Assessing Your Businesses Waste Stream

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Overall Goals

- Identify the materials generated by your business
- Opportunities for more diversion
- Identify cost-savings possibilities

Choose waste assessment method

- Depends on:
  - Complexity of business / workspace
  - Goals of waste assessment
  - Time / staff available

Walk-through vs. waste audit

Walk-through

- less formal
- more estimations
- looks at systems overall

Waste audit

- takes more time
- gives very specific and quantifiable data

Each method gives a “snapshot”
(doesn’t account for seasonal variation)

Sample Waste Audit Findings

- 5% = hard-to-recycle items such as plastic bags.
- 10% = recyclable material, including aluminum, glass, plastic and paperboard.

Sample Waste Audit Findings

- 50% = compostable items, including a large amount of paper towels, paper plates and food waste.

Sample Waste Audit Findings

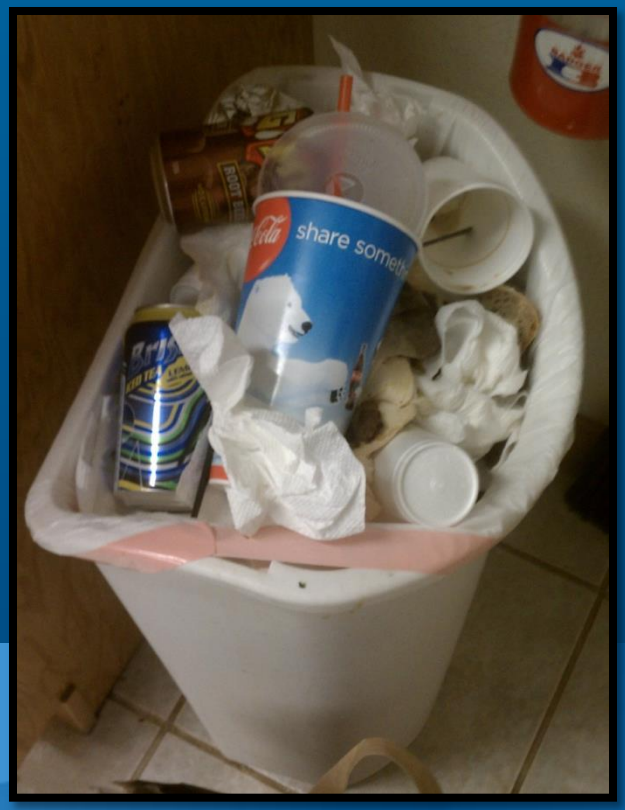
- 35% = miscellaneous items such as candy wrappers, rubber gloves, and other.

Sample Recycling Audit

- 50% of the recycling volume was cardboard
- Common contamination:
    - Plastic lids on aerosol cans
    - Bubble wrap
    - Non-recyclable plastic bag inserts in paperboard
    - Soiled or contaminated cardboard boxes.

Walk-Through:
Check each trash & recycle bin

- Estimate percentage of materials in bin
- Take photo for easy reference



Check for bin pairing

- Generally best to ensure every trash bin has a recycle bin directly adjacent
  - In locations where *only* trash or *only* recyclables are generated, ok to have stand-alone bin

Check for smart bin location

- Ensure bins are placed where waste is generated
- Properly size trash vs. recycle bin

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Check for signage

- Every recycle bin should be clearly labeled
  - Consistent, picture-based signage helpful
  - On wall above bin is ideal, front / top of bin works well too
- Label trash bins too

Check trash dumpster usage

- Decrease trash service = $$
  - Due to increased recycling or waste prevention
  - Due to excessive trash service scheduled

Other cost savings opportunities

- Separately recycle high-value materials
- Purchase durable, reusable products & shipping containers
- Purchasing activities
  - Monitoring inventory for accurate ordering
  - Purchasing in bulk etc.
  - Stop providing disposable service ware

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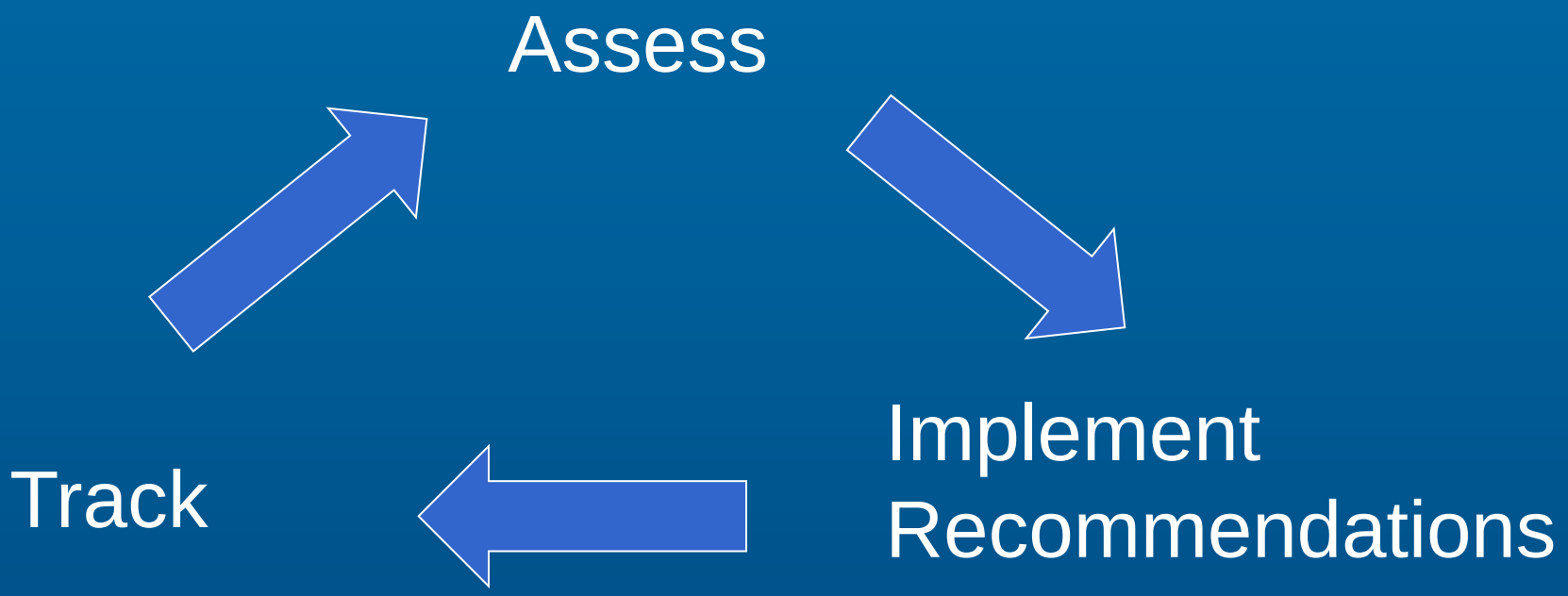
Complete the process



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