
formation, analyze it, and verify statistics, prices, and other market data. There are also trade groups that offer assistance and provide lists of potential markets.

In order to better understand the buyers' needs, the recycling coordinator should make direct contact with the buyers. It is worthwhile to tour the recyclers' facilities (this also helps keep honest those who do not actually have physical recycling plants, but have simply "announced" intentions to recycle). A plant visit will educate your staff and help build your relationship with the buyer. The most successful recycling programs in place today have spent the time and money necessary to understand the standards of quality required by the market and how quality re-

lates to the buyer's operations. Making a site visit is the key to understanding quality. In addition to plant visits, the coordinator should explore recycling programs in other communities to learn from their experience.

Planning and implementing a recycling program will be controversial, costly, and time-consuming. Ultimately, however, it will be rewarding. Devoting time and attention to marketing from the start will allow for much smoother operation and a longer lasting program. It is important to remember that recycling does not take place until the material you have collected is remade into a new product. Building a strong and reliable market is the key to a successful recycling program. PM

Cooperative Marketing in New Hampshire

John Isham

The importance of determining your markets and locking in acceptance of your products before embarking on a recycling effort cannot be overstated. As in any other area of manufacturing, the idea is to come up with a product that someone else will purchase. To do this, you must start by confirming buyers, becoming completely familiar with their needs, and being willing and able to generate products that meet their specifications. To gain the reputation as a reliable source, you must be able to supply a product of acceptable quality in sufficient quantities. And, above all, you must be able to adjust immediately to rapidly changing conditions and specifications in order to maintain your position as an active player.

Early in the game, we in New Hampshire learned that we could not compete for markets **individually**—if indeed we could locate a market at all. Most communities in the Granite State are in the population range of 5,000, are far removed from most markets, and command very little credibility with potential buyers. It was painfully apparent that to have any chance of successfully achieving our recycling goals we would first have to develop a

coalition of communities to educate ourselves, to gain credibility and clout with buyers, and to secure long-term commitments for our materials. Thus, in 1980, the New Hampshire Resource Recovery Association (NHRRA) was born. From this seed, a highly specialized and motivated organization of independent communities has evolved into what today is arguably the most effective municipal marketing group in the recycling field.

“*As more and more states follow the trend and enact mandatory recycling laws, an inevitable glut will hit the marketplace. . . .*” El

The NHRRA brokers a myriad of products, arranges transportation, handles billing, and collects the proceeds of sales for the membership. Buyers are enthusiastic about providing NHRRA with long-term contracts because they have assurances of a dependable supply with excellent quality control as well as the added efficiency of dealing with a single entity.

Simply put, NHRRA polls its membership to determine the quantity of a particular product that members are willing to produce. With that data in hand, a request for proposals (RFP) is solicited from potential buyers.

John Isham is the town administrator of Peterborough, New Hampshire. He is a founding member of the New Hampshire Resource Recovery Association and was instrumental in bringing recycling to southern New Hampshire.

Interested buyers respond with their specifications and a price they are willing to guarantee. NHRRA screens the proposals and selects those that appear to be in the best interest of the association. Negotiations then take place aimed at securing a three- to five-year contract, a guaranteed pricing and payment schedule, transportation, and firm specifications for the length of the contract period. After the contract has been finalized, NHRRA and the selected buyer conduct a series of workshops around the state to familiarize the members with the production process, quality control, and preparation for shipping. Six months prior to the end of a

contract, the process repeats itself and a new contract is negotiated.

Communities beginning new recycling programs are faced with the choice of joining an established cooperative, developing a new organization that meets their needs, or striking out alone. A great deal of time and frustration will be saved by affiliating with an experienced association that has already earned the confidence of the buyers. Such an arrangement provides immediate benefits and removes most pitfalls that await the new recycler. An added advantage of associating with an established group is that they undoubtedly have already weeded out the "bad apples." Many have compiled lists of reputable buyers along with a contract person for each, thus saving untold hours of individual research.

Should you be determined to go it alone, there are many ways to locate markets. Possibly the most common is looking in the local telephone book under "scrap dealers." Another approach is to subscribe to trade publications such as *Resource Recycling* or *Waste Age*. The quickest way to reach reputable buyers is through trade associations. Listings of trade associations are usually available through your state solid waste agency or your nearest EPA office. Trade associations can provide you with industry specifications, handouts, technical information, membership in your geographical area, and, in some cases, funding.

A wealth of good information is available at most recycling centers as well. While it would seem that recyclers would want to keep their buyers confidential, the ones who are in it for the long haul realize that their futures lie in their ability to produce substantial quantities of acceptable products. They are thus willing to share information with you in order to maintain a ready and reliable supply of quality recyclables.

As more and more states follow the trend and enact mandatory recycling laws, an inevitable glut will hit the marketplace, such as the one we are now experiencing with newsprint. The economics of supply and demand will kick in, and those recyclers who are unprepared or have rigid programs will begin to fall by the wayside as their sales falter. This is the time when we all must be prepared to look to nontraditional markets to bridge the gap until the marketplace catches up with supply. Let your imagination run wild! Every idea, no matter how remote, may have merit as a temporary solution. Who knows, perhaps one of these novel ideas may foster an entirely new business creating its own demand for recycled products. PM

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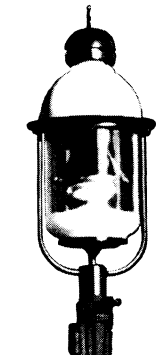
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