

The Business Side of Post-Consumer Food Waste Composting

Dan Matsch
Eco-Cycle Inc.

USCC Annual Conference
January 30, 2013

Who is Eco-Cycle?

- Founded in 1976
- Non-profit social enterprise
- Organics collection service since 2003
- Advocates for Zero Waste worldwide



Should you answer the phone when the local Zero Waste organizer calls?

Presentation overview:

- ✓ What is Zero Waste?
- ✓ Special challenges of the ZW feedstock
- ✓ New skills for a composter's staff
- ✓ The good news – new marketing opportunities



What is Zero Waste ?

ZW is a total commitment to:

- Maximizing **downstream resource recovery** through recycling and composting;
- Maximizing **mid-stream longevity** through reuse, repair and durable design;
- Maximizing **upstream waste reduction** through Redesign, ZW Purchasing, Producer Responsibility and New Rules.

ZW advocates for composting as THE ANSWER for almost 50% of the waste stream

Are you ready?

- ✓ Food scraps
 - ✓ Yard trimmings
 - ✓ Paper towels and other
 - ✓ Bioplastic packaging and bags
- ...GOTTA TAKE IT ALL!



ZW as it pertains to composters:

- ✓ Landfill bans on “organics” to reduce GreenHouse Gas emissions;
- ✓ Food waste = local resource to improve local soils;
- ✓ 85 residential food waste programs in 2009; now we have record of 156 in 2012.
- ✓ “Waste” management vs. producing a quality product from discarded resources.

Challenges of post-consumer food waste as a feedstock

- ✓ Requires a new permit, more regulation
- ✓ Might need capital investment to upgrade facility
- ✓ Might increase operations costs

Challenges of post-consumer food waste as a feedstock

- ✓ Highly contaminated
- ✓ Compostable plastics so far aren't distinguishable from petro-plastics
- ✓ High odor generation potential
- ✓ Less homogenous feedstock needs processing flexibility



Challenges of post-consumer food waste as a feedstock

- ✓ Maybe the biggest change: these guys aren't your landscaper customers
 - ✓ Local government
 - ✓ Public perception



Boulder City Council

Is it worth taking the leap? YES, If you are prepared!

New areas you may need to address:

- ✓ New staff skills
- ✓ Public image beyond odor mitigation
- ✓ New marketing opportunities
- ✓ Community-building

New staff skills:

- ✓ Training as government liaison - active partner
- ✓ Good program guidelines
- ✓ Customer will scrutinize your operation
- ✓ Multiple haulers may each have their own guidelines/messages to their customers
- ✓ Specialized reporting to muni



Save & Post!

COMPOST GUIDELINES

FOR CURBSIDE PICKUP AT YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS IN BOULDER COUNTY

COMPOSTABLE PAPER

COFFINETS, NAPKINS, TISSUES, ROLLER PAPER, CARDBOARD

FOODS & PLANTS

PIZZA, BANANAS, BREAD, YARD TRIMMINGS

SPECIALLY-DESIGNED COMPOSTABLE PRODUCTS

PLA: MADE FROM CORN, PLA-COATED PAPER CUPS, PLA: MADE FROM CORN, UNCOATED PAPER FIBER ONLY, OR BAGASSE

NO PLASTIC

NO PLASTIC-COATED PAPER, CHIPPED MATERIAL (SEE P. 24)

See detailed compostable products guidelines on page 30.

Composting combats climate change by preventing organics from entering a landfill, where they decompose and release methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

eco-cycle
Working to Build Zero Waste Communities

When in doubt, keep it out. QUESTIONS? Call or visit 303.444.6634 • www.ecocycle.org

www.ecocycle.org • 303-444-6634 © Copyright 2012 Eco-Cycle, Inc. All Rights Reserved

Changes in public image

- ✓ From under the radar to front page news?
- ✓ Communication with key decision-makers (like city councils) is critical
- ✓ Local gov partner can't invest in you until you are competitive with landfill tip fee (one way or another)

Community-building

- ✓ Tour requests from grade schools to the mayor
- ✓ Can you fulfill the image of the “community composter”?
 - ✓ EVERY community wants/needs one
 - ✓ Total image transformation to valued partner or utility
 - ✓ Public visibility can help a lot with quality control
 - ✓ Don't underestimate the allure of “completing the circle” by returning finished compost to the community



New marketing opportunities

- ✓ You have an edge with municipal composting projects – roads dept's, civic landscaping
- ✓ Front end service fees/back end guilt trip probably isn't a good marketing plan
- ✓ Use public visibility for local retail sales!

Success Story: A1 Organics



- ✓ Eco-Cycle persuaded them to try ZW feedstock
- ✓ Giant learning curve for both companies
- ✓ Now part of their identity
- ✓ One of highest profile composters in US

Services

Since 1974, A1 Organics has focused on services related to organic residual reduction and organic recycling services. Additionally, A1 Organics provides services related to organic recycling on a one time or continuing basis, which includes:

- [Food Waste Recycling](#)
- [Composting](#)
- [Compost Mixes & Blends](#)
- [Grinding and Custom Services](#)



Why bother?



- New green jobs are highly prioritized
- Landfilling will get more expensive
- Composting is still the best food waste solution
- Future generations are gonna need some soil



Dan Matsch
303-444-6634x116
Dan@ecocycle.org
www.ecocycle.org