

A Greener World

We hear it a lot in the news these days:

"Recycle newspapers and save a tree. Collect bottles and cans so they can be reused in the manufacturing of new products."

Protecting our delicate environment seems to be on the agenda of politicians, government leaders, and citizens in many parts of the world to show support for mother nature. The concept of green consumerism has gained momentum more and more over the last decade, and the public feels moved to pitch in and help. However, three essential keys needed to power this movement include a more informed public, the development of improved technology, and a greater demand for recycled materials.

Let's use paper as an example. The first step is to raise public awareness about the recycling process, to explain the kinds of materials that can be recycled, and provide ways on how to properly dispose of them. Local governments should educate the public on how to properly sort reusable materials from those, like waxed paper, carbon paper, plastic laminated material such as fast food wrappers, that can't be recycled very easily. Then, a system of collecting these sorted materials needs to be established. The Public interest might be there, but soon may wane if there isn't a system where they can take these materials to be recycled. Sometimes, we become complacent when it comes to recycling, but when you speak in terms of actual facts and figures that everyone can understand, people become more cognizant of the problem. I remember reading one time that the energy saved from one recycled can provides enough power to operate a television for three hours. Give the public information they can grasp, and then you will increase your chances of gaining followers.

Second, technological progress has been made on many fronts, but governmental agencies need to step up their support for companies involved in recycling by providing tax incentives, low-cost loans, or even grants to upgrade equipment and to encourage further research. One breakthrough has been the development of a new manufacturing process that uses enzymes to help remove ink from paper in more energy efficient and environmentally safe methods. Recycling paper materials can be expensive in both monetary and environmental terms. The difficulty in removing print from paper, the amount of energy expended during the process, and caustic waste that is sometimes produced are costs that companies incur that are then passed on to the consumer.

The final key is to increase demand for the growing surplus of resources waiting to be recycled. This process (or rather, *problem*) has appeared in various regions of the world where the technology to process the used materials lags far behind the amount being collected for recycling. There may be a great outpouring of support; yet the great stumbling block to implementing the second stage of this plan could be impeded by the corporate sector's inability to find commercial enterprises interested in using recycled goods especially when the cost exceeds those of virgin materials.

Recycling is a crucial key to protect our planet. The three keys mentioned are important ways to achieve this end.