

Practical communication on waste

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Ideas and conclusions from the RECO project
regarding awareness raising and communication
to change behaviour

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Introduction

Association of municipalities in Stockholm County (KSL) through the Regional Committee for Waste Management (RASK) participates in the international project RECO (Regional Cooperation on Waste Management in the Baltic Sea Region).

A part of the project, to which KSL contributes, deals with “Public Awareness”, but we have also contributed with knowledge from our regional waste investigation.

Work with “Public Awareness” have included the following:

- A regional cooperative website, Återvinningscentralen – Recycling centre (www.atervinningscentralen.se). The website has one external part directed towards citizens that presents in-depth information on what happens with waste after it has been disposed of by citizens. Another part of the website is internal and functions as a working page within RASK.
- A study on the development of waste information in Stockholm County. This work has resulted in a report that in a simple and easy-to-grasp way presents waste information in Stockholm County and which waste management activities that led to the establishment of the current system.
- Workshops where waste communicators and waste managers from municipalities develop conceptual approaches to how communication should be shaped in order to meet the changing circumstances.

Intention with this report is to present the outcomes of the aforementioned work.

The results of our experiences were partially communicated in the handbook that was developed in the RECO project and partially during the international conference in Riga in 2006.

Starting points for waste communication

Waste is a municipal matter

Household waste since long time ago has been responsibility of municipalities. Waste management has changed from waste collection to source separation and recycling. The municipal waste organisations were therefore one of the first public entities that started approaching citizens with information. Trust to municipalities has been high during a long period of time.

Waste management is in continuous change but it is still important that municipality as communicator signals trust and credibility!

.. but with many private actors

The shift in the municipal waste management towards procurement of waste management services has created the market for many privately and publicly owned entrepreneurs within both transport and waste treatment sectors.

Several actors have surfaced after introduction of the extended producer responsibility. They do not have the same goal as the municipal waste management, but are largely driven by national legislation and collection targets, which are to be met at the lowest possible cost.

Municipalities have no responsibility for waste from industries, but many types of waste from some industries that are similar to household waste, e.g. from offices and smaller businesses, are anyway treated as waste flows within the municipal system.

Private citizens and even political leaders often have difficulties to distinguish between these different actors. This means that despite the allocation of responsibility to producers (manufacturers) and businesses possible flaws in the system will affect the way municipalities respond to legislation, to companies under producer responsibility and to citizens.

.. and with changing legislation

Waste management legislation has been drastically developing during several last decades. EU directives within waste management area or related fields have been continuously introduced. Furthermore, strategic documents directed at or related to waste issues have also been designed and implemented.

EU directives and other initiatives that in various ways affect waste area are later transposed into the Swedish legislation.

In many cases these laws steer for what type of waste collections system should be developed.

.. and changing users and societal structures

Urbanisation

Urbanisation is taking place at the global scale. This leads to problems with finding physical space for waste management, both at single house, city district, municipality and regional levels.

How do we find place for recycling – both collection, sorting and recycling of materials – and how the system can support the required behaviour?

Individualisation and regional citizens

Development leads to that our citizens move around in larger spaces and nowadays they are much more citizens of a region than citizens of a city or a municipality. Too big differences in public service systems make it difficult for them to understand how the system works, to see their role in it and to take responsibility. From the perspective of citizens the originally local waste issues have become regional!

The level of citizens' knowledge is also growing. This also contributes to the demand that the society in the long run should be sustainable from environmental, economic and social viewpoint. Demands on service suppliers to respond to this demand are also increasing. In this case, the society should be ready to provide a waste management system that will be appropriate for the development of the sustainable society.

At the same time we also witness the increase in demand for personal freedom and for the high level of services that can support the comfortable life. Thus, "someone else" should ensure that my life is sustainable.

Inhabitants are "responsible individualists", who live in one municipality, work in another one, travel in the third one and have summer house in the fourth. This also affects the demand for waste management system and those responsible for solving all the problems. As a consequence, the demand for communication regarding waste management issues is also growing.

Consumption patterns

Urbanisation and individualisation influence the thinking and purchasing patterns of individuals in the society and lead to changes in consumption patterns. We consume more food in restaurants and pre-processed food, which shifts a large part of organic waste from households to restaurants and food processing industry. We consume also more products. When it comes to electronics and cloth, consumption levels have not changed much in Sweden in recent decades. However, such products as furniture, kitchen and bathroom furnishing have shorter and shorter lifespans.

Waste management system should therefore far-sightedly adapt to the changing consumption patterns.

.. which requires continuous change of activities

Legislation, individuals' responsibility and their demands on the society, consumption behaviour and waste production are still in the process of change. Likewise, the way public sector provides services to citizens have changed towards higher level of procuring services.

Both authorities and customers place higher and higher demands on waste to be managed in a sustainable manner, from social, environmental and economic perspectives.

Society has also become more and more technology-oriented, even in the way services are provided. Technological progress provides both new ways for dealing with produced waste, but also gives rise to new complex products that with time should also be treated and recycled.

All together, these factors lead to that waste management activities need to be adjusted to the increasing amount of diverse needs and demands. Communication therefore is at the core of the system that is able to meet all these demands.

.. which should fulfil many different goals – many unfortunately conflicting or unproductive

There are many goals at different levels in society put up and pursued by various actors. But do they coincide? Are there measures that contribute to fulfilment of environmental, social and economic goals? Do they satisfy individuals, society at large and businesses?

The answer is both yes and no. There exist many goals within society's various sectors, which in different ways support or counteract the development of waste management system. There are also many goals and policy instruments directed towards waste sector that do not coincide with one another or have effects that are not at all desirable, but still influence the way the waste system is shaped and functions.

Waste management system should take all these issues into consideration in its development in order to fulfil the requirements of the society, businesses and individuals in the best way possible.

It becomes more and more clear that the technology part of the waste sector in itself is not sufficient for meeting the demands. Not even increase in knowledge or information is sufficient. The only way forward is the increased integration and interaction between technical/logistical solutions and communication that could help create behaviour that supports sorting and recycling of waste.

Reflections on how waste communication can lead to behavioural change

How should we then address the use of the system, the customer and the citizen in this time of significant changes?

Earlier, information was steered primarily by *Legislation* and the *Technical system for waste management*.

But it becomes more and more important to consider the *Individual in the waste system*.

The role of users in the waste management system has increased and they are the most important link. Without the engagement or at least correct behaviour waste management becomes a costly enterprise and it is difficult to reach all the set goals even if technology has been developed at the unprecedented pace. The technological development should have as its starting point people's behaviour – the system should be more and more homogeneous and built up for long term performance so that the weakest link – humans – does not break.

Since every person on an average day becomes the target of more than 5 000 commercial messages, it is difficult to reach out with public information in this media noise. Together with increasing informational stress, the fragmentation of communication channels is also growing and scepticism towards advertising is on the increase. Therefore, it is important to reflect upon which channels are most effective and most credible.

We have to find new ways to reach out to our target groups and it is important to analyse what happens in the surrounding world, i.e. beyond the waste sector, and learn from it. How commercial marketing is conducted? How will individuals behave in the future and who will they listen to?

Below several reflections that everybody working with waste should consider are presented:

Differentiate between informing, raising awareness and changing behaviour

To raise awareness means to reach a person through various means with information so that the message is received.

- Knowledge
- Attitude
- Behaviour

The message should not be contradictory and should be formed so that it supports and develops existing values and knowledge.

People do not change behaviour just because they are aware. Therefore various types of triggers and incentives should be introduced as well. In order for the behavioural change to be permanent there is a need for repetition of actions.

In order to change behaviour, one needs knowledge, one should have positive attitude and one should in all possible ways facilitate behavioural change of the target group!!

Technical system and information should be seen as one system

The technical system and informational processes, raising awareness and changing behaviour are all parts of the same system, which should be treated in its entirety. *The chain will always be stronger than its weakest link* and it is devastating if the technical system sends out signals controversial to the messages in the communication process.

Therefore, systems development should go hand in hand with user behaviour. *It is impossible to communicate well about bad system!!!* Rather the system should adapt to how the user could be persuaded to act in the long run.

See also the region as a system

Producers of waste, i.e. all individuals, have been affected by globalisation and we, besides becoming citizens of the world, have also lost the feeling of solidarity and belonging to a small community we live in. We live in a different way than before and move over larger spaces and travel longer distances. Already today it is normal to live in one municipality (i.e. from the waste system organisational perspective), work in another one, have summer house in the third, and travel on vocation to the forth place. It is feasible that this regionalisation of our daily space is going to increase even more.

Since the development of the waste management system should start with individual behaviour, it is important that waste treatment and related processes are *not* seen as local phenomenon. Cooperation is needed early on in the process with regard to language, message and the development of collection system, so that citizens and users do not enter many different systems, various languages and messages that they have to relate to when they move over organisational borders.

Harmonisation is also needed when it comes to how the system is shaped at our working places where we spend the largest portion of our lives.

Technical development provides signals – make use of them!

Signal language is important. Waste trucks, recycling stations and other parts of the technical collection and treatment system are visible to the users, i.e. individual citizens.

In order to maintain trust it is important that every link of the collection chain sends the same message. By using confusing language and conflicting signals we will not get a well functioning sorting system. Instead its credibility will be questioned, whether for example sorted waste fractions are really treated separately and recycled.

One example of how the waste system was not seen in its entirety comes from how collection of glass is unfortunately carried out in many places in Sweden.

The containers, where people sort coloured and clear glass, are emptied into the same truck, but to different compartments, which are not visible from outside. Therefore many people think that different glass fractions are mixed and thus the language of signals gives wrong impression. This gives rise to the word of mouth communication from one individual to another one that there is no point in sorting glass and thus credibility and willingness to take responsibility are drastically reduced.

An easy way to address the problem would be to paint the truck bed in two colours (the same as the containers inside the truck) to give a signal that glass is actually deposited into separate compartments even during transportation.



Example of the signal language demonstrating that sorted fractions are not mixed during transportation

By using technical systems in the right way and by shaping them so that they clarify how the entire waste system functions, it is possible to establish connection with users and thereafter work on how users trust and sustainable behaviour can be enforced. One positive example is to allow the users who separate organic waste use the final product – compost – for their home and garden use or to use the biogas from composting as fuel for cars. It should also be clearly visible that the waste truck is driven by biogas produced from waste.

In order to maintain trust in the waste system, we should also see to that those who do not want to maintain good quality of waste sorting do not destroy efforts of others. It could be made so that unsorted waste is a bit easier to dispose of than sorted waste, so that there is not temptation to put unsorted waste together with the sorted fractions. The positive feedback that is needed to stimulate sorting in this case should be done in a different way, even though *it should be easy to do the right thing*.

What do you want to achieve?

The waste sector was in focus of the environmental policy since many years. As a consequence, it is nowadays expected that the waste sector on its own or with the help of the developed economic or regulatory instruments will be able

to deal with many problems that actually depend on the lifestyle developed in the more and more globalised world.

Waste management is the last phase in the lifecycle of products and although in some cases waste through recycling can receive a new life, this requires that the right circumstances are developed in society. This means, among other things, that there is demand for recycled material, that products that are designed are possible to recycle and that there is a sufficient incentive structure for the final user to sort waste and dispose it of to the right recycling flow. Some of these prerequisites can and should of course be supported and facilitated by, among other things, economic and regulatory policy instruments for the waste sector, but others can never be reached if these instruments are not applied also in other lifecycle phases of products.

Within the EU and Swedish legislation there has been ungrounded belief in that steering instruments for waste management will affect product design and consumption patterns of population. As was mentioned before, this is only possible if the used instruments steer towards the same goal and are applied to other phases of lifecycle.

Many of the instruments used in the waste sector in Sweden have not been correctly shaped and do not steer in a proper manner within the sector. A clear example of this is tax on plastics in burnable waste that did not lead to the growing recycling of plastics, but instead led to that heavy materials, such as metal and glass, were sorted out. If one really wants to avoid plastic getting into the burnable waste flow, tax on plastics should be proportionate to the actual plastic content in the waste.

Thus, one should understand that measures should be taken elsewhere in the product chain in order to reach the goals that currently are been set for the waste sector. The focus should be on what is possible and most important to achieve within the frameworks existing today. Thus, one should make a strategic plan laying out in what order and how the goals could be met, for which municipality has own capabilities and resources. What is important and what is urgent?

Considering the accessibility of resources for developing the technical and communication system, and the ability of people to receive and accept message and start changing their behaviour, it is unlikely that it would be possible to develop waste management system in accordance with the waste hierarchy for all different types of waste.

What are then the most important priorities today? The most important is to make sure that hazardous waste is treated separately and not together with the usual waste! Start there, despite the fact that the government perhaps have put main focus on packaging!! But make sure that the system is user-friendly and provides high service level.

After that take the next important fraction, most probably electronics and/or metal, and try to make it work, but do not forget to use the level of awareness and the systems perspective that have already been created. The more

homogeneous and similar the systems are the easier it is to reduce the level of mistakes and achieve high service level.

The awareness that little by little is achieved by inhabitants and producers of waste can be used to make them ponder over which products they use and how they can consume in a more intelligent way, by reducing their environmental impact and at the same time by using smartly own resources, money and time.

Although it might be tempting to inform all responsible for waste production actors about this fast changing world they live in, ***do not communicate about all changes in legislation to inhabitants!*** Try to keep information about collection and treatment systems as constant as possible! Take care of the practical problems that can arise due to changing legislation, but in such a way that you can continue your own main strategy.

Communication strategy

A communication strategy is needed as a guidance in the strategic plan on how waste management hierarchy could be implemented. Strategic communication is a planned and long term activity, which is adjusted to the target group and builds on the awareness about the surrounding world. Do not forget that in order to get credibility in the external world there is also need for internal communication.

Remember also that ***all problems are not communication problems!*** This is common perception that all the problems can be solved with information, but information can only provide basis for desired behaviour. However, in order for the behaviour to actually change appropriate conditions should be in place. Start with checking that they are provided (and will be provided in the future) and that they support the information, which you are planning to go out with.

Then develop communication plans with analysis of your target group, adjustment of the message, media analysis;, set up goals for various contributions and do not forget to follow up!!!

Start with developing and communicating a vision to policy makers and citizens.

A communication plan may contain these elements:

1. Analysis of target group
2. Goal and content
3. Media and methods
4. Implementation
5. Result
6. Evaluation
7. Organisational prerequisites

It is worth noting that goals in the communication plan are ***not*** the goals of the waste management! The communication plan should of course support achievement of goals of the activities, but communication goals are goals for directing and implementing communication. If this goal is achieved, it also leads to reaching the goals of waste management in the long run.

Communication goal can be divided into three steps based on how one wants to influence the target group:

- Knowledge goal – What should the target group know?
- Attitude goal – What should the target group feel?
- Behaviour goal – What should the target group do?

What goals we set depends in the same degree on what we would like to achieve with communication, but at the same time goals should also be ***Specific, Measurable, Accepted, Realistic and Time specific!!!***

What instruments we use depends on the target group and on what we would like to achieve, but also on the sender of communication. For public services there are specific instruments, such as for example the “municipal letter”. There are however other more traditional methods as, for instance, personal meetings. Together with new methods that can be taken from commercial marketing, all these methods comprise a good toolbox that can be used for the future communication challenge about waste.

If we can get to know the target group, create closeness and choose the right message we can also reach out to the target group.

Communication should be long term.

Changing message complicates awareness raising. The message should be simple in our communication tight world, in which we understand complicated messages only if we are genuinely interested.

When it comes to waste, it is few who will ever be genuinely interested in it. Therefore, the message should be simple and should develop by successively building on the earlier messages (or knowledge already known by the receiver).

Create recognition!

Study the commercial marketing (which most often only has one message – “buy our product because it is the best”) where the most successful companies have managed to create such recognition, in which we take in more than what we see.

Example of good recognition is Viking Line, which got almost 100 % of Swedish population to read *Viking Line* by only seen part of the logo.



Brand names should be built and be taken care of! They are the basis of effective communication.

Municipality as a trademark is strength

Swedish municipalities are positively charged brand names that should be carefully maintained. Both municipalities and municipal waste management organisations have good reputation and high credibility.

Of course this is something that should also be used. Therefore, decide early who/which organisation that should be the carrier of the message.

A discussion was held in Stockholm region to allow the region to be the sender of the message. However we decided that municipalities (or waste management organisations) should be the prime carrier of the message about waste to citizens, because they are the ones citizens approach with complaints or suggestions and turn to looking for additional information and knowledge about waste. Thus, municipalities could be the starting point for the development of the communication system.

Choose the message

We need to choose the message depending on what we would like to reach with the communication. It could be different messages for different target groups. The main point is to find the instrument to reach what we want. What knowledge we want to provide, what attitude we want to change and what behaviour we want to create?



Even here we can learn from commercial market. E.g. Coca Cola sells also a lifestyle and has always done that, but in a way that is adjusted to the time (it is however always recognisable).

Perhaps waste sector should learn from them! Think e.g. *how can we make a lifestyle message out of waste information?*

Remember that our messages about waste and consumption become more complex and have to have high degree of credibility; credibility that is questioned by only few.

Therefore, start with the most important message, if there is no other reason to build up trust and credibility by a simpler message first before it is time to address the main problem.

Symbols, as e.g. composting or collection of packaging, can be good, but it is also important to be aware that symbols of change can acquire their own meaning and function as barriers to more important actions.

In Sweden we have unfortunately found ourselves in such a situation. Discussions have focused on questions about symbols for composting and collection of packaging material. This has been diluted with legislation and EU directives and resulted in the following perception of people "I have sorted my waste and make my own compost, so I do take responsibility for the environment and the society". This can work as a way to calm the consciousness and totally depends on the strong focus that has been placed on these activities, which gives the impression that this is absolutely the most important things to be done. After this it is very difficult and confusing to follow with more important activities.

To tackle symbol questions one-sidedly and “routinely” can therefore backfire and shift the focus to wrong things. In the long run it may complicate the change of citizens’ focus towards more important actions.

So what is the most important message? Recycling of packaging that comprises a smaller part of the waste flow in the society is obviously not the most important waste-related problem. In our global economy packaging is useful, even in environmental terms, since it reduces damage and transportation related losses. When it comes to large environmental impact and benefits, they can be addressed by reusing products, which is more important!! This means that it is the consumption of goods in the first place that is most important to influence: what products and in what quantities. An obvious goal is therefore material recycling, partially to reduce the use and partially to increase reuse and recycling of, e.g. metal and glass, which production is resource intensive.

However, before we reach that point, it is perhaps most important to take away the most dangerous materials from the unsorted waste flows. It is the initial condition for recycling of the sorted waste.

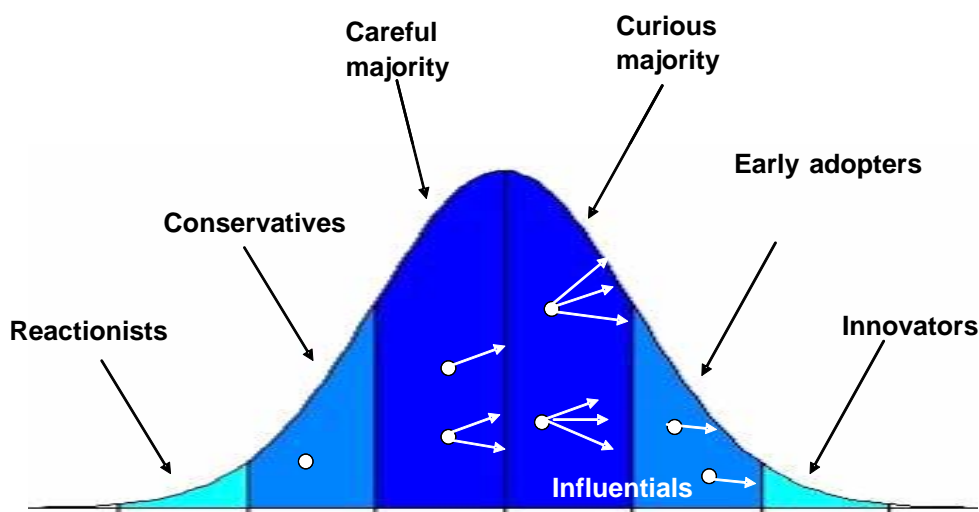
Despite the priorities, the message in all the activities should be simple, non-controversial, long term and supported by the technical system. It means that it is clear advantage if the message can be balanced and in line with other systems in the society. *What other actors are out there who are affected by the message and should provide the same message?*

It could, for example, be water and wastewater companies, a unit responsible for city streets, organisation for real estates or housing cooperatives, etc. Cooperate with those actors, whose messages are important, and cooperate when you go out with similar messages. It gives a larger effect if the message is visible under longer period than if it is a short term effort. Resources for information and communication are rather limited as well as opportunities to reach out to target groups.

Choose target group

Citizens can be divided into three groups:

- “Forerunners” or “those already saved” (early adopters and innovators in the picture below) is a group that quickly absorbs the message, is aware and has a driver to change and reach its goals and a vision for own development and own actions. This group often also wants to influence others and some of its members like to use new technology.
- “The majority” comprises people who are not looking for new knowledge themselves and who do not have any real own goal with their actions, but who just do as others.
- “The conservatives or reactionists” are people who do not want to change anything, who perceive all new inventions and actions as evil and who actively find arguments against change for themselves and who also loudly protest and criticise in a debate.



The group that should be targeted first of all is “the majority”, because it is possible to have constructive communication with them – they can be positive to change.

The group of innovators should of course be used in the process. This group comprises individuals with high level of awareness and the drive that can be used, because it is perceived by many representatives of “the majority” as positive example. Innovators could be represented by celebrities, intellectuals, generally knowledgeable or visionary people, or someone with position within mass media (e.g. meteorologist who talks about climate changes).

However, this group often includes “extreme elements” who can be perceived by “the majority” as strange or dangerous in some way. To use these kinds of examples can lead to a negative rather than positive effect, and it is therefore important to keep the integrity and credibility of the communication.

The reactionists should not be forgotten, but one should not be drawn into discussion or argument with them too deeply. It is however important to have at the ready tools and knowledge to disarm the arguments of this group so that they do not reach out to “the majority”. To put it shortly: place yourself into the shoes of your opponent and think and analyse the situation from their perspective and find contra-arguments.

Choose instruments

There are many instruments that can be used in communication. The ongoing fragmentation of media makes advertising to function less effectively and the increasing amount of advertising and marketing makes it difficult for various messages to be heard.

Public organisations, at least in Sweden, have some advantage in comparison to commercial actors through their neutrality and high trust from the society. This should of course be used, but even here one needs to think through what instruments fit better to the message and the target group. Do not hesitate to

use ideas and experiences from experts in commercial marketing and PR, but try to adjust and use them from the perspective of your organisation.

Choose language

Language must be simple and clear and adjusted to the target group. Even in this respect it is good to think long term. Try early in the process to find common language and terminology with other actors, which is adjusted to the language that already exists in the society.

In communication with citizens, do not use legislative and technical terms, because they are difficult to understand and they change with time. Instead, try to find more permanent words and approaches that could be more natural for citizens and users and which can easily become part of everyday language and concepts.

Overall, the complexity of the waste management organisation with continuously changing legislation should not be visible to customers. For them the language and the message should be crystal clear and long term.

Don't forget the "word of mouth"

Use *word of mouth*, i.e. conversations that affect our choices, ideas, products and services. Try to create excitement or motion by using positively charged people, for example, forerunners or celebrities, as carriers of the message to "the majority". Communication via such opinion builders gives higher credibility.

People who are used as *ambassadors* could, for example, be media celebrities (useful when campaign should start or should be strengthened, because then there is need for extra attention from media) or local celebrities, e.g. head of association or local authority, whom people listen to. These people create the necessary "buzz" around the message, i.e. via talk in the city, and little by little reach outside the initial target group.

The driving force behind "talk in the city" works, because we are looking for connection and fellowship; we want to reduce risks, costs and insecurities and improve our private economy; we talk to each other, because we want to mark our social position.

Word of mouth strategy has been used since 1930s and successfully applied by commercial actors. Its strength is in high confidence the receiver of the message has towards the sender, e.g. celebrities, authority, friends, family, etc.

How do you find ambassadors?

1. If they are known – screen them out
2. Use your intuition
3. Allow the intended target group to call in their friends and ambassadors



4. Use customer service – those who voice their criticism and issues of right kind
5. Monitor chat-sites and mail-lists to see who influences people opinion
6. Screen media to see who leads the discussion and who is invited to contribute to the dialogue

How do you do then?

1. Invite to an inspiring experience, test and previews (you want to be first)
2. Listen actively – search for criticism and points of view (want to be heard)
3. Invite to a dialogue (want to influence)
4. Facilitate meeting points and networking (what to meet others)
5. Use advertising and PR (want to feel secure)
6. Use benefits of the Internet (there are many of them...)

Greger Hagelin, VD i WE International:

“So we decided to do it our way. Instead we went to our friends, good people who we could see ourselves working with. Eventually 40 people ended up investing between 50 and 200 thousand crowns. A lot of people ask me if it’s tiresome to have that many partners, but I feel the opposite. It’s an enormous power.

All of these people want WE to do well and they all help to spread the brand message. It’s an incredible mix of personalities but they’re all the best you can find. We meet every third month and I tell them what’s going on with the company. We then eat and hang out and people rarely leave before two in the morning.

They’re our WE ambassadors and they’re an incredible force.”

Personal contacts

Use personal contacts; let the waste collectors be ambassadors (see “*word of mouth*” above). Are there personnel at recycling stations or disposal sites which people come in contact with? Then ensure that they have positive attitude towards their job that is so important for society and have the knowledge to share with citizens. Through their self-esteem and knowledge they can provide high degree service, but also transfer positive “vibes”. By giving waste management a face, the entire system becomes more personal.

Various international companies, e.g. “Starbucks” have reached their expansion just by allowing all the marketing to be done by their personnel. They were educated to become ambassadors; and their knowledge and confidence made them the largest chain of coffee bars in the world.

Choose place

In the media noise that exists today we most easily catch information if it is provided at the right place and at the right time. For example, set up a poster on the waste bin at the waste collection point and inform citizens in this way. Another way to communicate is to provide information when it can be most easily accepted and the receiver has the time to understand it. An example could be to use travellers’ “wasted time” on the bus or train by distributing leaflets with waste related information.

Waste should be visible (loud and smell)!

Allow waste management to be visible, to some degree be heard and smelled (but not so much that it gives negative associations!). Do not hide it to back yards, emptying times - to when people are asleep, but show that it is an important part of societal infrastructure, which is a foundation for us to live comfortably and fashionably.

If we cannot show that waste management together with other basic technical infrastructures (e.g. wastewater, energy) is important and must take place, it will always be hid away while the demands on it will be growing. It will become an unbearable situation, which, in the worst case, would lead to serious health, social and economic repercussions, if the system will not be able to function properly and provide the level of recycling the society needs.

Can waste communicators use mass media?

In media debates, focus is always on something negative, something which does not work, irrespectively of the question. It is seldom that there are positive news. This affects also waste management system and its activities and in Sweden mismanagement in the waste sector is often in focus of documentaries or news. The issues addressed can be anything from unclear message in the collection system to littering at recycling stations (which are actually driven by waste industry and not by municipal organisations). Regardless of who is actually responsible for the raised issue, it is often municipality that is being called upon. Journalists have huge opinion-building effects due to their place in media, their celebrity status and their possibilities to make themselves amusing.

How shall we respond or relate to all this? Shall we go into polemics or sit quietly or shall we deal with this in a different way?

After discussions in our RECO workshops we decided that public service personnel should not go into polemics, because of the risk of loosing credibility, but should anyway react.

We should instead encourage politicians to participate in polemic debates or at least in media debates and focus on highlighting the long term goals we have to reach with regards to material recycling and waste management, but at the same time, admit that it is not an easy journey and we all learn from mistakes.

Public service personnel should also react and try to get journalists on their side by presenting the long term strategies, clear examples of what is been done to reach them and at the same time, show them that it is a very complex area.

Policy and practice, the sides of the same coin

Waste arena should be kept outside the political arena when it comes to details, i.e. how the system is built, because drastic changes in political perspectives are counterproductive to long term goals of sustainable waste management system. Policy should develop and set long term goals and ensure the support for reaching these goals with the help of appropriate measures, such as laws and taxes. It is important that for example taxes are set so that they drive towards the long term goal. In Sweden, the idea behind introducing a tax has usually being good, but the way it has been implemented sometimes gave a

totally different outcome, because the current societal conditions and realities were not taken into account. An example of such a failed tax is the tax on plastic incineration, which goal was to direct away recyclable plastic from incineration. However, since the tax is weight-based it leads to that it is not plastic that is sorted out, but heavier fractions, such as metal and glass (of course these fractions are also important to sort out, but this was not the intention of the tax).

Internal and external communication

Only because the external communication is one of the cornerstones of the waste management system the internal communication should not be forgotten. Both parts are important!!

Internally in Stockholm county we understood the need to increase communication and cooperation between various partners within the region. For the municipal actors (municipalities, municipal waste management companies and organisations) a common web-based platform was organised.

It has a publicly open part that the regions develop together and an internal part. The primary carrier of the message as we always tell is the municipality (or municipality owned organisations); therefore the most important information is local one. The regional information is added to the common platform that is available to all and each municipality puts a link to their work. The target group for this common website is the interested general public, i.e. those who would like to know more (e.g. school pupils, students, journalists, politicians, and in general people, who would like to have deeper understanding and knowledge). On this common webpage one can find regional statistics, diagrams of waste flows, description of problems and solutions for various fractions and materials, as well as pictures from typical waste treatment facilities (including collection with various types of trucks and various types of recycling stations and facilities).

What is then a "Succesfull concept"

Begin with ensuring that the collection and management systems are:

- Easy to understand and long term
- With high level of service (customised for various user groups)
- Built to support sustainable technical lifecycle in the long run

Then support with communication that is:

- Strategically planned and developed
- Goes hand in hand with the collection and management systems
- Innovative, but built on strong assets of the organisation from credibility perspective
- Adjusted to users' conditions and lifestyles
- Built on simple messages
- From a credible source who meets people and media that question waste activities in a proactive and friendly manner
- And who proactively motivates key groups in strategic time.

Several factors have to work together. Societal instruments:

Education – knowledge gives acceptance

Enforcement – laws and rules

Economy – economic instruments

Engineering – systems that work

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Behaviour **F**ocused
Systematised **W**aste
Communication