

Tips for Implementing a Neighborhood Electronics Collection Event

A Case Study

The following text describes a recent neighborhood electronic collection event. This was the second of two events, and corrected the mistakes of the first.

BRING Recycling, a non-profit center in Eugene, Oregon, teamed with Lane County to provide their community with an opportunity to donate electronic equipment for reuse and recycling. The organizing team worked with a salvage company, Computer Drive Connection (CDC), which in turn works closely with StRUT, Students Recycling Used Technology. This connection appealed to the organizing team's goals of putting working systems back to use. StRUT is a non-profit organization that takes working systems, refurbishes them, and donates them to schools.

The team did a modest amount of outreach for this event. They placed an ad in the daily newspaper, in a weekly newspaper, and in the Comic News; published press releases; received a bit of TV publicity through a news conference; and distributed about 20 flyers to the BRING's board members. All electronic equipment was accepted with the exception of TV's and household appliances like toasters, blenders, etc.

The collection event took place over two consecutive days, Friday and Saturday, at a site provided by the County. Lane County, BRING and community volunteers from the Master Recycler program staffed the event. It took two people to control traffic, two to load donations into boxes, one or two to deal with the paper/manuals, and one or two to greet customers and record their donations. In addition, they had a forklift driver/pallet jack operator to move the full gaylords about and load them into a trailer.

The first day was open to businesses by appointment only. These appointments were set 15 minutes apart from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. The businesses were asked to donate \$1 per piece of equipment with a \$10 minimum. Separating the commercial collection from the residential kept the lines moving smoothly on each day. Appointments could have been set closer together and the event could have ended at 2 p.m. It worked well for businesses to make appointments, whether they drop off items on the same day as residents or on a separate day. They often have large quantities and it can slow things down to unload 50+ items. It is rare for the general public to have that amount of material.

The residential collection was scheduled to take place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. All equipment was sorted to the salvage company specifications. No salvage activity was allowed at the event because it had proved to be a problem at an earlier event, at which other non-profits were allowed access for salvage for reuse. It slowed things down and caused long lines. CDC facilitated reuse without having to deal with it at the event. All collected equipment was put into a truck provided by the salvage company.

Many systems were donated with reuse in mind. The donors brought equipment in its original packaging with associated manuals. This level of care and completeness is not necessary for the reuse market. The corrugated cardboard and paper were recycled. The County provided

gaylords to collect these fiber materials and volunteers from the Master Recycler program were on hand to remove wrapping from manuals and help separate the incoming paper.

What to expect:

The residential collection, even though it was advertised as 11 – 2, took place from 10 to 4. People began lining up hours early. Many people brought full systems including peripherals, manuals, software, etc. It is difficult for many people to accept the fact that the eight-year-old computer that they paid \$2,000 for is now scrap metal, so be considerate! The collection event collected about 27 tons of electronics and a ton of paper and cardboard. The paper consisted mostly of manuals. All wrapping and plastic must be removed for proper recycling. If your community has a need for floppy disks, you can accept those that are brought in by the public, reformat them, and distribute them back to the community.

What everyone should know:

Plan for a big turn out. Get plenty of volunteers and staff. At least six people are needed on hand at all times, including traffic control; more are preferable. Be sure to have some garbage bins on site. The first step in doing an event is finding a vendor to accept all the material and getting their guidelines. These change with the markets, so check early and often. For example, some will charge you to accept monitors, some will not accept them at all. The organizing team's current vendor, CDC, is no longer accepting copy machines or VCR's although they did the first time.

BRING is happy to send a copy of its full report to anyone thinking of holding a collection event.

Bring Recycling
P.O. Box 885
Eugene, OR 97440-0885
541-746-3023
bring@efn.org