

CASE STUDY: COCA COLA RECYCLE ZONES

Coca Cola introduced Recycle Zones in April 2008 with its aim to establish sustainable and effective recycling initiatives in “away from home” environments.

Key facts

- There are 130 Recycle Zones.
- The total of 320 tonnes of cans and bottles recycled over the course of the project.
- The Recycle Zones was a one-off project. Although, there are no plans for a widespread introduction of new zones, a limited number will be implemented on a case by case basis.

Location

Focusing on the four key sectors of shopping centres, transport hubs, leisure attractions and hospitals, the intention for the project was to develop at least 80 Recycle Zones over the 3-year lifespan of the programme. As the project developed and gathered momentum, a further two sectors were explored for development. These were academic establishments, universities and colleges, and events.

When the project launched, the ambition was to launch 80 zones between April 2008 and March 2011. By the end of the project, a total of 130 Zones were operational, collecting over 320 tonnes of plastic bottles and soft drinks cans over the course of the project.

Rationale

The purpose of developing this program was to provide consumers who frequent locations “away from home” with an opportunity to dispose of their soft drinks packaging in a manner which would ensure that they would be diverted from landfill and recycled. As Coca Cola produces a lot of packaging waste, the company felt a responsibility to provide an option for some of the packaging to be recycled, therefore the idea of Recycle Zones was developed.

At the time the scheme was implemented, there were very few Recycling on The Go (RotG) facilities in place, therefore Coca Cola felt they could they do something in this arena to work towards. They aimed to show how a certain scheme in a certain environment could work. They wanted to try and test it, see what the pitfalls were then others can follow suit going forward after the programme.

Scheme overview

The Recycle Zone project was a collaborative venture, led and fronted by Coca-Cola Enterprises Ltd (CCE). CCE was responsible for developing the project logo, visuals and all of the press and media releases which happened as a result of new locations engaged with the project. As lead partners for the project, CCE was the major investor of finance into the program. The project was also partnered by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). WRAP injected funding towards the development of the project, and leant support. WRAP also provided access to all of the standardised iconography to be used through the Recycle Now programme as and when a new location became a Recycle Zone. Through the use of this iconography coupled with a project branded logo, the program became the first branded recycling initiative in Great Britain. Responsibility for implementing the actual Zone at any of the locations rested with Recoup who were also responsible for visiting sites and

feeding back any issues, i.e. with contamination or signage.

The primary focus for the scheme was the collection of soft drinks packaging, namely plastic bottles and beverage cans. In a number of implementations, the scheme was widened to incorporate the collection of paper and cardboard.

Planning

The project concentrated its development in the following key sectors: academia, leisure attractions, NHS, shopping centres, transport hubs, workplaces, and outdoor events (such as music festivals and larger sporting events).

During the initial discussions prior to implementing any of the Zones, the need to appoint a designated supplier of recycling units for each of the Zones was identified. An invitational meeting was set up in November 2007 for three of the leading suppliers of recycling units to present to the Project Team a range of their units which would be fit for purpose when installed into the locations which were being identified as potential Zones. CCE explored all of the potential suppliers and their respective products, as well as engaging with a sole supplier to assess the concept of designing a bespoke unit specifically for the project. Through this process, it became apparent that a “one unit fits all” solution was not going to be the most appropriate way of developing and implementing the project. Had the project board agreed to venture down this route, then the project would have limited itself to only developing a certain type of Zone, either internal or external.

After the meetings and discussions had taken place, the Board recommended using a range of leading suppliers, who could all provide a solution to any given scenario. Another key factor in this decision process was the fact that of the Zones which were subsequently launched, very few were similar in their size, style, geography or layout. This meant that a range of solutions was required rather than produce an “identikit” scheme that could be rolled out across every Zone.

Containers

The suppliers chosen to work alongside the Recycle Zone project were: Broxap, Glasdon UK, Linpac Environmental, Taylors and Wybone. Each of the suppliers offered a uniqueness of product, which enabled the project to develop at certain locations that would not have been possible.

Selected units from a range of sites are shown below.

Figure 1: Examples of containers



1

1. City College Plymouth RotG units
2. Royal United Hospital, Bath RotG units
3. Manchester Airport RotG unit



2



3

Signage

WRAP Recycle Now iconography is used for all the Recycle Zones.

Capital expenditure

At the start of the project, CCE had committed to investing £50,000 per annum for the 3-year duration of the project. This investment was matched with £143,000 from WRAP. As the project developed and gained wider recognition, its extension of target zones from 80 to 120 resulted in a significant injection of funds from CCE.

The project budget permitted the level of investment for each Zone to be £4,000-5,000, on the understanding that this investment is then matched by the potential partner Zone.

Collection and storage arrangements

The collection and storage arrangements for each Recycle Zone were the sole responsibility of each site. Recoup was responsible for visiting sites and feeding back information, including monitoring contamination as part of a material assessment or audit to assess the performance of the zone. When undertaking a material assessment, each of the nominated units had their contents removed, photographed (to identify the quality of the material collected), and then analysed. Any contamination found whilst undertaking the assessment would be counted and weighed to ascertain the proportion of contamination against the volume of recyclate collected. Overall, Recoup found that contamination was an issue for some sites, although not to a large extent. Through the Recycle Zone project CCE learnt quickly that you must have a general waste bin next to the RotG units to reduce contamination.

Communication

The main methods of communication for the Recycle Zones were posters next to the units and signage on the units. Local press releases were also issued for some sites. Some of the Zones have a space on host's [website](#)

For CCE, the tone of any communication used is very important. CCE feels that people do not respond to a lecturing tone or extreme environmental messaging as it is seen as too huge a problem and ultimately turns them off. CCE discovered through research, that communication needs to be tailored, sticking to messaging that is upbeat and positive and that highlights the positive effect of the consumers recycling. An example message on a poster is 'Do you realise that for every plastic bottle you recycle you get an extra 3 hours on your computer'. Displayed alongside a RotG unit, it can be a powerful way to positively engage users.

Since Recycle Zones were introduced, CCE has developed its communications to make it more obvious that it is behind the campaign. The communications are bright, vibrant and red, associating with the CCE brand. They changed following research that showed that it was not obvious that CCE was behind the Recycle Zone project. The newer communications is shown below:

Figure 4: CCE updated Recycle Zone branding



Performance, contamination and monitoring

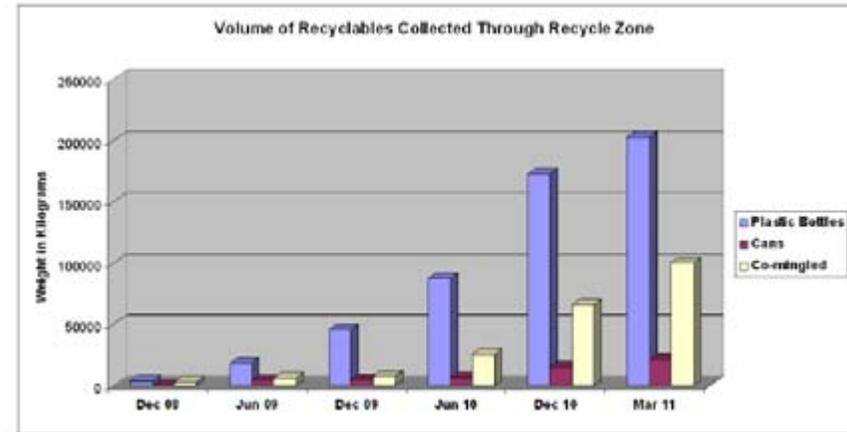
As part of the agreement to join the Recycle Zones project, every partner had to provide data based upon the volumes of material collected by their respective recycling units. To assist in the provision of data, an online reporting tool was devised to enable the easy entry of information. This information was collated and then publicised on the recycle-zone.co.uk website. Reporting the collection of cans and plastic bottles was the primary requirements for each Zone locations, though other various forms of paper were also collected at some sites,. The reason for this was that in the majority of instances, plastic bottles particularly would be the prevalent material in terms of tonnage found within a location.

Once their Zone was launched, each location was provided with a unique username and password, to enable them to log directly onto the system to report the quantities of material collected during the previous month. In the majority of instances, the waste management contractor was able to provide this information. Where this was not possible, then the information produced as part of the material assessment was used to estimate tonnage. The material assessments produced a dataset based upon the weight of a full recycling unit and extrapolated across the total number of units at a site to produce an estimated average during any given reporting period. This method was applied at a number of locations as the project progressed.

The reporting website provides a number of alternative options for entering the information, depending on whether a location has access to data from their waste contractor. Once all of the data is collected, a monthly report is circulated around the project board, indicating the latest dataset levels, broken down by each individual location and by material type.

The volume of material that each Zone would enter into the reporting website was collated and hosted upon the external facing Recycle Zone website to demonstrate the overall volumes of material that the project had facilitated for recycling (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Volume of recyclables collected over course of Recycle Zone project



Lessons learned

In CCE's experience, people are unsure which materials to place in commingled recycling units and, as a result, contaminate the units with material that cannot be accepted. As a result, CCE found that a source-segregated collection system works best. The others lessons learned by CCE were that:

- It is important to always ensure a general waste bin is placed with the recycling units to avoid contamination.
- Over-stylised or fussy units interfere with the messaging.
- There is no proof that different types of communication work better in different environments. As long as communication is clear, people will know what to do.
- Negative messages 'turn people off'. Messages need to be clear and straightforward. Communications need to be upbeat and positive to engage the public.
- Clarity of the messaging is important – simple is best, through posters nearby and on units.
- The shape of the aperture on the recycling unit is important – a slit aperture is best for paper, circle aperture for cans

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**For further information about
Recycle on the Go please visit:
www.wrapcymru.org.uk/RotG**

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