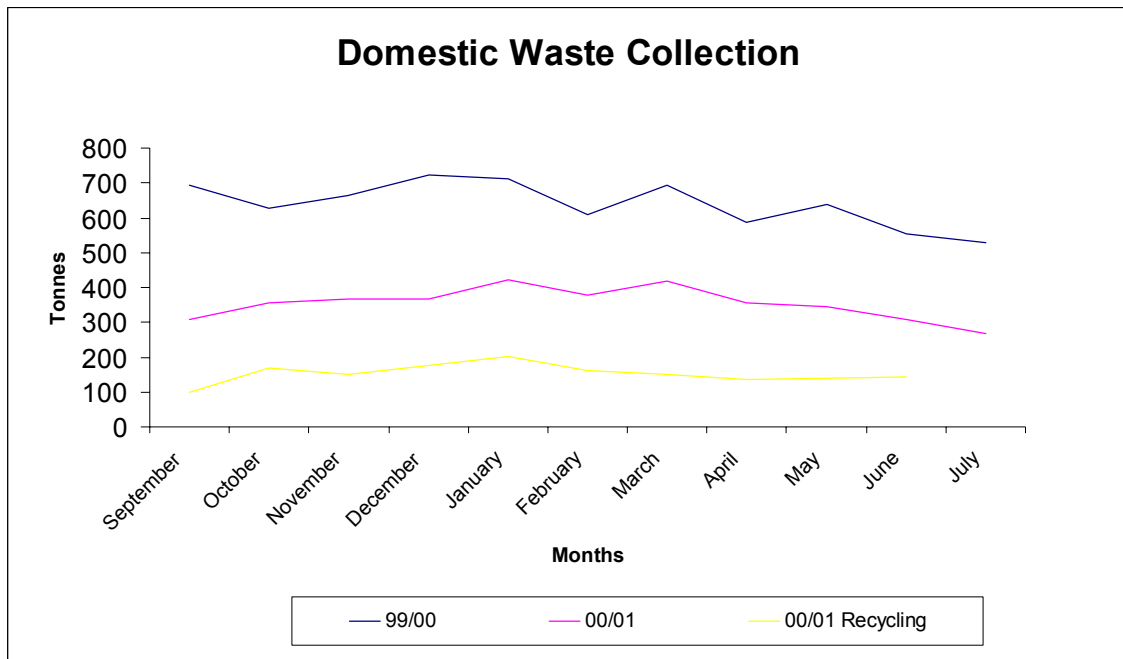
- Attitude
- Significant decrease in waste being landfilled.
 - Significant improvement in attitude to kerbside recycling, waste minimisation and to Council.
 - Comments in Council's annual performance survey demonstrating continued positive attitude.
 - General feedback continues to be positive. People whose pre-programme phone calls were received at arms length called to say they were pleasantly surprised.

(b) Results

REDUCTION IN WASTE TO LANDFILL SINCE KERBSIDE RECYCLING



WASTE COLLECTION CHANGES SINCE KERBSIDE RECYCLING



Summary

A purring cat – Success.

The opinions and views expressed in this report are those of the writers and should not be purported to necessarily be those of the Gisborne District Council.

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APPENDIX 1

SURVEY 1

What recycling system you would like to be used in Gisborne (20% response).

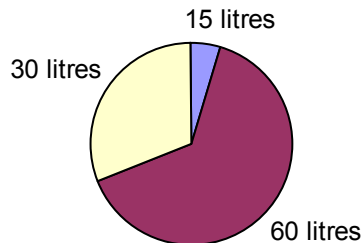
92% kerbside recycling.

SURVEY 2

How many rubbish bags funded by rates should be accepted for weekly collection when kerbside recycling collection is implemented (20% response).



What size bag did the one bag responders want.



Decision

Staff had proven that an average household actively minimising waste (through recycling, composting/worm farming etc) could reduce waste to under 15 litres/week. However as very few responders agreed, a behavioural change programme based on this would be extremely difficult.

Conversely if a 60 litre rated service were to be provided there would be little incentive to actively minimise waste.

So 30 litres was decided upon, with an initial three month period at 60 litres to prove this was possible.