

Case Study: Direct Mail Recycling Analysis

BACKGROUND

Preceding PAS 2020, the DMA and Royal Mail entered into a Producer Responsibility Voluntary Agreement between DMA and Defra, which commits the industry to ensuring 55% of direct mail is recycled by the end of 2009, and 70% by the end of 2013. National waste management experts M-E-L Research were commissioned jointly by DMA and Royal Mail, to produce an accurate and independent measure of performance against this target.



METHODOLOGY



The monitoring operation involved technicians from M-E-L Research carrying out a detailed analysis of household waste and recycling collections. A representative sample of local authority areas was selected, and four waves of analysis were carried out over each calendar quarter in 2009. Samples of residual 'dustbin' waste, and paper waste collected for recycling, were collected and processed to identify materials that can be identified as arising from direct marketing campaigns. The work was carried out by specialist trained technicians, who are routinely deployed more widely by M-E-L Research to work out the kinds of materials in the household waste stream that householders are best at recycling.

Commonly this focuses on things like drinks cans, cardboard packaging, glass bottles and food waste. The DMA/Royal Mail recycling tracking research required a sophisticated addition to the normal analysis process so that direct mail products could be reliably identified in the recycling materials, and also in the remaining dustbin waste. This information was needed so that the recycling percentage could be accurately calculated.

Acorn area classification and types of collection system categorisation were also used to ensure that a reliable and representative national figure could be calculated based on the samples of waste the consultants were taking from areas within 11 local authority districts each quarter (44 per year).

OUTCOMES

The final 2009 figure showed that over 76% of marketing mail was placed in the correct recycling receptacle at the kerbside by householders. This was a very encouraging first national figure and surpassed the voluntary agreement figures for both 2009 and 2013. A similar project is currently being undertaken for 2010 to ensure long-term reporting consistency and provide evidence to drive forward increased diversion of used direct mail items, which makes carbon savings and prolongs the life of our increasingly precious landfill sites.

TESTIMONIALS

Chris Edwards, Senior Insight Manager at Royal Mail added, "*M-E-L's robust and accurate measurement of mail recycling is central to Royal Mail's commitment to develop a sustainable future for the Direct Mail industry*".

For further information about this project please contact
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