



## CASE STUDY | The Saldanha Bay Municipality Household Recycling Project

Within eight months of the launch of a recycling separation-at-source service at Langebaan in Saldanha Bay, nearly half of the households had started participating. This was partly achieved by using the psychology of recycling to guide public education and the communications campaign that supported it.

**S**aldanha Bay Local Municipality on the West Coast of South Africa includes resorts, industrial and commercial areas surrounded by farmlands. Its towns of Vredenburg, Saldanha Bay, Langebaan, Hopefield, St Helena Bay, Jacobsbaai and Paternoster consist of some 25 000 households.

Following the national waste management strategy, the municipality decided to implement a separation-at-source kerbside recycling collection service aimed at residents in upper-, middle- and lower-income areas. Recycling swap-shops are planned for informal settlements.

The programme is phased over a three-year period to accommodate annual budget allocations, with Langebaan selected as the first area for the launch of the service. Its demographics comprise many retired people with an influx of visitors over holiday periods.

### Tenders for collection and marketing

The tender for the kerbside recycling collection service required a competent recycling company to transport and sort recyclables to the Saldanha Bay Municipality's materials recovery facility. This was awarded to Wastegro based in nearby Malmesbury.

The tender also required a communications subcontractor with proven experience in the recycling behaviour change field to manage public education and marketing to increase householders' participation. This was awarded to GreenEdge Communications, a Cape Town-based consultancy.

A strategy was then developed that included educational materials for householders and tactical use of local media along with activities to reach schools, housing complexes and shopping centres. Relevant information and FAQs were written up for the municipality's website.

### Starter packs and launch materials

Starter packs containing informational leaflets, fridge magnet reminder cards and two clear bags to start recycling were distributed to households in the week before launch. All "dry" materials – paper, plastic, glass and tins – were to be put out in clear bags on the pavement for weekly collection on refuse removal day. These would be swapped for fresh ones, so keeping the system moving.

A launch advertisement was created and placed in *Weslander*, the local community newspaper, and on social media. The emphasis in messaging was the ease of a wet/dry, two-bag

separation system and the convenience of door-to-door weekly collection. On launch day – 5 October 2016 – a photo and article featuring councillors and municipal officials supporting the launch was published.

### Schools recycling art competition

In the run-up to and during the launch, a recycling art competition between local schools was organised in partnership with the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve. Prizes were donated by shops in the nearby Laguna Mall. This helped raise recycling awareness among children and their families. The prize-giving event was a further opportunity to gain media exposure.

Soon after the launch, a local women's organisation held a recycling demonstration for their members. Photos were taken and an article was published in *Weslander*.

At the nearby mall, a table was set up on Saturday mornings where shoppers were given advice about what and how to recycle. Visits to housing and resort complexes were also undertaken with leaflets and posters handed out to homeowners' associations and managing agents.

### Assessing participation rates and waste sampling

By early December, two months after the launch, the rate of participation by residents could be measured, based on the weight of recyclables collected. Also, a waste sampling exercise was done to determine what kinds of materials were



A wrapped starter pack



LEFT Community members with their clear bags for recycling

OPPOSITE PAGE Launch of the Saldanha Bay Municipality Household Recycling Project

## Elements for success

- Adequate planning and preparation time
- Competent, proactive waste management department
- Helpful municipal Communications Unit
- Strategic behaviour change through marketing and communications
- Efficient, service-oriented recycling collections contractor

being separated by households and by which income levels.

This revealed, not surprisingly, that the proportion of glass was greatest among upper-income households (who would have higher disposable income to buy bottled beverages), while plastic (especially PET for soft drink bottles) was greatest in the lower-income groups.

### Psychology of recycling

The psychology of recycling behaviour change shows that some people in a community or organisation will only take part in recycling once it has been shown to be working effectively.

Report-back advertorials were placed in Weslander emphasising that within eight weeks, nearly one out of every two households were already recycling. The advertorial also used infographics to show recognisable examples of what could be made from the materials recycled so far, and what resources were saved.

### Holiday season

Being a coastal resort, Langebaan draws

visitors over the holidays. Messaging was also designed to let them know that the recycling service was available and they could get starter bags at the local municipal office. Over Christmas and New Year, there was a spike in the amount of recyclables collected, which reflected the increase in people and the consumption of festive drinks and eats.

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### The next set of towns

Planning is now under way for the launch into the next set of towns, which will replicate methods and hopefully tonnages achieved in Langebaan.

The Weslander readership covers these towns as well, and many enquiries for the service have been received from their residents.

This bodes well for the expansion of the service. However, these towns have a different demographic and are populated mostly by middle- and lower-income residents employed in commercial, industrial and agricultural enterprises. It remains to

be seen how the first and second phases of the services compare. But with the first-phase householders' participation on trend to exceed 50%, and over 250 t having been collected since launch, while 38 jobs have so far been created in the process, the Saldanha Bay Municipality's kerbside recycling service can be seen to be on the path to efficient recycling.

"The introduction of the separation-at-source programme in October 2016 has been highly successful and the second and third phases will follow shortly. The success of the programme is dependent on having the correct team players. I want to thank Wastegro and GreenEdge for the effective and efficient services rendered to Saldanha Bay Municipality and our communities," comments David Wright, waste manager at the municipality.

### Secrets to success

Most importantly, the success of the programme has been due to residents answering the call for recycling and being willing to give their voluntary time and energy to get into the routine of separating their domestic waste at source and, in this way, contributing to social and environmental betterment. **35**

*\*Hugh Tyrrell is the director of GreenEdge Communications.*

## Awareness, education and behaviour change campaigns for successful separation-at-source recycling

- Campaign planning
- Project management
- Messaging and graphics
- Creative production
- Media planning and placing
- Training and coaching



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