

Sustainable Packaging Coalition Spring Conference

March 25 – 27, 2014

4.

Key Overall Themes / Takeaways

- **Customers are confused, and contamination is the result.** Industry, governments, schools are not using universal messaging, leading to contamination and eroding ROI for recycling and composting businesses that enable landfill diversion and use of post-consumer recycled content as raw materials. Universal messaging / customer confusion jointly represent a universal challenge. (See How2Recycle.info section, below)
- **More cross-sector collaboration is required** to further embed sustainable practices into business supply chains, including packaging design decisions.

UW Compostable Packaging Expo

- The compostable packaging selection has grown from 7 to ~700 since Seattle began this journey!
- Compostable PLA film is making its way into sandwich wrap and pastry bag windows; we need to think about ways to minimize customer confusion and ensure these items make it into the correct waste stream. Tinting presents problems with regard to food presentation. What other ideas does the group have?
- In complying with Seattle's food service packaging ordinance, Starbucks chose to pursue plastic-lined recyclable hot cups instead of PLA-lined compostable cups in order to avoid becoming involved in the GMO debate. PCC arrived at the same decision based on their commitment to avoiding GMO products.

Tour of Cedar Grove Everett Composting Facility

- Contamination is their biggest challenge:
 - #1 contaminant is plastic film, including green produce bags due to confusion with green compostable trash bags
 - #2 contaminant is recyclables
 - Also: produce stickers!
 - If perceived contamination level exceeds 5% for a given load, the entire load must be sent to the landfill.
 - Commercial loads are the biggest challenge with respect to contamination.
- As such, CG supports / requests help in the following areas:
 - Fully compostable food service ware (to avoid dirty recyclables contaminating both recycling and composting waste streams)
 - Ban of green-tinted polyethylene bags (to distinguish from compostable trash bags)
 - Tinting of compostable foam meat trays (to distinguish from polystyrene)
 - PLA wrap labels, tints
 - More education for homeowners
- CG is looking to expand their offerings of compostable food service containers. Currently partner with WNA (cutlery), SOLO (cups), Bioterra (takeout). See [Zilchables](#).
- CG did not bid on latest Seattle contract; current contract terminates in April 2014.
- Seattle represents/represented) 20% of CG volume.
- Lack of standardization creates challenges with respect to labeling and customer education.

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- Cedar Grove certification standards differ from those of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI).
- US Composting Council/BPI seal are not universally on food service packaging.

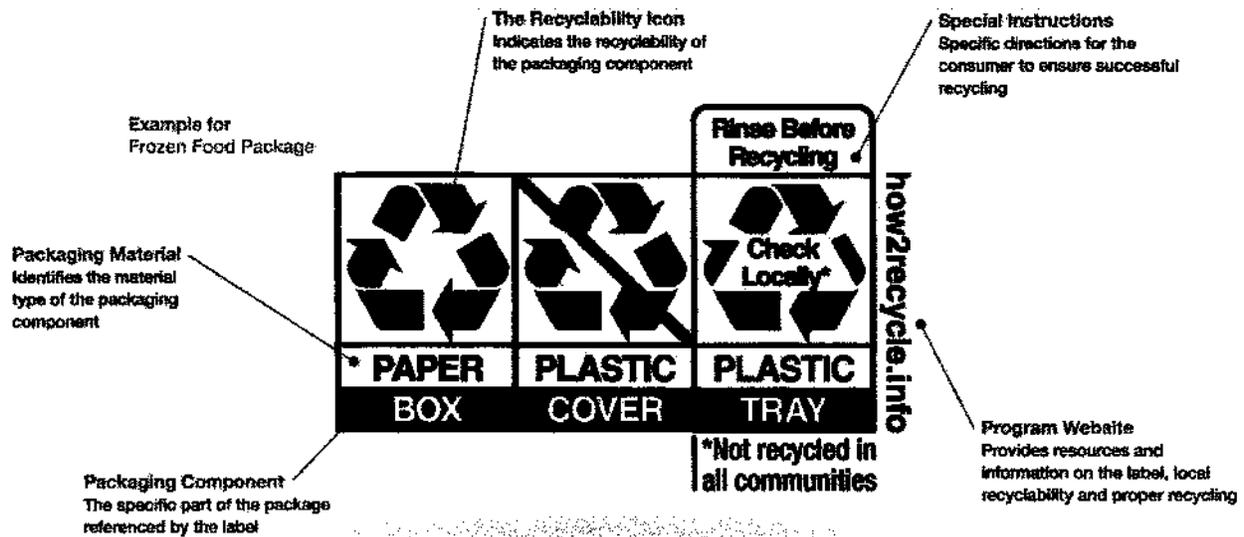
Essentials of Sustainable Packaging

- **SPC Definition of Sustainable Packaging:**
 - Is beneficial, safe & healthy for individuals and communities throughout its life cycle;
 - Meets market criteria for both performance and cost;
 - Is sourced, manufactured, transported, and recycled using renewable energy;
 - Optimizes the use of renewable or recycled source materials;
 - Is manufactured using clean production technologies and best practices;
 - Is made from materials healthy throughout the life cycle;
 - Is physically designed to optimize materials and energy;
 - Is effectively recovered and utilized in biological and/or industrial closed loop cycles.
- **Creating economically viable, closed loop systems for the recovery of packaging materials is an essential characteristic for Sustainable Materials Management:**
 - As defined by OECD, Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) is “an approach to promote sustainable materials use, integrating actions targeted at reducing negative environmental impacts and preserving natural capital throughout the life-cycle of materials, taking into account economic efficiency and social equity.”
 - SMM conserves resources, reduces waste, slows climate change, and minimizes the environmental impacts of the materials we use.
- **Customer confusion re: terminology**
 - Degradable: will break down eventually; not proven and concerns recyclers
 - Biodegradable: Implications of anaerobic vs. aerobic, longer duration than certified compostable
 - Certified Compostable: Varying standards (BPI, ASTM, Cedar Grove, Backyard / Belgian)

How2Recycle.info

- The How2Recycle Label began in 2008 and is a project of GreenBlue’s Sustainable Packaging Coalition.
- The How2Recycle Label is a voluntary, standardized labeling system that clearly communicates recycling instructions to the public. Variation in recycling programs, unclear labeling, and inaccurate recyclability claims make proper recycling a challenge. The How2Recycle Label was created to provide consistent and transparent on-package recycling information to consumers. Currently the label only applies to packaging sold in the U.S.
- As the SPC continues to rollout the How2Recycle standard, partnerships with organizations such as SPU and the SWAC are welcomed, specifically:
 - Help Harmonize Recyclability Language (consider incorporating into municipal signage efforts?)
 - Provide Data / Feedback to the SPC regarding the impacts of the label

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Keynote Speaker & Panel Discussion: Joel Makower, Chairman and Executive Editor, GreenBiz Group, Inc. "The State of Green Business/Corporate Sustainability"

- Panelists from Microsoft, Starbucks and REI
- Key (very high-level) takeaways:
 - More cross-sector collaboration is necessary to continue to move the needle on both managing risk and creating value.
 - Ownership of sustainability within organizations is shifting away from c-level positions such as CSO, and moving instead toward being embedded within the org where the biggest impacts are perceived, e.g. supply chain, facilities management.
 - Broadly speaking, "if companies were required to pay the full environmental costs of their businesses, it would cut profits by 100%." So whether you, your customers or some outside force makes that calculation for you, "ignoring sustainability is becoming a risk factor for some companies."

Visit to Westlake Center Food Court to Observe Food Service Packaging Regulations in Practice

- Customer confusion due to out-of-town guests, suboptimal signage
- Tenants are fined for non-compliance

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Corporate Sustainability Reporting (Carbon Footprinting, SASB, GRI G4)

- Lots of discussion about the significant time, energy, resources that are being spent on sustainability reporting in absence of industry standard reporting requirements. Key takeaways:
 - Metrics are in high demand today because customers don't trust companies and are demanding more transparency, both at the corporate and SKU levels.
 - When responding to a reporting request from a client or elsewhere, be sure you know how clients are planning to use the reports (if you don't, ask!)
 - When requesting reports, ask yourself and your colleagues to seriously consider how they will inform decision-making. Is it meaningful, actionable?
 - Key audience for reporting is actually internal employees: it can be used as an educational process, tool for engagement / change management, and to inform decision-making.
 - Harmonization across reporting standards is desperately needed, but may not come.

Additional Speakers and Some Notes

- Dick Lilly, Seattle Public Utilities: "Seattle's solution to a packaging challenge"
 - Big problem: contamination.
 - Moving toward compostable packaging requirements by 2015, with certain exceptions (e.g. hot/cold beverage cups may be recyclable).
- Sego Jackson, Snohomish County Solid Waste: "How to get more packaging recycled"
 - Have done some inspired work around "transcreation" (vs. translation) of educational materials for non-English speaking / immigrant communities.
- Janine James, The Moderns: "Leveraging consumer insights for sustainability"
 - These days, all companies are in the content business, whether they realize it or not
 - Let the customer discover how green your product is; don't hit them over the head with it.
 - Make the customer the hero; empower them to do (buy) the right (green) thing by telling a compelling story.
 - Focus on educating the kids! They will educate their families.
- Jeffrey Wooster, Dow Chemical Company: "Consumer Insights and Packaging Sustainability Lessons Learned From Dow Chemical"
- Brett J. Butler, U.S. Forest Service and University of Massachusetts Family Forest Research Center: "Family Forestry in the US"
 - More than 50% of forests in the U.S. are privately owned (i.e. by families or individuals)
- Martine Padilla, Sustainable Green Printing Partnership
- Joe Myhra, Seattle Mariners, Green Sports Alliance
- Allen Langdon, Multi-Material British Columbia, "The evolution of EPR in Canada"
- Scott Cassel, Product Stewardship Institute, Extended Producer Responsibility
- George Leonard, Trash Free Seas Program, Ocean Conservancy
- Jay Bassett, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency