



# Tips and Tricks for Removing Trash Cans (and encouraging the use of centralized hubs)

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*We learned a lot as we Implemented Centralized Waste Hubs and wanted share our Tips and Tricks:*

**1) Really, really perfect your rational and be sure that EVERYONE is talking about it.**

Use facts to persuade people, but consider telling it as a story... it can even be a long story. Our message, in story form, is found at the end of this document.

**2) Expect push-back**

People are really attached to their trash cans, but you CAN change behavior!

**3) Reevaluate and Educate constantly**

For a while we noticed that large plastic fountain pop cups were being tossed into the trash. We realized that the icon on our "Plastics" bin was a bottle and so people were confused. We modified the bin sign and the problem was gone! Similarly, we noticed that most of our "trash" was candy/chip wrappers. We called our provider and they indicated that if we set up a separate bin for wrappers, that they would be able to recycle them. And so we did!

**4) Arm your staff with answers to FAQs**

From "where does this go" to "why are we doing this"... the questions come forward all the time, and so it is helpful for staff to not only buy in to the initiative, but also be able to help educate

**5) Consider using "Individual Recycling Containers" for staff with individual offices.**

We realized right away that our full time faculty and staff did not want to get up and walk to a centralized bin each time they opened an envelope, ate a snack, or used a tissue and so we offered "individualized recycling containers." Our containers are paper bags with our logo on them so that people can fill them up and empty/sort at a hub as needed. The bags work well for several reasons:

- 1) in a shared office space, each person can have their own
- 2) Small bags encourage people take care of them regularly (custodial staff will NOT be sorting bags)
- 3) If a bag gets somewhat gross, it can be composted.



## Our Message, In Story Form

Our message/story addresses multiple concerns in order to address various concerns. A typical conversation/class presentation goes a little like this:

**Sustainability Champion:**

Did you know that our recycling goes to the Holland Rescue Mission? The sorting becomes part of their job training program and the profits go to keep their programming going. For that reason (and because we're committed to sustainability), we've implemented centralized hubs with bins around campus.

**Other – Student, Faculty, Staff** (*nodding*):

Cool. (everyone typically agrees with the first part)

**Champion:**

And in order to encourage everyone to make responsible choices (so that we can optimize our donations to the Rescue Mission), we've also removed trash containers from individual offices and classrooms around campus"

**Other** (*looking confused/concerned/perplexed/bewildered*)

What? No way. You couldn't have. Why? Where am I supposed to put my trash?

**Champion** (*gently, perhaps with a twinge of sarcasm*):

You can put it in the centralized hubs ... best practices show that when individuals are presented with options, they make good decisions... so we wanted to make sure that each time you went to throw something away, you were presented with the best options so you could make the best choice.

**Other:**

I always recycle! I put paper into the blue bins, try to put bottles into the recycling and then put everything else into the trash...

**Champion:**

I'm sure you do... but not everyone does... we did a dumpster dive...

**Other:** (*intrigued, possibly disgusted*)

What?!?!?

**Champion:**

Yes, a student and faculty volunteered to sort through the dumpster to see how things were being disposed. Turns out that about 90% of what was bound for the landfill could have been composted or recycled.

**Other:**

Wow. That's a lot... (*making connections*) and it could have been going to the Mission.

**Champion:**

Yeah, and after we took away the trash cans, we waited 4 weeks and did another dive. Turns out that the second time, only 20% or so could have been recycled or composted.

**Other:** (*recognizing the value, but reluctant to change behavior*)

Hmmpph... Doesn't my tuition pay for a janitor to take care of my trash?

**Champion:**

We're trying to keep tuition down, and this not only allows us to take responsibility, but also is a cost saving measure because our janitorial staff does not have to empty as many bags. It also saves money because we don't have to buy as many bags, and ...

**Other:** (*sensing no way out*)

OK