

**CONFERENCE CALL MINUTES
WEPSI DESIGN SUBGROUP
12/05/01**

WEPSI Design Subgroup members present:

John Katz, EPA Region 9
Kathy Hudson Kerns, PSU
Ted Reichelt, Intel
David Stitzhal, NWPSC
Wayne Rifer, WEPSI
Vicky Salazar, EPA Region 10
Cate Gable, Global Futures
Frank Marella, Sharp
Patricia Jatczak, WA DOE

Design Subgroup Minutes 12/5/01

Update: Renee St. Denis has been contacted again but we have no response from her as yet. Cate will follow up one more time via email.

We returned to and restated our subgroup project focus of Recyclers-to-OEM feedback loop. Discussion followed. The side benefit of this approach is that it will allow us to establish broader relationships with this stakeholder group of recyclers. Also it narrows our focus to something doable.

But questions were raised about including a channel for consumers to the OEM as well. The recycler feedback is really end-of-life only; the purchase decision has already been made. The recycler group doesn't have the same 'market power' that consumers do. The consumer feedback may be a more powerful driver for OEM DfE change. Consumer feedback often gets a lot of attention, whether that consumer is an individual or an institution.

We then discussed a possible way to wrap the two ideas — recycler and consumer feedback — together, to explore the link between recycler and consumer. A suggestion was made that we tap retailers as well.

In order to ensure that we weren't covering ground already staked out by other subgroups, Wayne gave a review of the market drivers group focus. They are considering an assessment tool that would evaluate products for DfE and recycling friendliness.

It was brought up that perhaps we could find common ground on the idea of focusing on "feedback loop to OEMs regarding DfE/DfEOL" and consider three or four various options with the view to doing a "mini-SWOT" for each option:

- Consumer -- residential, institutional, public, private

- Retailers -- both online (virtual) as well as physical

It was noted that institutional consumers can provide feedback from both purchasers and disposers.

Then we discussed the need to define the products to be covered by this feedback loop. It was generally agreed that we were following the product scope established in the NEPSI dialogue.

We recapped by restating our overall focus and by brainstorming on aspects to consider in preparing for our SWOT. We also acknowledged that feedback can include both informational feedback and financial feedback mechanisms.

Consensus on Design Subgroup Focus:

Informational feedback loops to OEMs (for products currently being focused on by NEPSI). We will consider for inclusion three feedback channels: from recyclers, consumers (both institutional and individuals) and retailers. These may be narrowed or tailored based on mini-SWOTs we conduct for each channel option.

One outcome of the SWOT will be identification of key leverage points. Those feedback mechanisms that are better implemented early will be identified.

Key questions/components to consider in preparing for our SWOTs:

How is recyclability valued? How can you measure recyclability of something manufactured today that won't be recycled until 5-8 years down the road? The example discussed was the flame retardant component in older plastics which is no longer being added to new machines.

Life-time of the product versus technology life-cycles — (there is a 6-10 year development cycle, whereas consumer/market lifecycle is 2 years).

What other feedback models and systems are out there for review? (Consumer product safety commission? -- i.e. how did the Firestone tire problem come to light?)

Leasing/long-term contracts (what consumers are wanting in upgradeability, maintenance, i.e. utilize long-term service and maintenance agreements for cars as a model? Is that feedback helping to change design for autos?). It was suggested that this mechanism is best for large customers.

Consumer reports — (CR is a non-profit group consumer union which publishes reports. Note three months ago, the report on electronics/tvs/computers and a rating for what is repaired and which should be. "Fix It or Nix It", Oct 2001)

Internet ratings by consumers?

Marketing focus groups — most OEMs have them to inform marketing and product development.

Other "Informal feedback"- channels — Conferences - EPR2, IEEE -- attended by recyclers, OEMs, NGOs, Biz and government where dialogue happens.

"Gray market" issue — chips taken out of one component and remanufactured into a 'new' product

Timing of the feedback loop — at what pt does the OEM get the info? And let's make sure it is received at a time it is useful.

Institution/Culture: Are OEMs ready for feedback? Is the form of the information right/useful? How could we make it useful to OEMs?

Components / modules easy to take out and repair

Are EOL issues relegated to environmental managers rather than the engineers designing product? Who is the right contact for the feedback info?

The feedback mechanism needs to be considered in light of a national recycling infrastructure and marketplace

What if NEPSI works? What if NEPSI doesn't work? What would improve/hinder our chances of a feedback loop being productive? The comment was made that if the currently fragmented EOL and disposal market is consolidated in some way coming out of NEPSI, information channels will be much more easily established.

How do the agreed upon system attributes from NEPSI and WEPSI look in terms of their relationship with feedback loops.

Is there a feedback loop to manufacturer suppliers (including suppliers of raw materials, components, and/or product tools)? (EIA -- Materials Declaration Form; customer info coming to OEMs reflecting change in design and reflecting that change upstream to component and materials suppliers)

Component manufacturers — we really need to consider a two-way feedback loop.

Feedback should set direction for R&D on down the supply chain. Also these changes must fit together systemically (i.e. like lead-free solder and the other implications that has for design changes).

Next steps:

Prepare and route documents to all design subgroup members (including the mini-SWOT examples from the Canadian study; minutes from this mtg.; others?)

Read and think about considerations above.

Plan on convening as a group during the next multi-stakeholder meeting in Portland 12/12 to discuss.