

Recycling Online



Smartphones and recycling – Part 2

by Roger Guttentag

the iPhone version, the Android version should be comparable in terms of design and functionality.

More app examples

Materials sourcing

Aluminate – This was developed by Alcoa Aluminum to encourage the recycling of aluminum cans. You can start by setting goals based on the number of cans to be recycled by a specific date. The can goal number is then used by the app to generate the dollar value it represents. Aluminate will also help you locate aluminum recycling centers based on your phone location or zip code, though be aware that many are just drop-off sites. Other app functions include recycling news, information and video content, as well as links to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.

iScrap App – The focus of this app is on providing metal and electronic scrap



Aluminate app

generators information on locating potential buyers for their material. Scrap buyers are identified based on your location, on a Google Map within a 50-mile radius. Selecting a map pin will bring up a screen showing available contact and business information. Companies that are part of the iScrap network will also provide additional information on pricing and container services. If you don't know what you have, you can upload a photo of the material in question and request its identification from a local company you select. The iScrap App also has a detailed listing of various subcategories, for ferrous, nonferrous and electronic scrap, to help generators understand what materials they may have.

Municipal recycling outreach

Apps4Ottawa – This Canadian app provides detailed information on the Ottawa Open Data App Contest that ran from September 2010 through February 2011. The contest awarded cash prizes to any eligible developer who submitted a mobile device app that addressed one of five categories such as “Green Environment / Sustainability.” All participants were encouraged to use open public data available from the City of Ottawa. Descriptions of all winning apps are provided, including the data sources

In last month's column, I discussed the various trends that describe current smartphone usage especially with regard to the steady growth in app usage. Apps that can be used in a variety of ways to promote or advocate all sorts of waste reduction and recycling practices are now available and I expect more to be developed in the near future. Two examples of apps that help users identify local recycling opportunities, iRecycle and My Recycling List, were described last month. In this month's column, I will provide some additional examples, organized into general categories, of how private and public recycling organizations are trying to harness the power of smartphone technology. Please note that while specific descriptions I provide of some apps are based on

Web Address Directory

Alcoa Aluminate	http://tinyurl.com/AlcoaApp
Apps4Ottawa	http://apps4ottawa.ca/
Bin It!	http://tinyurl.com/BinItApp
Curb Surf	http://curbsurf.com/
Get it and Forget It – Smartphone Users' Fickle Taste for Their Apps	http://tinyurl.com/AtlanticFickle
Greenopolis – Recycle Pix	http://greenopolis.com
iScrap App	http://iscrapapp.com/home
Mobile Apps – A look at What Makes a Good App Great	http://tinyurl.com/GoodAppGreat
My Free Stuff	http://tinyurl.com/FreecycleApp
My Waste – Municipal Media, Inc.	http://www.my-waste.mobi/
Paper Karma	https://www.paperkarma.com/
Pioneering Code Recycling Campaign	http://tinyurl.com/UKQRcode
Preserve@ Launches iPhone App	http://tinyurl.com/Gimme5App
The Ten Principles of Mobile Interface Design	http://tinyurl.com/MobileInterface



MyWaste app

they used, as well links to where the apps are available. The Gold and Bronze apps in the “Green Environment” category provided respectively information on Ottawa’s curbside recycling collection system and on alternative recycling options for a variety of products

MyWaste – This app, developed by Municipal Media, Inc., is the type of recycling public outreach that is typically done through the use of print or Web-based media such as collection calendars and general program information. Residents of communities which use the MyWaste service can download the app and receive collection schedules for specific streams such as mixed recyclables, green materials and waste, set reminders and be provided a one-stop source of other services that may be provided such as recycling drop-off locations, household hazardous waste collections and end-of-life-management of various products, such as large appliances or electronics.

Social networking / rewards

Gimme5 – Preserve, a consumer products company, has a No. 5 plastic (polypropylene) recovery program for any type of clean product made with this material, such as take-out containers and yogurt cups. This app provides locations where the Gimme5 drop-off bins are located. Recyclebank points, which can be redeemed for various coupons, are earned by checking in to record your drop-off visits.

Greenopolis RecyclePix – Waste Management’s Greenopolis has developed what it describes as a photosharing recycling app. It provides registered users the opportunity to earn points that can be redeemed for rewards, simply by uploading photos of eligible recycling actions to social media sites such as Facebook.



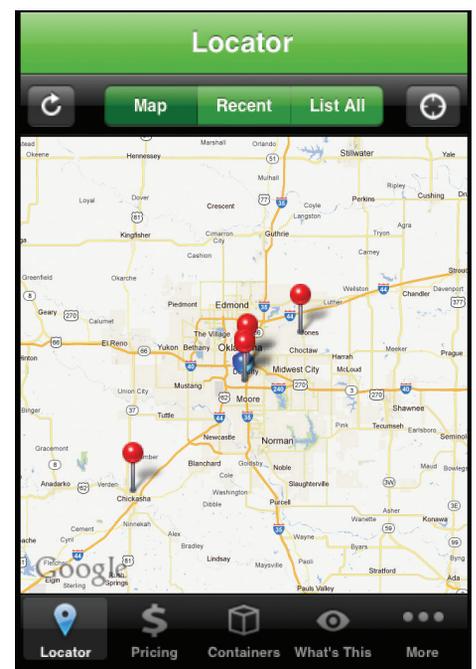
Bin It! app

Bin It! – Produced by the American Chemistry Council’s Plastics Make it Possible program, in partnership with Recyclebank and Earth911, this app is a game which asks players to toss various plastics goods – water bottles, shampoo bottles and milk jugs – into recycling bins. The user’s score – the number of bottles that make it into the bin – is converted by the app into actual products that could be made with that amount of plastic. Also, Recyclebank members who log in can earn points for the rewards-based recycling program.

London Councils of Westminster and Camden (U.K.) – This municipal region in greater London recently inaugurated a novel rewards program called “Bin, Scan, Win” that is based on providing a QR (quick response) code on the sides of designated recycling collection bins that can be scanned by any camera-equipped smartphone with a QR reader app. The scan provides a link to a site that the users log in to be entered into a drawing for a 20 GBP (approximately \$30) voucher. The program is scheduled to run until September 2012.

Waste reduction

Curb Surf – If you have something that you no longer need, but it is still usable, then you can post its availability on Curb Surf. When you open this app, it will show you a Google Map with various colored pins showing the location of items left at the curb for pickup. The pin colors represent



Curb Surf app

the age of the listing as less than 24 hours, more than 24 hours or more than a week. Selecting a pin will lead to information on the listed item and travel directions. You can report an item as no longer available (because you got it or someone else beat you to it) or as a spam posting. You also have the option of posting information on any items you left for pickup along with a listing photo.

My Free Stuff – This app is designed to make it easier for anyone who is a member of a Freecycle group to post photos of items they wish to list as available for pickup. The app also keeps track of what items are posted and how many people looked at a specific posting.

Paper Karma – This is another tool to consider in reducing unwanted junk mail. After downloading the app, enter the names and addresses of one or more users. Take a photo of the mail you no longer want to receive and then make an unsubscribe request for the person that received it. The app also keeps track of all unsubscribe requests and how successful they were.

Final thoughts – Don’t forget about design

A February 2012 article in *The Atlantic* magazine online edition (“*Get It and Forget It: Smartphone Users’ Fickle Taste for Their Apps*”) has two interesting statistics that stand out from a larger discussion of recent research on app user behavior. First, the Pew Center’s Internet and American Life Project found that most users seem to

open about five, or fewer, apps per week. Second, a market researcher interviewed by *USA Today* stated that 80 to 90 percent of all downloaded apps are eventually deleted.

What I think these findings should mean to any public or private organization considering the development of their own smartphone app is that excellent design is crucial to its longevity on a user's smartphone. For this reason, I included links to two very useful articles that address, in different ways, the approaches that should be considered in smartphone app design. Some examples:

Keep a sharp focus on what the user needs and how the design meets those needs. More is often not better.

Make sure the app design emphasizes responsiveness, clarity and ease-of-use.

Don't forget that the app will be used on a small screen, so don't include features that don't work or are inconvenient to use in this kind of visual environment, such as a lot of text or typing.

Include features that make it simple for users to provide feedback on what they don't like, or to request changes or new features. Update the app on a timely basis in response to this feedback.

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