

## Case Study

As part of a wider communications campaign, Braintree carried out a door-to-door canvassing campaign in under performing areas on its alternate weekly recycling scheme. It aimed to stretch recycling performance by encouraging participation in recycling and giving advice on correct separation of recyclables and waste reduction opportunities. The council organised and managed the campaign in-house.



Braintree

## Braintree's canvassing experience!

# Background

Braintree District has 58,000 households and is mainly rural with three main market towns. Just over half of the properties in the district have an alternate weekly collection service. The scheme has consistently delivered high recycling rates (42% to 50%) through the collection of a wide range of recyclable materials, strong promotion and enforced participation. There is however a considerable variation in performance and a number of low performing areas have been targeted in an attempt to stretch the overall performance of the scheme.

Braintree's recycling rate is 30% exceeding its 2005/06 target by 9%.

# About the campaign

- Number of households targeted: 10,000
- Number of households spoken to: 2,468
- Hit rate: 33%
- Time period: August-September 2005.

## Campaign's aims:

- Raise recycling awareness and encourage participation
- Increase the range of materials households recycle
- Decrease contamination levels
- Improve participation frequency
- Investigate understanding of the service
- Communicate effectively with target audience
- Offer a personal approach
- Obtain 360 degree feedback

## Identifying target audience

Braintree's campaign focussed on non-participants and poor participants, determined through low or irregular set out, or high contamination. They were identified by two survey techniques:

### 1. A participation survey

A survey was carried out in November 2004. The results showed that round-by-round participation varied between 63% and 93%, with an average of 75.6%. A sample was selected from the lower performing collection rounds using street level set out data.

### 2. A contamination survey

The crews use contamination cards and stickers when residents put the wrong materials in their recycling containers. The number of cards issued was recorded on different rounds to identify problem areas. In addition, a separate contamination rate was calculated based on the number of warnings issued per participating property. The survey was carried out in February and March 2005.

# Logistics

## Recruitment

The Council prepared the job descriptions and placed advertisements at the Job Centre, on internal notice boards, on environmental recruitment websites and at local colleges.

From initial preparatory work to commencement of employment, recruitment took 3 months. This involved writing job and person specifications, undertake research to determine competitive salary rates, dealing with the personnel department, placing adverts, identifying equipment requirements and allocating budgets.

Braintree reviewed many job description adverts, including examples from WasteWatch, environmental job websites, Essex County Council and other local authorities. The findings were then adapted to meet local requirements. Adverts were posted on 28th June with a closing date for applications of 13th July 2005.

[Click here to see the job description.](#)

4 canvassers were recruited.

## Health and Safety

The Council produced a health and safety protocol. This protocol was adapted from the Environmental Services Department standard procedure and laid down guidance which ensured the safety of canvassers. ROTATE was also involved in giving health and safety guidance which was included in the training pack for the canvassers.

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Below is general guidance Braintree included in the training pack:

- If there is ever any doubt about personal safety, don't visit
- A daily work programme should be agreed in advance with the responsible officer
- At the end of the day team members should check out by telephoning the responsible officer
- A 'buddy' system can be used to ensure that every team member has contact with at least one other person and is not out of touch for unreasonable lengths of time
- All team members are required to carry mobile phones and there must be a least one phone for each 'buddy' team
- Canvassing should be based on a pre-agreed address list
- Canvassing should take place at the door
- Canvassing should be restricted to daylight hours

### Training

Once recruited, the canvassers undertook a one week intensive in-house training course. A training pack was developed with the help of ROTATE which included information on how to deal with the public, health and safety, details of the local recycling schemes and a Q and A section.

The canvassers were set targets in order to maintain good contact rates. This was based on the assumption that 14 doors per hour could be knocked on. This meant the team of four could visit 1,680 houses per week. With a 30% contact rate 504 people would be spoken to per week. These targets were changed slightly as work progressed to be more realistic – the original target underestimated the amount of training and organisational time.

### Managing the project

- Working hours: 37 hours per week
- Start and finish times: 9 am-5 pm
- Other hours: some evening and Saturday work were necessary to achieve the required contact rate.

'Day time engagement tends to be with people who have the time to recycle, there is a need to engage with people at evenings and weekends to reach the intended target audience.' (Ian Haines - Environmental Policy Manager)

One of the canvassers was appointed as team leader, providing day-to-day coordination of activities. The overall campaign was coordinated by a project manager.

### Questionnaire

A simple questionnaire was used as a basis for the conversation with the householder and to record feedback.

[Click here for questionnaire](#)

### Cost/resources

Total costs – £12,400, this included:

- Wages £8,628 - agreed rates were £6.55 per hour for canvassers and £7.60 per hour for team leader
- Recruitment and on costs £1,725
- Vehicles £320
- Equipment and clothing £371
- Mobile phones £200

These costs do not include training and the support provided by the project leader and other members of the recycling team, estimated at £10,000.

## Achievements

The canvassing proved to be a great PR opportunity for the authority. PR opportunities that resulted included:

- Positive reports in local newspapers
- Added value to roadshows held in the areas where canvassing had taken place
- Features on BBC Radio 4 You & Yours
- Enthusiastic support from councillors
- Canvassers were briefed on key issues other than recycling and were able to deal with and feed back non recycling issues – this was well received by the public and evidenced by customer comment and feedback to councillors

Subjective feedback from recycling officers and crews suggests that there has been a major improvement in customer understanding of the alternate weekly scheme and quality of participation. More recycling containers were being presented and a visible reduction in contamination was observed.

The participation survey is still in progress, however, provisional results show an overall increase in

## Braintree's canvassing experience!

participation of 9.6% giving an average of 85% and increases as high as 25% on some of the rounds. The contamination survey was repeated shortly after the canvassing ceased and showed a reduction in contamination per participating household from 3.66% to 2.38%.



'We think that it needs at least 8 weeks of field work to justify recruitment and training costs, but no longer than 12 weeks to maintain staff motivation and commitment (unless different activities can be introduced to break up the programme). Ultimately it will depend on the number of households targeted and availability of resources' (Ian Haines - Environmental Policy Manager)

## Learning points

- Set targets to ensure that a high proportion of contacts are made outside normal working hours
- Recruit graduate calibre workforce, it makes intensive training easier
- Break the programme up with feedback sessions and opportunities to do other activities

The campaign period needs to be long enough to gain maximum benefit from training and recruitment costs but short enough to maintain the enthusiasm of canvassers.

More case studies and specific advice is available through WRAP's ROTATE team – contact them on:

01295 819661  
[rotate@wrap.org.uk](mailto:rotate@wrap.org.uk)

Alternatively visit  
[www.wrap.org.uk/local\\_authorities/rotate/index.html](http://www.wrap.org.uk/local_authorities/rotate/index.html)  
for more information.

November 2006

# Job Description prepared by Braintree District Council

Department:	Environmental Services	Job No:	Grade:	1
Name:		Designation:	Recycling Communication Campaign Taskforce	
Responsible to:	Recycling Communications Campaign Officer			
Supervises:	None			
Overall Objectives:	To increase awareness of and participation in the high diversion recycling scheme operating in the Braintree District through an intensive programme of door stepping and monitoring.			
Main Duties:				
1	Carry out doorstepping activities in a defined area within the Braintree District, engaging the public through direct interaction, raising awareness of the recycling service and motivating customers to participate in the scheme.			
2	Distribute printed literature in support of door stepping activities.			
3	Assist with recycling and waste minimisation events and roadshows.			
4	Monitor performance and customer satisfaction using a variety of techniques including participation monitoring and face-to-face surveys.			
5	Record data arising from doorstepping and monitoring activities and assist with report writing using Microsoft Office products.			
6	Feed back issues raised by customers to the recycling team.			
7	Comply with all legislative requirements including health, safety and welfare, ensuring good practice and standards at all times.			
8	Apply and actively promote the principles of the Council's Equal Opportunities.			
9	Advise the Recycling Communications Campaign Officer if, at any time, the above duties and responsibilities of the post cannot be performed.			
10	Carry out other associated duties, as may be detailed by the Director of Operations.			
Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974				
Exempt	Non-Exempt	Politically Restricted Post (Yes/No)		
Hours/Unusual Conditions:	37 hours per week, including early morning, evening and weekend work where necessary to ensure maximum door stepping contact rates.			
Car Allowance:	Leased	Casual (Restricted to 1450 cc maximum)		
Date Accepted		Officer		Head of Service

## Person Specification

	Essential Criteria	Desirable Criteria
<p>Education, Qualifications and Training required for the post</p> <p>Weight: 10%</p>	<p>Good basic education to A Level or equivalent.</p>	<p>Qualifications or training in recycling, environmental issues or marketing and promotion</p>
<p>Equalities (depth of equal opportunity knowledge related to effective job performance)</p> <p>Weight: 5%</p>	<p>Awareness of equal opportunities in relation to service delivery.</p>	<p>Experience of applying equal opportunities in a customer service environment.</p>
<p>Experience required for the post</p> <p>Weight: 15%</p>	<p>Experience of working with the public including face-to-face contact.</p> <p>Experience of data collection.</p>	<p>Experience in a customer relations environment, promotional work or environmental initiatives including recycling.</p> <p>Experience of cold calling</p>
<p>Special skills and knowledge required for the post</p> <p>Weight: 40%</p>	<p>A broad understanding and interest in waste management and recycling.</p> <p>Familiarity with MS Word, MS Excel, MS Access.</p> <p>Good interpersonal and communications skills.</p> <p>Meticulous approach to data collection.</p> <p>Ability to organise and work with limited supervision</p> <p>Ability to work within and contribute to a team</p> <p>Ability to identify and pass on relevant information.</p> <p>Dealing with the public and conflict situations.</p>	<p>Data entry and analysis, customer surveys, promotional work, knowledge of environmental issues.</p> <p>Knowledge of survey and interview techniques.</p>
<p>Personal qualities required for the post</p>	<p>Enthusiastic</p> <p>Articulate, Confident</p>	

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Committed to job

Self motivated

Ability to work without supervision

Flexible (in terms of working hours and tasks)

Willing to walk and work outside in all weather conditions.

Weight 20%

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Other requirements for the post, such as any unusual working or travel arrangements

Must be able to work in the UK with immediate effect.

Driving licence and access to car or van.

Prepared to work out of normal office hours and at weekends.

Weight 10%

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