

Persuasive Waste Receptacles

Background:

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the recycling rate in the United States decreased from 34.7 percent in 2011 to 34.5 percent in 2012 ("2012 Facts and Figures Fact Sheet" 1-3). As indicated by the EPA in its 2014-2018 strategic plan, "traditional approaches to risk reduction and pollution control cannot always fully achieve [the] long-term and broad-environmental quality goals." ("FY 2014-2018 EPA Strategic Plan" 44). Recently, there has been significant growth in the development of physical technologies designed to intentionally change how individuals think and act. The purpose of this memo is to inform Gina McCarthy of a plan to reform the United State's public waste disposal system by replacing conventional waste receptacles with persuasive trash and recycling bins.

Issues:

The physical form of public waste receptacles obstructs proper waste disposal. Because public trash and recycling bins are not divided into subsections, citizens are unable to compost food and animal waste and cannot sort recyclables according to material.

Outdoor waste bins camouflage in with their surroundings because their color, typically gray, black, blue or green, imitates those most frequently found in nature, making them difficult to locate from far distances and at night.

Course of action:

In order to reduce littering and increase the recycling rate of municipal waste in the United States, the EPA must develop a standardized system that makes it easy, convenient, and simple for citizens to properly dispose of waste in public spaces. In its 2009 report, "Littering Behavior in America", Keep America Beautiful (KAB) lists the prior presence of litter, social norms, and convenience of trash receptacles as the top three factors that influence littering behavior ("Littering Behavior in America" 7). The likelihood that individuals will litter decreases in litter-free environments and when the convenience of using a proper receptacle increases (5-10). In its report KAB also notes that "a brightly colored, themed, or decorated receptacle attracts considerably more trash than does a plain ordinary appearing receptacle" (7).

Recommendation:

1. Design two cylindrical receptacles: one for trash/compost and one for recyclables.
2. Divide the trash receptacle into two halves. a. Reserve one half for compost, color it white and label it with the number 1. b. Reserve the remaining half for trash, color it black and label it with the number 2.

3. Divide the recycling receptacle equally into three sections. a. Color one third of each recycling receptacle red, one blue, and one yellow. b. Designate the red section for plastics, the blue section for glass and metal, and the yellow section for paper and cardboard. c. Label the red section with the number 3, the blue section with the number 4 and the yellow section with the number 5.
4. Phase in a new policy requiring packaging manufactures to code disposable items with the color and number that corresponds with the subsection that the material should be discarded in.

Works Cited

Keep America Beautiful. *Littering Behavior in America*. San Marcos: Keep America Beautiful, 2014. Web.

United States. Environmental Protection Agency. *2012 Facts and Figures Fact Sheet*. Washington: 2014. Web.

United States. Environmental Protection Agency. *FY 2014-2018 EPA Strategic Plan*. Washington: 2014. Web.