

COMPOST

A BEHAVIOR CHANGE SUCCESS STORY

brought to you by the city of portland

December 8th, 2014 | Behavior, Energy & Climate Change Conference



**INCLUDE
THE FOOD**



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

Innovation. Collaboration. Practical Solutions.

*City of Portland, Oregon
Charlie Hales, Mayor • Susan Anderson, Director*



WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Portland's implementation of residential composting is a really great behavior change **success** story.

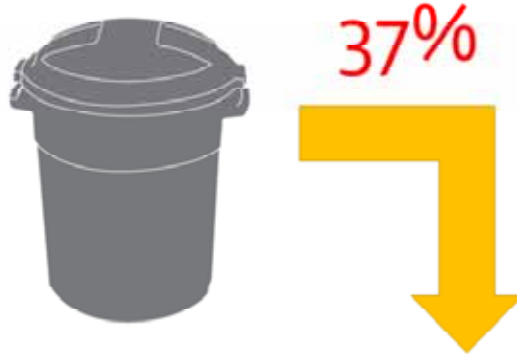
We faced big challenges going in, but we followed behavior change best practices and we had great results.

TRIPLED COMPOST



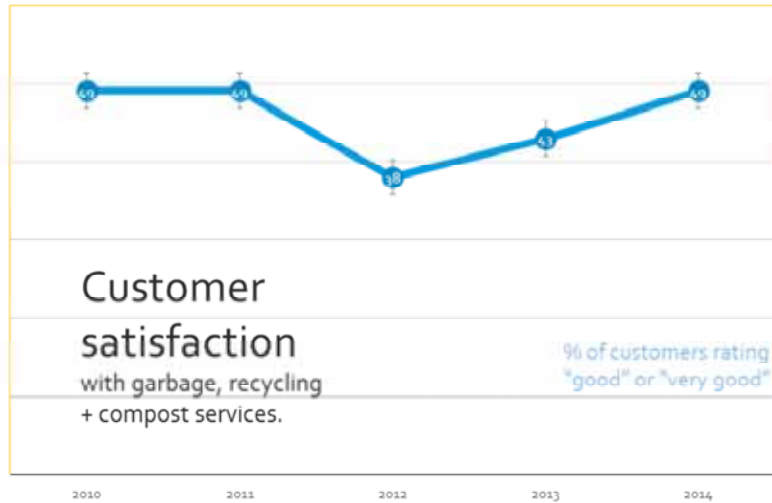
In just 3 years we tripled the amount of residential compost (yard debris & food scraps) collected.

REDUCED TRASH



Reduced trash by almost 40%.

A NEW NORM



And most importantly, we normed a new behavior across an entire city.

This graph is a customer satisfaction survey that the city does every year.

The dip you see is the year we started the new program. Two years later, we're back up to where we were before.

Graph pulled from auditor's report:

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/article/507436>

REMEMBER THIS

1. IDENTIFY BARRIERS + BENEFITS

Don't assume.
Ask your audience.
Use surveys + focus groups.

Identify barriers & benefits.

What's going to make it difficult for your audience to do what you want them to do?

How do they stand to benefit from doing what you want them to do?

And don't assume you know – rather, ask your audience directly through surveys and focus groups.

2. PILOT

Learn what works + what doesn't.
Test messaging.
Find champions.

Pilot your program.

Learn what works and what doesn't,
test messaging,
and find champions.

3. CBSM

Use CBSM tools + best practices.
We did.
They worked.

Community Based Social Marketing – www.cbsm.com

www.cbsm.com



SOME BACKGROUND

PORTLAND

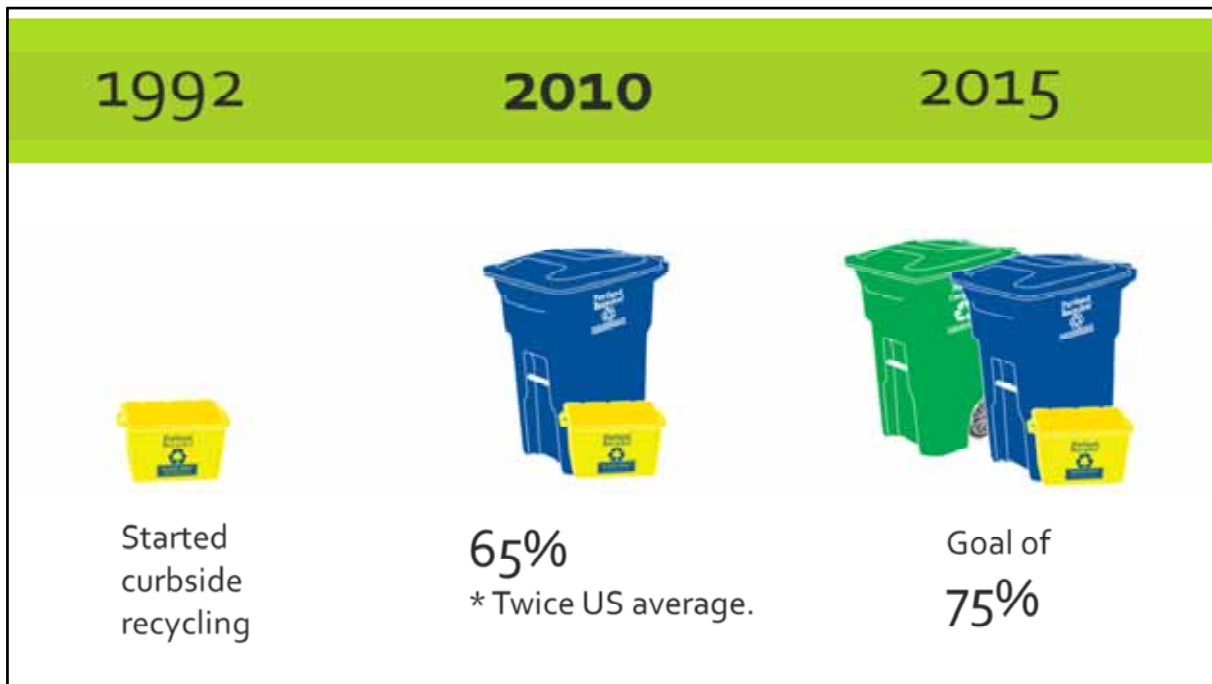


= pop. 650,000



Portland is a small big city, similar in size to Denver or Baltimore.

We're known for biking, beer, and hipsters, and if you want any more stereotypes, you can find them on a tv show called Portlandia.



We started curbside recycling in 1992.

By 2010, we had a 65% recycling rate (which was twice the US average).

And we have a goal to be composting or recycling 75% of our waste by 2015.

+ FOOD



We were already collecting yard debris, and to reach our goal, we needed to add food.



How does compost connect to climate change?

When food goes to the landfill it creates methane, which, as you know, is a highly potent greenhouse gas.

In contrast, when food is composted, it creates nutrient-rich fertilizer, which farmers can use in place of conventional fossil fuel-based fertilizers.



We were already collecting yard debris every-other-week, and we wanted to add food.

We had determined the best way to do this was to add weekly compost pick up, and at the same time, to reduce trash pick up to every-other-week.

By doing this we would:

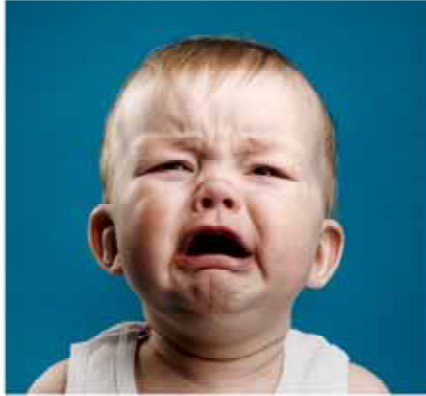
- Avoid an increase of trucks on the road, along with their associated carbon emissions,

- Avoid having to raise garbage rates for residents.

- Provide residents an incentive to get food out of the trash and into the compost, since if they didn't get the food out, they'd have to pay for a bigger trash can.

CHALLENGES

Reducing trash
pick-up to
every other week.



We knew people would not be happy that we were reducing trash pick up to every other week.

The ick factor.



Our other big challenge was the ick factor.

When it comes to compost, people assume the worst – that it will smell bad, attract rats, and otherwise be, well, just gross.

Fortunately, we had a champion in our Mayor, who wanted the city to have a successful composting program, and was willing to take the political risk for it.

That was a great help, but we still needed the program to work well enough that the majority of Portlanders would be happy with it.



PILOT YOUR PROGRAM

So, we took the time to pilot the program before we made the change city-wide.

WHY PILOT?	OUR PILOT
Learn what works + what doesn't [on a small scale].	1 year (2010). 4 neighborhoods.
Invest resources wisely.	2000 households.

Our year-long pilot was a crucial element in the success of our program, because we were able to learn what worked and what didn't, and then invest our resources – both time and money – in smarter and more efficient ways.

GAIN CREDIBILITY

87% were satisfied with new system.

9 out of 10 were composting.

Only 7% had to get a bigger garbage cart.

We were also able to gain credibility and buy-in from decision makers because we had data that showed that the program was working.

If we had tried to get approval for reducing trash pick up, without the pilot, it would have been a really hard sell.

But, once we'd done the pilot, we could point to this great data and convince people that it would work.

FIND CHAMPIONS

We **love** the new system.

—Nura

The new program is
very convenient for us.

—Sally + Bernie



Brad Robertson Richmond neighborhood

"With two kids under 8, we generate a lot of food scraps in our house. Now we put bones and vegetable peels right into the kitchen pail. Crumbled animal crackers, soggy cereal, and sandwich crusts can go in as well.

The kids are excited about turning their food scraps into usable compost and doing something good for the earth."

The pilot also allowed us to find champions who could say, in their own words, how well the program worked for them.

This is especially helpful in addressing perceived barriers.

People often think change is going to be harder than it really is.

So if you can get their peers telling them, "hey, I've done it, and it's fine," it's really helpful in overcoming that initial fear and push-back.

TEST MESSAGING

Seattle + San Francisco
are already composting.

Don't let your food scraps
go to waste.

Food scraps create
methane in the landfill.

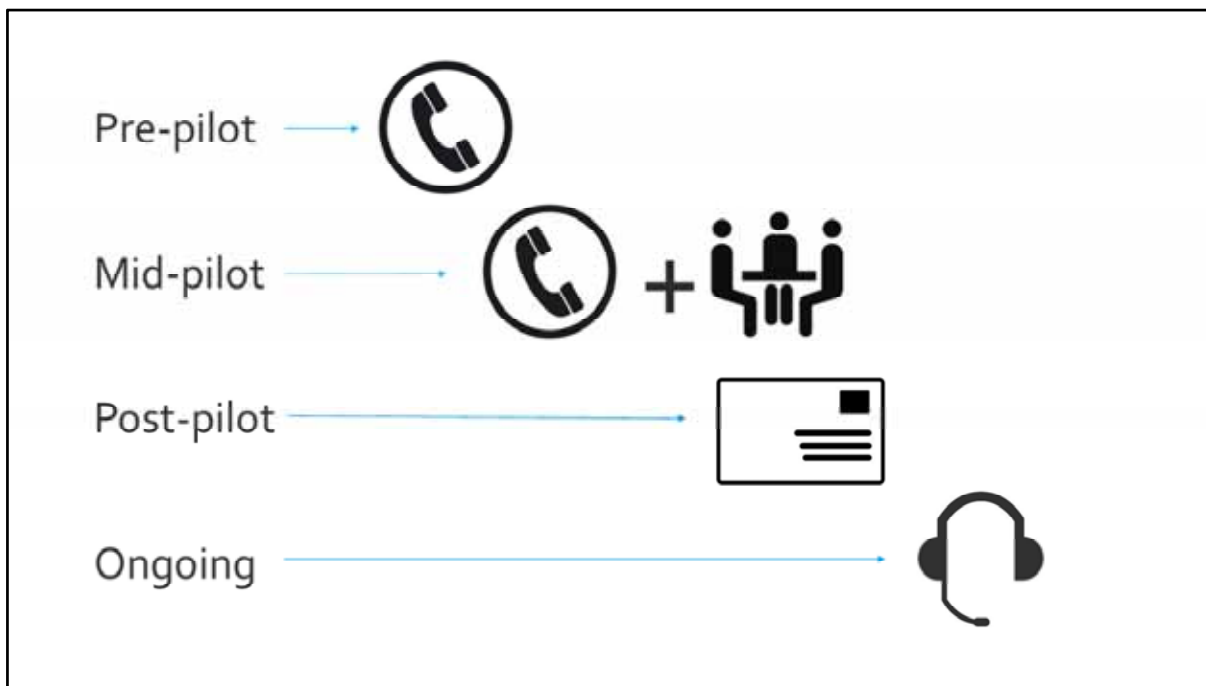
30% of garbage is food.



The pilot also allowed us to test messaging.

For example, we thought telling Portlanders that Seattle and San Francisco were already composting would be a big selling point.

Had we not tested these beforehand, we would have been trying to motivate people with things they really didn't care about.



Before we started the pilot, we called residents in pilot neighborhoods. Four months into the pilot, we called again and at the same time, we conducted focus groups to get more in-depth information. After the pilot, we sent out a post-card survey. We also tracked feedback from our customer service hotline.

We gathered a lot of feedback through this process, and it was incredibly helpful in understanding our audience and how to motivate them.

It also allowed us to know what they needed and when they needed it, so we could tailor our marketing and outreach to meet those needs.

In addition to the survey work, we also collected **empirical data**, in the form of waste sorts and waste tonnage reports that showed us how much food people were actually putting in the compost.

Survey work by: Campbell DeLong Resources, Inc.



MARKETING + OUTREACH

So, how did we put this information to use?

The marketing & outreach consulting firm on this project was Coates Kokes.

CHANGE IS HARD

Three easy ways to get help:

1. Online: www.portlandcomposts.com
2. Hotline: 503-823-7202
3. Email: wasteinfo@portlandoregon.gov



To begin, we wanted to help move people through the initial phase of confusion and frustration as quickly and smoothly as possible.

One way we did this was to really promote that “we’re here to help.”

To assure that we actually were there to help, we hired and trained extra customer service staff to work evenings and Saturdays for the first 3 months of the city-wide program

FACE TO FACE

Door-to-door canvassing.
26 neighborhoods.
20,000 doors knocked on.



We also went **door-to-door**, canvassing different neighborhoods to answer questions and offer suggestions.

We organized staff & volunteers to knock on 20K doors in 26 different neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY MESSENGERS

"Knock + Talk" fundraising
18 community projects funded
\$2 / conversation, 50 cents / door hanger

Join the Include the Food campaign and raise funds for your community organization!



**INCLUDE
THE FOOD**

What: The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) invites neighborhood associations, cooperative groups, ethnic groups, and communities of faith to mobilize volunteers to go door-to-door to answer questions about changes to the curbside collection system, to promote composting and to raise money for the group. Bilingual groups particularly encouraged to get involved.



The best messengers are those from within a community, so we offered community groups an opportunity to raise money for community projects by canvassing. This allowed us to provide neighbor to neighbor education and to educate volunteers that wouldn't otherwise have been interested in the program.

Feedback from volunteer: "It was a rewarding experience knocking on doors and finding out how many people really liked the new food to compost program. This project let me hear first hand the problems very few people had with the program and to answer their questions with facts and options. It also helped me answer questions from my neighborhood as well. Our Neighborhood Association was proud to participate in this worthy effort. This was an easy way to help the environment and create community!"

Some of the 18 projects funded through canvassing efforts:

- University Park Neighborhood Association: Welcome sign for the neighborhood
- Portland Organic Productions: Food for volunteers who help with Cathedral Park clean-ups

- Imago Dei: Fund for “comfort packs” for children who are taken into foster care
- St Johns Farmers Market: Booth for community groups
- Arbor Lodge Neighborhood Association: Supplies for maintaining a pesticide free Arbor Lodge Park
- Concordia Neighborhood Association: Support for the neighborhood Concert in the Parks

PHASE INFO

Pre-change
Build anticipation
Basics of change



In the pilot, we gave too much information up front, and people got overwhelmed, or tuned out.

So in the city-wide roll out we sent information in three phases:

First, before the new program began,
we highlighted the basics of what would be changing
and promoted testimonials from happy pilot participants.

At start
Details of changes
Step-by-step how-to

Collect food scraps when:

- ① Preparing meals
- ② Scraping plates
- ③ Cleaning the fridge of leftovers



At the start of the new program
We explained more details about the changes
provided step-by-step instructions.

Continued education
Reminders
Feedback

**Composting Works!
Garbage Rates Going Down**

Thanks to your efforts to reduce waste and recycle and compost more, Portland residential customers will see a slight decrease on their monthly garbage bill, beginning July 1, 2013. Overall, rates are down about 1 percent.

Compost from Portland households is being used in local community gardens and parks.



Throughout the first year of the program
We continued to provide reminders
and we started incorporating more feedback on how the program was
working.



Throughout our marketing and outreach campaign, we used Community Based Social Marketing tools.

REMINDERS



For example, one of the biggest barriers in the new program was that residents could not remember which week garbage would be collected.

And if they missed a pick-up, they'd go a whole month without garbage collection.

To help them remember, we:

- set up a reminder system where Portlanders could sign up for emails reminding them which week was trash week, and which weeks were just recycling and composting.

CBSM prompts: <http://www.cbsm.com/pages/guide/prompts:-remembering-to-act/>

INCENTIVES

People
love
raffles.



To encourage people to sign up for the email reminders, we promoted a raffle, where everyone who signed up was entered to win a \$100 off their garbage bill.

We now have over 13,000 people signed up, with 10-15 new sign-ups every day.

CONVENIENCE



The other big barrier in the program was that residents had to change their habits around food waste.

Instead of putting food in the trash, they had to collect the food in a separate container, and then get it outside to their compost cart.

So, we tried to make it as easy as possible, by: purchasing kitchen pails and having them delivered to every household at the start of the program.

We also providing step-by-step guidance in brochures and outreach materials.

SOCIAL NORMS



In our canvassing and surveys, we often heard people say the program was working well from them, but they worried it wasn't working well for others – like people with children, or elderly folks.

We were able to address this by finding all different types of families to share their stories and talk about how the program was working well for them.

We promoted these stories in print materials and online.

We made videos of residents sharing how they kept their kitchen pail clean or avoided fruit flies.

<http://www.cbsm.com/pages/guide/social-norms:-building-community-support/http://www.cbsm.com/pages/guide/social-diffusion:-speeding-adoption/>

FEEDBACK



Feedback is another great tool to keep momentum going.

As we tracked the program's success, we reported back to the community, telling them how things were going at 6 months, a year, and beyond.

We wanted to encourage Portlanders to continue making the effort, and show them how their efforts had paid off.



A year into the program we ran a large ad in Portland's biggest newspaper, thanking Portlanders for their great work, and showing them what they had accomplished.



IN CONCLUSION

I'm not saying it was easy. When we made the change city-wide, we took some heat.

**Portland garbage rates are
unfair and should be junked**

thousands of people
ensnared by the heavy-
handed experiment in social
engineering known as
**Portland's solid waste
collection system.**

By **The Oregonian Editorial Board**

This stinks of **fascism**.

This **idiotic idea** will be a failure.

Rats will be running in the streets soon, as
the garbage cans overflow.

I thought we lived in a democracy, not a
waste management **dictatorship**!

This is by far the **worst idea** anyone has
yet come up with.

I **love** the composting program!

The new program is very **convenient** for us.

It makes me **proud** to be a Portlandia gal!

My household is **delighted** with Portland's composting program.



But because we had cultivated champions in the community and gathered testimonials throughout the program, we were able to counteract the negative voices and not let them become the norm.

A NEW NORM

satisfied
customers
+
80%
participation
rate



We're now 3 years into the program, and composting *is* the new norm.

It's not perfect; we haven't gotten all the food out the trash.

But we're now recycling or composting 74% of our residential waste, just 1% shy of our 2015 goal.

LESSONS LEARNED

Identify barriers + benefits.
Pilot your program.
Use CBSM tools + best practices.

Community Based Social Marketing – www.cbsm.com

And what we learned in this process, which I hope you will find helpful in your own work, is:

Identify barriers and benefits.
Pilot your program.
Use CBSM tools and best practices.

THANK YOU.

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<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/>



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RESOURCES

Portland's composting program

www.portlandcomposts.com

Community Based Social Marketing

www.cbsm.com

More detailed program info & data available

lindsey.maser@portlandoregon.gov