

## Local Electronics Products Recovery Program (Take it Back Network)

### Situation

A serious challenge to the environment has been created by decades of electronic products in the United States. Electronic waste, including televisions, monitors, computers and cell phones, contains hazardous materials and should not be thrown in the garbage. To address this issue, PRR worked with King and Snohomish counties to create a convenient electronics recycling program for consumers.

### Solution

PRR began by doing market research and holding roundtable discussions and interviews with key partners to determine the best way to design a viable, private-sector recycling program for electronics. The research resulted in the formation of the Computer Recovery Project in 1999, a King County effort to have local businesses collect computer monitors for recycling.

By 2002, it became apparent that the program needed a new identity to allow for the collection and recycling of additional electronic products. PRR worked with King and Snohomish Counties to develop the Take it Back Network. Key advocates in the program were invited to participate in the development process, and local businesses, including recyclers, non-profit agencies, small retail shops and big-box retailer Staples, were recruited as collection locations. Products collected for safe recycling included TVs, monitors, computers and cell phones. Comprehensive promotional strategies included advertising, media relations, a program website, brochures, and in-store advertising.

### Result

The Take it Back Network is a prime example of using strategic marketing tools and outreach with key stakeholders to develop and implement a successful program. The network has morphed into one of the most successful private-sector electronics recycling systems in the nation and was the first program to include a national retailer as an on-going collector of e-waste. Since 2002, the network has grown to include 51 recycling locations, and more than 255,385 units—or 8.5 million pounds—of electronic waste has been collected and safely recycled. The success of the network has allowed both King and Snohomish Counties to ban electronics from their landfills while knowing that their residents have the use of a convenient recycling system at their disposal.



## 2005 King County E-waste Disposal Ban

### Situation

Effective October 1, 2005, King County banned the disposal of computers, computer monitors, TVs, cell phones, and other electronic waste (e-waste) at local transfer stations. E-waste can contain lead, mercury, cadmium, brominated flame retardants, and other toxic materials which, if disposed of improperly, can be released into the environment and pose serious health and environmental threats. To ensure that consumers have a safe, convenient place to dispose of e-waste, King County leveraged the Take it Back Network (TIBN). A partnership between King County Solid Waste Division, Snohomish County Solid Waste and Seattle Public Utilities, the TIBN is a group of retailers, repair shops, non-profit groups, waste haulers, and recyclers that accept used electronic equipment for reuse or recycling. Network members agree to recycle the products only in developed nations and in a manner that protects human health and the environment. In preparation for the e-waste disposal ban, King County contracted PRR to increase the number of recycling locations available through the TIBN and raise awareness among residents in King and Snohomish Counties.

### Solution

PRR negotiated and secured a partnership with Staples to offer recycling for computers, monitors, keyboards, mice, and peripherals at their 14 stores in King and Snohomish Counties. PRR collaborated with Staples to secure a recycler for the program, create informational point-of-purchase store materials, and assist with in-store implementation. In order to inform the public about the e-waste ban and Staples participation in the TIBN, PRR designed a comprehensive marketing plan that included TV and radio advertising, launch of a new program website ([www.takeitbacknetwork.org](http://www.takeitbacknetwork.org)), and comprehensive media outreach. The goal of the recycling efforts was to secure 5,000 recycled units over the course of three months.

### Results

The announcement of King County's e-waste ban and the launch of the TIBN marketing campaign were a huge success. On the media relations front, the team secured print coverage in major local publications such as *The Seattle Times*, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and *King County Journal*. Broadcast coverage included a local "clean sweep" with multiple, in-depth stories appearing on all local TV stations including KOMO-TV, KONG-TV, KIRO-TV, KCPQ-TV, KING-TV and NWCN-TV as well as KIRO-AM radio and the local NPR radio affiliate, KUOW-FM. Additionally, PRR secured a lengthy segment on "Evening Magazine," in which John Curley hosted a portion of the show on location at Total Reclaim Recycling. PRR's efforts generated a positive public response that resulted in the generation of more than 5,600 recycled units within the first six weeks of the campaign.

