

BUSINESS

Companies push the recycling envelope

Andrew Manuse/Daily News Staff

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Maio, who used other recycling companies in the past, recently decided to go with Westborough-based E.L. Harvey & Sons Inc.'s mobile shredding service to remove the company's paper.

“Customer confidentiality was the main reason,” Maio said. “I don't want a truck carrying our records down a highway and having an accident and all our records going out the door.”

Maio said the truck comes about once a month to each of the bank's four branches and shreds confidential customer documents on site. The waste management company provides lockable bins for storage of the paper during the interim period. It costs the bank about \$300 a month per location to do the shredding and haul the paper away, he said.

Jim Harvey, chief executive for E.L. Harvey & Sons, said the company has two mobile units that do on-site shredding. It takes about 7 minutes for each 96-gallon barrel, he said. Otherwise, a truck picks up recycled materials from small businesses, which mostly generate material he calls “mixed-office paper.”

Either way, the trucks bring the paper back to the company's facility where it is sorted, baled, then shipped off to paper mills, mostly overseas, Harvey said during a tour of the facility last week. It gets sorted among newspapers, cardboard and other paper products.

“Mixed-office paper becomes toilet paper, napkins and Kleenex,” he said.

The facility, which handles 82,000 tons of recycled material a year, separates up to 27 different grades of paper, among other materials, which are processed elsewhere into different products, he said.

Businesses recycle about 40 to 45 percent of their solid waste these days, said Greg Cooper, deputy director of consumer programs for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. That beats the municipal recycling rate of about 30 to 35 percent, he said.

``It's much easier to recycle at a business than a household," Cooper said. ``They have a homogenous waste flow coming out. It's a much more structured environment where that type of activity can take place."

But Cooper contended that there's still major gains to be made in commercial recycling, with cardboard and paper at the top of the list. He estimates about 500,000 more tons of paper a year can be more easily recycled. He didn't have statistics about small businesses in particular.

Patterson and Gerry LLC, a Framingham-based accounting firm with 18 staffers, has practically eliminated the need for a recycling program.

``Our file cabinet is now a Sun server with backup," said Paul Gerry Jr., a partner with the firm. ``We've taken care of recycling by eliminating or reducing the paper we use to begin with."

The firm now scans-in customer documents and files clients' tax returns with the government digitally, Gerry said. Customers get a copy of their return on a compact disc and the firm keeps a digital copy on its server, he said.

The only recycling the company still does is with bottles and cans. Gerry said the company accumulates them and gives them to charity.

Truth be told, the company used to have a basement full of filing cabinets, which in turn were full of paper documents. The cabinets are still there, but they're empty after the firm hired Absolute Data Destruction to shred the paper it no longer needed, Gerry said.

Absolute Data Destruction, a New Hampshire company, offers on-site shredding service that recycles the paper it collects.

Lawrence DelVecchio, a Milford accountant who runs his business out of his home, said he hired Woburn-based Shred Pro to get rid of about 850 pounds of paper a few years back. Shred Pro, which also offers a mobile service, recycles the paper it collects.

``I certainly did have a lot of files, they accumulated over the years," DelVecchio said. ``I was saving them all then realized I didn't need them all, so I had them shredded."

Now DelVecchio saves all of his clients' data on his computer hard drive and backs the files up on discs.

Susan Crane, a Sudbury environmental attorney who also works from home, said she uses a Staples Inc. shredder to take care of her clients' sensitive data, then uses the town's recycling bins to get rid of the paper.

``I recycle every single scrap," Crane said. ``Our recycling volume, home and home office is probably 40 percent of total waste, another 5 (percent) to 10 percent is composted. It's important for everyone to do. I just think it's critical."

Greg Conigliaro of Framingham-based Conigliaro Industries, another waste management company, said a lot of small businesses come to his facility to get rid of their recyclable materials, because it's cheaper that way. Conigliaro actually pays \$5 per ton for mixed paper. While the company doesn't do on-site shredding, it does pick up recycled material, which may cost a business more.

``Most of the small business guys are motivated by helping the environment, but they don't have a big trash load to begin with," Conigliaro said. ``There are three motivations for why people recycle: to save money, to reach environmental goals or to meet local, state or federal regulations."

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