

CHAPTER 18

EFFECTIVE TABLING AND PRESENTATIONS

INTRODUCTION

We learned in the Behavior Change chapter that it usually takes a personal interaction or connection for people to commit to new actions. A person can read and see in books, magazines, brochures, movies and social media that their actions can make a difference, but it typically takes hearing from a trusted source for them to really make change happen. Person to person contact also helps address specific concerns and questions. While media materials and messages can be tailored to fit the majority of the people in a community, they can't match the responsiveness and engagement of conversation and interaction. A person can listen, answer questions and identify tools that respond to another person's situation and needs. A person can share stories about how they also struggled, and how they were able to succeed in making changes.



Elizabeth Erickson tells her story

If we ensure that the messenger is armed with knowledge and access to effective resources then we have a truly powerful formula for change. This is why it is so important for you to share what you know as a Master Recycler.

Master Recyclers use a number of tools and techniques to connect with the community about resource conservation on a personal level. Common strategies include staffing informational tables (Yes, “tabling” is a real verb!) and offering presentations. This chapter provides information to help you effectively utilize these two strategies. It will explore effective communication techniques for behavior change in the context of resource and materials management. In both group and individual projects, understanding the nuts and bolts of effective communication will increase your success at motivating others to make positive changes.

COMMUNICATION FOR CHANGE

When preparing to staff an information booth or offer a presentation, it is important to be thoughtful about what you want to focus on saying and what materials or resources you can bring with you to help support your message. You have a limited amount of time to reach people and make a meaningful connection. Depending on the setting, you may be competing with music, food, and other exhibitors. At one County Fair, Master Recyclers reported that their booth was next to the Humane Society. “It was hard to compete with a kennel full of cute puppies!” said a Master Recycler who was there.

Despite the potential distractions, Master Recyclers report feeling most satisfied when they prepared ahead of time and genuinely connected with the people they talked with.

To think through how you can be brief and still connect with people, let’s revisit the checklist of positive and effective ways to communicate how people can take action that was in the behavior change chapter.

Behavior Change Checklist

- Identify one or two go-to positive actions you want people to do.
- Identify the barriers to the action.
- Identify who you are asking to do the action and what they value (for example, personal well-being, family, health, saving money, protecting nature, feeling connected to the community).
- Create messages and tools that help overcome barriers and reinforce benefits based on their values.
- Encourage people to try it.
- Set goals and give feedback

Remember that it is helpful to be as specific as possible with the action you choose to focus on. Rather than just encouraging people to recycle, compost or reduce waste, consider talking about keeping glass on the side, collecting food scraps while you are preparing meals, and sharing power tools. Try also to find out specifically who you might be talking with. If you are presenting to a group, ask questions about their interests, concerns and demographics.

Being specific will help you focus on the exact barriers and benefits that might be associated with the action and population you will be meeting. It will give you clues as to what tools and resources will be helpful in solving problems and help you think through how making these changes will be beneficial to the people you will be meeting. Remember, in our region, there are many reasons besides the environment that people might choose

to take some of these actions. People have said that recycling, sharing, composting, and using non-toxic alternatives also improves their sense of well-being, gives them more time with family, keeps their family and themselves healthier, connects them with the community, helps them feel like they are doing their part, shows how smart and resourceful they are, and saves money and time.



Cindy Correll shares the Include the Food message

Most of the campaigns by Master Recycler program partners utilized these techniques in their design. If you look at the City of Portland's Be Cart Smart campaign or the Eat Smart, Waste Less campaign in Beaverton, Gresham and Washington County you will see that they provide you the actions, benefits and tools needed to overcome barriers.

Your experience at an information booth or providing a presentation for these campaigns will be more effective (and fun) if you take some time ahead of time and use the behavior change checklist on the previous page to understand what this campaign specifically wants people to do, why they would want to do it, and how to use the tools that are provided. Your top messages will come from a combination of describing the actions and the benefits in taking the action.

Behavior science aside, the conclusion in the behavior change chapter was quite simple: if you listen, connect, tell your story and listen to others' stories, you will likely make the human connection that is so vital.

INFORMATIONAL TABLES

Tabling, the act of staffing an informational booth, is one of the most popular and effective ways that Master Recyclers reach and motivate people to reduce their waste. Some Master Recyclers sign up for tabling assignments that the Master Recycler Coordinator sets up. Others discover or arrange for tabling opportunities in their own communities. Some work with ready-made, topic-specific kits, while others like to create their own displays.



Yvonne Garcia explains backyard composting

When signing up for a prearranged information table:

- Instructions will be sent to you including directions, top messages and information on using the kit.
- You may be asked to pick up and/or drop off the kit.
- You may table with staff from Metro, Clackamas or Washington County, Mentors or other organizations. This is a great way to start out and learn, and it's also a chance to network with people working in the field. If you like working with them, you can give them your contact information and ask them to contact you directly when volunteer opportunities arise on their projects.
- You'll often work shifts with fellow Master Recyclers.

When arranging a table yourself, check with the event coordinator ahead of time to ask:

- Does it cost money?
- Do they provide a table and chair or canopy for rain and sun protection?
- Where exactly is your space, and how large is the table?
- Will you be expected to share a space?
- How many people attend this event?
- What languages are generally spoken at this event?

Basic tips will make your tabling outreach more successful:

- Before you arrive, identify key messages to include in every conversation. Stay on message when you're not answering questions.
- Review commonly asked questions on your topic before you start.
- Arrive on time. Bring water (hopefully you'll be talking a lot!).
- Always wear your name badge for Master Recycler projects.
- Don't just sit there; do something, even if the event is slow. Make eye contact as people pass by. Displays and literature are meant to assist you to communicate; not to do it for you.

- Think of some catchy phrases or introductory sentences that might attract people to the table. For example: “Would you like to guess which materials go in which container?” or “You look like you have a burning recycling question!”
- Stand up while talking to people. It’s easier on your neck and helps you make eye contact.
- Keep your table neat, with the most important pieces in the front. Bring paper weights for outdoor events, even on non-windy days. It takes only one gust to scatter your literature all over the place.
- If you’re working with a partner, take turns answering questions so that both of you get to interact with the public. Don’t jump in when it’s not your turn, unless your partner asks you to.
- Keep your messages positive. Talk about a wide range of benefits to taking action.
- Keep a tally of conversations as you go. Kits often include a count clicker. Or you can use a smart phone tally counter. You can even tally on a piece of paper.

Here are some pointers to make your own table a success:

Some Master Recyclers set up a table at their favorite community event, their kids’ harvest festival or science fair or farmers market. You can even do it once a month for the summer and rotate topics!

- Check with the Master Recycler Program Manager to ensure there isn’t already a Master Recycler working at the event you have in mind. The Program Manager may also have contact information for the organizers of the event.
- Consider announcing that you would like a partner in the Master Recycler newsletter and/or website by contacting the Master Recycler Program Manager.
- Consider sharing a table with a Master Gardener, if they already participate in this event.
- Review the next chapter for pictures and descriptions of displays and literature that are available to Master Recyclers throughout the region.
- Make sure that your display, information and literature are correct for the jurisdiction in which the event takes place.
- Keep it simple. Too many topics and too much literature can confuse your message.



Colleen Johnston and Melissa Baker made their own Can I recycle it booth

PRESENTATIONS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Often, Master Recyclers who want to make changes in their workplaces, multifamily housing, religious organizations, or other community organizations find that presenting to groups is persuasive. As with tabling, some presentation opportunities are prearranged for Master Recyclers. Some Master Recyclers enjoy sharing their knowledge and passion for waste reduction in presentations and demonstrations, while others find the idea intimidating; we encourage you to try it and discover whether it's a good fit for you.

You're welcome to call the Program Manager, your local jurisdiction liaison, or your Master Recycler Mentor for advice, to rehearse your speech, or just for a confidence booster. Most people who take on the challenge find it very rewarding. Below are some tips to make your presentation more successful.



Betty Benson presenting with props



Kris LaMar brings her worm bin wherever she presents

Questions to ask in advance if you are presenting to a group you don't know

- What is the exact location and time of the presentation? (If needed, ask for directions.)
- How long do I have to present?
- How many people are expected to attend?
- Should I bring brochures in languages other than English? Will interpreters be provided? (If they do not have the resources for an interpreter, contact the Master Recycler Program Manager to see if you can partner with a Master Recycler who speaks that language.)
- How much does this group already know about this topic? Is there anything in particular that you or the organizers hope to accomplish with this presentation?

Presentation preparation

- Keep it simple. Use PowerPoint presentations only if you have a table, projection surface, reliable equipment and access to electricity.
- Review the resources listed in the next chapter to select literature (handouts) to supplement your presentation.
- Consider checking out a kit to use as a visual aid or provide a game.
- Practice using your visual aids with someone you know and time yourself to make sure you are within the allotted time. Be sure to leave time for questions.
- Arrive early to have plenty of time to set up and familiarize yourself with the setting.

PowerPoint

- Most of the time, PowerPoint presentations are not the best way to connect with people as they tend to reduce your chance for dialogue. But in some settings like a lunch presentation at a workplace, you might decide to use this tool.
- Use PowerPoint presentations only if you have a table, projection surface, reliable equipment and access to electricity.
- Keep in mind that your PowerPoint slides should supplement your presentation and should not function as notes for you, the speaker. Do not simply read slide after slide.

Presentation content

- Carefully plan the beginning of your presentation. The first few minutes are important to capture your audience's attention. Tell a brief story or ask people to share their stories about success or challenges in taking action. If you are funny, make the story funny. Include why you made the changes you will be talking about.
- Use real experiences that people can identify with, rather than loads of statistics. Tell your own story whenever possible. Talk about when you struggled to get it right and how you made a change.
- Keep it positive. Studies show gloom and doom messages discourage people rather than motivate them to take action.
- Use an outline and key messages rather than trying to memorize a speech word for word.
- Think about what will encourage this particular audience. Parents at a PTA meeting will have different interests (for example, packing school lunches) than people attending a discussion at a senior center (for example, effective food storage).
- Use the worksheet on the next page to plan the content and outline of your presentation.



Cecelia Warner presents to Adelante Mujeres

RESOURCE

For more information on PowerPoint and other visual aids you can consult **7 Tips to Create Visual Presentations** (available online).



Christy Morales plays a recycling game with kids

PRESENTATION PREPARATION WORKSHEET

What action do you want people to take? _____

Who is your audience? _____

List three key messages you want them to hear:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What kind of kit and/or literature would help reinforce the message? _____

Outline the main points for your presentation: _____

Interactive communication

Whatever the type of outreach, open dialogue is often more compelling and more likely to drive social change than facts and figures. Hence, the most important part of your presentation may be the question and answer period after your short talk.



Leah Schrod interacting with kids

You probably can't cover all of the concerns or burning issues that your audience may have. But opening your presentation to dialogue will help you to better understand and address some specific concerns that may be preventing your audience from making important changes.

Pointers for a successful question and answer session

- When you practice your presentation with someone you know ahead of time, ask your “pretend audience” to ask some questions so that you are not just practicing your presentation, but also preparing to have a productive question and answer period.
- Listening is the most important part of communication. Try to determine what exactly the person is asking? If someone asks “Why can't we put plastics on the curb that have the same number as bottles and tubs?” don't respond with “You can recycle those plastics at these locations...” They'll still wonder, “Why not at the curb?” Answer the concern before you offer solutions!
- Review any sections of the handbook that pertain to your topics.
- Contact a Mentor, your local government liaison, or the Program Manager to find out the latest FAQs being asked on your topic.



Josy Wright adds some street theater to her message

- Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." As a Master Recycler, you know a lot more than the general public, but we don't expect you to know everything! What you can do is direct people to good information sources. This is a key function of Master Recyclers. The Metro Recycling Information Center is usually your best resource. You can even hand out magnets (available from Metro) imprinted with the RIC phone number: 503-234-3000.

Audience participation is another, more advanced tool you may want to integrate into your presentations. Interaction often helps individuals test new ideas, clarify their thinking, and develop skills for solving problems and resolving issues. However, you, as the presenter, must provide the direction and keep discussion focused on the topic.

Strategies you might use to generate audience participation



Natassja Pace demonstrated the problem of plastics at the beach with a sandbox display

- Introductory name games.
- Quizzes.
- Small group discussions.
- Role playing.
- Sharing favorite resources.
- Show and tell (personal stories)
- Problem-solving: Explain a problem (for example: vegetables and fruit are going bad before they get eaten) and ask the audience to contribute some strategies that might help solve this common problem. Fill in missing strategies after they have shared their ideas.
- Finish the presentation with an invitation for people to make a commitment: you can start with one. For example, you might commit to checking your cupboards before you go shopping so that you will buy only what you need.
- Use real objects or even art! People learn with different senses and through different sorts of activities. Bring props to talk about how to sort waste. If you are artistic, consider using a white board to draw the words or images you are describing. Use costumes or cut out images from magazines to demonstrate your points.

FEEDBACK

Consider using the form on the next page to ask for feedback. You can photocopy this 2-up form and cut in half. Ask people to fill it out after you offer a presentation or staff an information booth to help you get feedback and improve.



MASTER
RECYCLER
PROGRAM

FEEDBACK REQUEST

Please tell me the top three most beneficial aspects of this presentation / event.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Can you recommend any improvements? _____

Thank you for providing me with feedback on today's presentation / event!



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Amalia Allende at a greener cleaner table

CONCLUSION

Some of you will be ready to jump at the chance to get out and share your ideas and interact with the community, but if you are like most people, this feels intimidating. If this is the case, there are a number of small steps you can take to feel more comfortable.

- Start with a topic you feel passionate about.
- Talk with people you know first.
- Sign up for an opportunity where you will be working with staff or other volunteers.
- Talk over your concerns, ideas and even practice with your assigned Master Recycler Mentor.
- Staffing an information booth is usually a good first step before offering a presentation.
- Spend time with the ideas on preparation mentioned throughout this chapter.

Think about how you can share your story and experiences rather than simply telling people what to do. As Mahatma Gandhi suggests, “Be the change you want to see in the world.”