

CASE STUDY



RFID BOOSTS RECYCLING BINS, LOCAL BUSINESSES

Local businesses, homeowners benefits when Metalcraft's RFID tags become part of a community's recycling program

Americans recycle about a quarter of their residential trash – a rate that has remained fairly constant despite the growth of curbside recycling service, community education and other efforts to encourage more recycling.

Research suggests behavior is not changing because of the extra effort involved to recycle and the lack of perceived benefits. So, Rewards for Recycling in Davison, Michigan decided to provide motivation and remove practical obstacles to recycling in their community just north of Detroit.

"We wanted to create a system that rewarded residents for the simple act of curbside recycling – a service they were already paying for with property taxes," said Preston Hards, Marketing Manager at Rewards for Recycling. "Our aim was to make it easy for the resident, waste hauler, and municipality; we wanted to create benefits for all."

Rewards for Recycling developed a system that used Web-based memberships and an RFID system to easily and automatically track residents' recycling activity. The program provides Metalcraft's RFID labels to each residence which are placed on their curbside recycling bin.

The labels have a unique account ID number corresponding to the address, and the community's waste haulers carry RFID readers either in their vests or mounted on the trucks which automatically read the labels without burdening their work. "We were most impressed with Metalcraft's labels because of their performance," said Hards.

"These curbside recycling bins are outside in Michigan where snow, salt, heat, and abrasion take their toll. We needed durable, reliable RFID products with quick turnaround, and Metalcraft is very accommodating." Rewards for Recycling also secured the participation of local businesses to provide coupons, giveaways and other money-saving certificates to residents' recycling.

Each time the household recycles, they are awarded credit to their RewardsForRecycling.com account which can be redeemed for items and offers from local businesses. "We knew we needed an incentive," said Hards. "In addition to encouraging individual participation, the program does help establish a collective consciousness in the community. The tie to the local community is important."

Davison, Grand Blanc, and Genesee Townships were the first of three communities to use the program in Genesee County where residential recycling rates range from 8 to 22 percent of households. In just one month, the number of households recycling shot up 50 percent, and the volume of recycling more than tripled.

The RFID-enabled program generates foot traffic for local businesses and thousands of savings certificates were downloaded from rewardsforrecycling.com in the first month. "This is truly a four-way winning proposition," said Hards. "The community wins by going green and dramatically reducing waste, the residents benefit with great savings, the local businesses benefit from the increased traffic and free promotion, and of course, most importantly, our environment wins."

With a proven concept, Rewards for Recycling has its eyes on expansion. Just 18 percent of Michigan households recycle statewide. And Hards is eager to serve multiple types of communities including universities, large condo and apartment complexes in addition to residential neighborhoods. "Metalcraft's RFID labels on bins can make it easy to track recycling activity in apartments, condos and other communities," said Hards. "Rewards for Recycling could really change the composition of garbage dumpsters in those environments."

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HARDS**

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Recycling