Recycle This, Not That!

SWANA 2016 Excellence Award

Awareness Campaign Excellence Award Submission
Miami-Dade County Department of Solid Waste Management

Miami, Florida
Approximate Population: 2.7 million
Cost per household Fiscal Year 2016: $0.78
Approximate Budget Fiscal Year 2016: $248,000

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Executive Summary

In 2013, in response to an increase in contamination in the department’s single-stream recycling program, the Miami-Dade County Department of Solid Waste Management (DSWM) created a marketing campaign to address residential recycling practices. DSWM’s goal was to increase awareness of proper recycling procedures.

To share this important information with Miami-Dade County residents, the department created the Recycle This, Not That! awareness campaign. The campaign’s diversified marketing approach allowed the department to educate residents about what recyclable materials are permitted in the single-stream program, while pointing out items that are not accepted or permitted in the program.

With the Recycle This, Not That! campaign’s overarching goal to increase customers’ awareness of the proper way to recycle materials, DSWM has compiled the enclosed application to submit for the SWANA Awareness Campaign Excellence Award for 2016.

Research

Since the program’s inception in 2008, participating in the DSWM single-stream curbside recycling program has become a part of residents’ daily routines. However, recycling contamination—which is the mixing of acceptable recycling materials with unacceptable materials, rendering the recyclable materials unusable—has become a local concern and an industry-wide challenge that negatively affects single-stream recycling programs.

Several years after the initial rollout of the single-stream recycling program and the corresponding marketing campaign introducing the program to customers, it was decided that a new marketing campaign should be created to address the challenges presented by the presence of contaminants in the recycling stream. Prior to the implementation of the Recycle This, Not That! campaign, research showed that 33% of all items in the recycling stream were contaminants. This research was conducted with the cooperation of the county’s recyclable materials processor, which analyzed the recycling stream to determine which items were deemed to be recyclable versus contaminants.

It was also determined that confusion about recyclable materials allowed in the program led to residents placing materials in the cart that either could not be recycled or were unacceptable in the County’s program. Several types of plastic, glass, and paper are not allowed in the program. However, the assumption that all waste that is made of those materials is recyclable caused some residents to place non-recyclable items in their carts.

Additionally, the single-stream recycling program’s closed cart system does not allow for materials in the cart to be inspected prior to being collected and sent to the processing center. Inspecting the collected recyclables prior to processing would require additional capital and labor costs that would prevent the program from operating at a sustainable level. Due to the inability to extract contaminated items from the recycling stream prior to processing, it was
determined that the best course of action to address this issue was to better educate residents, to stop the contamination at the source.

In order to make the most of available dollars and ensure that the message was displayed prominently to as many residents as possible, DSWM decided to make the campaign—titled *Recycle This, Not That!*—an integrated awareness marketing campaign.

### Planning & Goal Setting

#### Goal

DSWM’s overarching goal for the *Recycle This, Not That!* campaign is to inform residents about both proper recycling practices. Part of the reason for this is that many residents simply don’t know what specific items are and are not permitted in their recycling carts or the impact that those non-recyclable items may have on the system’s recycling equipment and the marketability of the recyclable materials.

The goal at the outset of the campaign was to achieve a 5 percent reduction in recycling contamination in the curbside single-stream recycling program. Once that goal is achieved, the continuous goal for the campaign is to maintain the reduced level of recycling contamination and continue reducing the contamination levels even further on an annual basis.

#### Target Audience

Since the DSWM single-stream recycling program is strictly for residential customers, the target audience for the campaign is primarily adult residents of Miami-Dade County who own or rent a single family home/townhouse. DSWM currently serves over 340,000 households in Miami-Dade County and participating municipalities that receive curbside recycling service.

#### Campaign Background

In 2013, DSWM created a marketing campaign to address contamination in the curbside single-stream recycling program. The initial campaign was titled *Keep Your Cart Happy*, and it outlined the acceptable recyclable items that would keep residents’ recycling carts “happy” while also pointing out items that were not recyclable in the program. During the first year of the *Keep Your Cart Happy* campaign, the recycling contamination marketing strategy was rebranded, resulting in the creation of the *Recycle This, Not That!* campaign in 2014. Although the campaign was retitled, the *Recycle This, Not That!* campaign still incorporates the *Keep Your Cart Happy* slogan in several of the campaign’s marketing pieces.
Campaign Timeline

The campaign timeline for the *Recycle This, Not That!* campaign is reevaluated on an annual basis due to budget changes from year to year. Also, different campaign components are added/removed every year to find more efficient and cost-effective ways of spreading the campaign’s message to the public.

**Campaign Components**

DSWM worked with the Miami-Dade County Communications Department to identify what types of media would provide the most impact when considering the most effective media mix to relay the *Recycle This, Not That!* message. The consultation resulted in the identification of several media that would provide the most campaign impressions, both online, in print and through traditional mass media such as radio, television and outdoor advertising. Campaign components included:

- Transit advertising
- Print advertising
- Newspaper advertising
- Television and radio advertising
- YouTube video production
- Online display banners, mobile, and search engine marketing
- Social media marketing

Work on the campaign began in 2014 for fiscal year 2015, with a subsequent renewal for fiscal year 2016.

Here is a brief description of each of the marketing components used in the campaign for fiscal year 2016:
Radio Advertisements

The Communications Department produced radio spots for the Recycle This, Not That! campaign in English, Spanish, and Creole with a game show theme (See Supplemental Information section for audio link.) These 15-second and 30-second spots inform listeners that not all items are recyclable in the DSWM curbside single-stream recycling program and provides information on how the listeners can find out more about recycling services provided by the department.

YouTube Video – Keep Your Cart Happy

The Communications Department produced 15-second and 30-second YouTube videos highlighting the Keep Your Cart Happy message (see Supplemental Information section for video link). The video shows residents placing unrecyclable items in recycling carts and the carts opening and gently tossing the items back at the residents with a message. The imagery and “talking” cart reinforce the message that unrecyclable items make their recycling carts “unhappy,” therefore emphasizing the importance of recycling the proper materials. The video was produced in both English and Spanish.

Cable Television Advertising

A 30-second Keep Your Cart Happy commercial was run on a number of top rated English and Spanish-language cable networks. The video is the same 30-second version of the YouTube video that was produced by the Communications Department.

Online Display Banners, Mobile, and Search Engine Marketing

Online banner ads were created with the Recycle This, Not That! messaging. These banner ads were placed on a broad network of news and information websites. A search engine marketing campaign was developed through Google to focus on key words associated with the campaign.

Social Media

Social media posts on Facebook (see Supplemental Information section for page link) have been “boosted” to reach a broader audience in Miami-Dade County. These posts feature photos and/or videos that showcase the Recycle This, Not That! campaign messaging to engage Miami-Dade residents who use social media frequently. The videos used are the same YouTube videos produced by the Communications Department and the photos used are the print advertisements used in the transit and newspaper campaign components.
Transit Advertising
Advertising on Miami-Dade County transit vehicles and train stations/bus stops provides a way to amass impressions from a large number of residents who use the Miami-Dade transit system on a daily basis. Full-color advertising was placed on the inside and outside of transit buses and inside buses and Metrorail cars, as well as at Metrorail stations and platforms. The advertisements were evenly distributed to cover all of the different routes in Miami-Dade County.

Newspaper Advertising
Full-color newspaper advertisements promoting the Recycle This, Not That! campaign were placed in English, Spanish and Creole-language newspapers throughout Miami-Dade County. The advertisements were placed in both county-wide and neighborhood newspapers that have subscribers in all 13 Miami-Dade County commission districts.

Content Marketing
Advertisements were created and placed in a digital network of websites so the Recycle This, Not That! messaging appeared to be similar to other content on the host webpage. This advertising took advantage of “native advertising” opportunities to spread the word about proper recycling practices on sites visited by Miami-Dade County residents.

Direct Mail
A 6”x9” direct mail postcard with the Recycle This, Not That! message was sent out as part of the fiscal year 2015 campaign. Approximately 350,000 postcards were printed, and these were mailed to every Miami-Dade County curbside single-stream recycling customer. The remaining quantities continue to be used in outreach activities.
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Budget

The campaign’s costs are related to production and placement. The promotional costs were associated with placing the ads and videos in their respective media. Although posting the videos to YouTube did not cost any money, all other aspects of ad placement had a cost.

Here is a breakdown of the cost, by campaign component, for the fiscal years 2015 and 2016 Recycle This, Not That! campaign:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Budget FY 2015</th>
<th>Budget FY 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$248,038</strong></td>
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Implementation

Obstacles

Several obstacles presented themselves during the implementation of the campaign. The first obstacle was the issue of language translation in the campaign components. Miami-Dade County is home to a diverse population, one in which many residents speak English as a second language or do not speak English at all. In order to ensure that all customers were able to access the information presented in the campaign, DSWM added Spanish and Creole translations to several marketing pieces.

Another obstacle facing the implementation of the Recycle This, Not That! campaign is the public’s desire to recycle as many materials as possible. This may not appear to be an obstacle; however, many residents place non-recyclable items in their recycling carts under the impression that DSWM can figure out a way to recycle the materials. In reality those materials end up contaminating the recycling stream, damaging the processing equipment and reducing the marketability of the recyclable materials. Developing creative ways of breaking this cycle of “wishful recycling” and educating the public on the proper ways to recycle materials posed significant challenges when planning and executing this campaign.

Recycling is a popular topic, especially in terms of media coverage and educational outreach. Many organizations provide information to the
public regarding what can and cannot be recycled; however, there is often conflicting information about what can and cannot be recycled. Making sure that the correct information is reaching the county’s recycling customers is another obstacle that the campaign has had to overcome to ensure that residents recycle properly.

Opportunities

DSWM views technology as an opportunity for expanding the campaign’s reach while reducing costs and creating more of an impact on our target audience.

The use of YouTube videos as part of the campaign emphasized the importance and power of online, mobile and social media platforms. Viewers not only absorb the information presented in the videos; they exhibit a willingness to share those videos with their network of social media followers and friends. Utilizing YouTube also made the videos accessible to county residents for as long as possible.

Social media engagement through boosted posts also leveraged technology to gain impressions from a vast network of social media followers and subscribers. The online display banners, mobile advertising, search engine marketing, and content marketing also leveraged technology, and more specifically the Internet, to ensure the Recycle This, Not That! campaign reaches as many residents as possible.

Budget vs. Costs

In the two years that the Recycle This, Not That! campaign has been used, the campaign has not gone over budget. In fiscal year 2015 the campaign had a budget of $229,038, but the campaign expenses for the year cost exactly $229,038. In fiscal year 2016, the campaign budget is $248,038, but campaign expenses for the year are $247,896.18, providing for a budget surplus of $141.82. Since its inception, the Recycle This, Not That! campaign has not had expenses exceed the budget and has not had to seek alternative sources of funding or abandon any campaign components due to budget shortfalls.

Partnerships & Collaborations

DSWM collaborates with several entities to spread the Recycle This, Not That! campaign’s message. The department partners with Dream in Green, a non-profit organization that provides workshops on energy and water conservation as well as recycling. DSWM attends the workshops to share the benefits of recycling the right materials and to give an overview of our services. Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Department also partners with Dream in Green and DSWM in holding the workshops by providing staff support and giveaway items such as energy efficient lightbulbs and water efficient shower heads.

DSWM also collaborates with the municipal governments that use the department’s recycling services. The cities/towns that use the county’s recycling services often have information sessions for residents to answer questions or address
concerns about recycling, and DSWM participates to better inform the citizens not only about their recycling services, but to make sure they are cognizant of the items that are recyclable as part of the curbside single-stream program.

DSWM staff attends dozens of events every year that feature the *Recycle This, Not That!* message, and with the support of partner organizations such as Dream in Green and the 19 municipalities that are serviced by Miami-Dade County’s single-stream recycling program, the message of recycling the correct items continues to be spread throughout the community.

**Results**

The *Recycle This, Not That!* campaign has done very well for the DSWM. A number of residents have expressed their satisfaction with the quality of the videos and advertisements, as well as the information provided.

Below are some measurable fiscal year 2016 campaign results for the months January 2016 through March 2016:

- Total reach of radio spots was 4,948,700 people listening to English, Spanish, and Creole radio stations in Miami-Dade County
- Full video views on YouTube have increased 23% (211,729 total views) since the campaign’s inception in January 2016, compared to the period prior to the campaign (October 2015 – December 2015)
- Pageviews to the DSWM home page, Recycling Webpage, and Residential Recycling Webpage increased by 20% (15,593 total pageviews), 30% (5,446 total pageviews), and 338% (11,314 total pageviews), respectively
- Social Media Outreach
  - The Facebook post of the English version of the *Keep Your Cart Happy* video reached 124,464 users, generated 1330 post clicks, 335 post likes, and 171 post shares from March 1, 2016 – March 15, 2016
  - The Facebook post of the Spanish version of the *Keep Your Cart Happy* video reached 63,032 users, generated 681 post clicks, 404 post likes, and 127 post shares from March 1, 2016 – March 15, 2016

Links to the videos mentioned above can be found on the DSWM’s website, [www.miamidade.gov/solidwaste](http://www.miamidade.gov/solidwaste). They
have been featured on the County’s portal (home page), a webpage that receives more than 200,000 unique visitors per month.

Also, in 2013, the DSWM’s recyclable materials processor, Waste Management, hired a private firm to conduct a recycling composition analysis of the department’s curbside single-stream recycling program. Prior to the implementation of the Recycle This, Not That! campaign, it was determined that 33% of all items in the recycling stream were contaminants. In a subsequent 2015 study, it was determined that 28% of all items in the county’s curbside single-stream recycling program were contaminants. We believe that the Recycle This, Not That! campaign played a significant role in the 5% decrease in recycling contamination in the program.

Evaluation

With a customer base of more than 340,000 households, the DSWM curbside single-stream recycling program serves a large portion of Miami-Dade County. Ensuring that as many customers are reached by the Recycle This, Not That! campaign is a daunting task; however, it is a challenge that the department took in earnest.

The department learned that by integrating different marketing media into the campaign and creating messages in the three languages most spoken in the county, it ensured that the Recycle This, Not That! message reached every corner of Miami-Dade County. From radio spots to cable television commercials, print ads to social media posts, every option was explored in crafting this multifaceted campaign. In the end, the campaign paid dividends as the percentage of contamination in the curbside single-stream recycling program decreased after the campaign was introduced. With the ability to measure the number of people reached by the campaign, as well as the decrease in contaminants in the recycling program, it is plainly evident that the Miami-Dade County Department of Solid Waste Management’s Recycle This, Not That! awareness campaign is worthy of winning the 2016 SWANA Awareness Campaign Excellence Award.
Supplemental Information

Recycle This, Not That! “Game Show” radio advertisements (English and Spanish versions):
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d7l17wbkiit7eow/AAC5YPh3xDGmE5DzwWrRm-Rqa?dl=0

Keep Your Cart Happy YouTube Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thmz6XoJveE

Miami-Dade County Department of Solid Waste Management Facebook Page:
http://www.facebook.com/MiamiDadeSolidWaste