



Let's Recycle Better, Together.

An event banner with a blue and green color scheme. The text on the left reads "EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR DIVERSION & WASTE REDUCTION" in white and green, followed by "WEDNESDAY APRIL 8, 1:00PM ET" in white. The right side of the banner features an illustration of people at a recycling station with a wheel of fortune and various recycling bins.

**EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGIES FOR DIVERSION
& WASTE REDUCTION**

**WEDNESDAY APRIL 8,
1:00PM ET**

Today's Panelists



Sydney Rogers-Lemke

Senior Manager, National Sustainability

SBM Management Services



Stacy Savage

Founder & CEO

Zero Waste Strategies



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& opinions

Look for links
to resources

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for panelists

Zero Waste Employee Engagement

A practical framework for business leaders turning good intentions into lasting behavior change across your facility.

BUSCH SYSTEMS WEBINAR SERIES



Sydney Rogers-Lemke

Senior Manager, National Sustainability

SBM Management Services

- Zero waste consulting & waste reduction strategies
- Programs for solid waste diversion from landfill, incineration, and WTE
- Education & training
- TRUE zero waste advisor & certifications



Stacy Savage

Founder & CEO

Zero Waste Strategies LLC

- AKA "The Texas Trash Talker"
- Waste Industry Professional -22 Years
- Small Business Owner & Consultant - 13 Years
 - Dell, AT&T, Apple, AbbVie, Nestle', Boston Univ., City of Austin
- TRUE Advisor for Zero Waste Facility Certification
- Helped pass 2 Texas E-waste Take-Back Laws
- Helped pass 4 Austin Recycling Ordinances
- Board Member, State of Texas Alliance for Recycling
- Co-founder & Former Chair, Austin Zero Waste Alliance
- Austin City Council Appointee, Zero Waste Advisory Commission



Audience Poll Question #1

Behavior Fundamentals

Before launching any employee engagement campaign, it's important to understand **how people actually behave** – not how we wish they would.

Three forces shape every recycling decision your employees make:

Attention & Convenience

People default to the easiest option. Confusion guarantees contamination.

Habits & Routine

Most employees are on autopilot. Design the environment, not the person.

Emotional Buy-In

Resistance fades when people connect diversion to outcomes they actually care about.

Waste Bins & Collection



Design for the 2-Second Decision

Reduce Friction at the Bin

- Bold color coding, oversized icons, and "most common item" examples at eye level eliminate hesitation
- Limit streams per station – fewer choices means fewer mistakes
- Keep setup **identical across the building** so a habit learned in the break room transfers to the desk side

Rewire the Environment for Habits

- Same bin order, same colors, same wording everywhere – consistency builds autopilot behavior
- Reinforce with brief refreshers in staff meetings and seasonal campaigns
- Acknowledge friction: **invite feedback** on what's annoying or confusing, then visibly fix it

Why Have Centralized Trash & Recycling (CTC)?



Wastes and Increases Recycling

Less plastic liners are used because there are less bins and occupants are 25-50% more likely to place recycling in the correct containers.



Improves Awareness

CTC is a more active way for people to engage in greener waste disposal practices.



Increases Activity

Provides an opportunity for employees to get up from their desks and take a break from sitting.

'Desk-side' Waste Bins Are So 2012!



'Desk-side' waste bins are typically small, unlabeled bins that may have a single collection space or sidecar attachment. Desk-side bins contribute to contamination and reduce success rate of recycling programs.

Recommended Best Practice for Paired Bin Systems:



CTC Considerations and Requirements

Prior to Implementation: Prep Work

- **Identify Building Areas For New CTC Stations**
 - Walk the site and review floor plans
 - Determine any bin size constraint considerations
- **Determine Current Collection Schedule**
 - Number of current desk side bins
 - Hours collecting trash and recycle from desk side bins
- **Janitorial Costs To Calculate Of Current Collection Schedule**
- **Disposition Of Desk Side Bins**
 - Recycle or donate
 - Costs for collection and disposal
- **Confirmation From Existing Hauler For Acceptable Recyclables**



Bin Setup Recommendation: Best Practices Signage

Refreshed signage helps improve visibility and awareness of recycling programs

Follow best practices to keep signage easy to understand:

Design

- **Keep it simple.** Minimal words and clean images make it easy to identify what goes where.
- **Be consistent.** Use the same terms across signage to help avoid confusion. For example, use 'trash' or 'landfill' or 'garbage' but not all three.
- **Color coding.** Select a color for each material stream for a quick visual cue. For example, all '**recycling**' signs should be **blue**; all '**compost**' signs should be **green**.

Placement

- **Eye level.** Where possible, post signage directly above each bin.
- **Bins with 'backboards'.** Where bins may not be next to a wall, consider bins with built-in backboards. (Example on next slide.)

Case Study: Tech Giant's Corporate Managers + Janitorial Staff

A tech giant in Austin hired Zero Waste Strategies to conduct a corporate waste audit. Over the course of 2 days and with 8 sorters, we analyzed almost 5,100 lbs. of trash, recycling, and food waste. The site's overall recycling rate was 64%, and of those materials found in the trash stream, an additional 50% could have been diverted to the recycling or composting streams. We used this data to deliver a 35-page analytics report to the client. The waste audit was successful thanks to 2 key business departments: Corporate sustainability managers and the janitorial staff.

Key Findings from the Waste Audit

Total Waste Sampled	Diversion Rate	Additional Diversion Potential	Top Waste & Contamination Contributors
5,097 lbs.	64%	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Landfill trash (48.22%), compostable materials (38.92%), recyclables (12.86%)• Misplaced materials, such as food waste in recycling bins and recyclable items in landfill trash

Audience Poll Question #2

Types of Education

Engaging Across the Employee Journey

Map engagement to communication "**moments**" – from day one onboarding through daily routines and face-to-face interaction.



Each moment requires a different approach, but all three reinforce the same consistent message: ***"This is how we do things here."***

Gamification: What Actually Works?

Make participation **engaging, not childish**. Tailor depth of training to the culture » what works in a tech office may not fit a manufacturing floor.



Smarter Bin Design

Shaped lids, restrictive openings, color-coded and **paired bins** (landfill always next to recycling) with matching signage.

Centralized stations make walking to the right bin the norm.



Competitions & Sprints

Floor-by-floor contests based on **lowest contamination rate or increased diversion %**.

Run 4-6 week time-bound sprints with a clear baseline, targets, and data storytelling.



Recognition First

Non-monetary recognition often matters more: shout-outs, internal news stories, digital leaderboards.

Rotate these types of recognition formats – highlight progress, not perfection.



Light Incentives

Tie rewards to **collective outcomes** – site-wide contamination reduction or hitting an organics diversion goal. Avoid individual "volume" rewards that invite gaming the system - should be a team effort.

What is Zero Waste Week?

It is an environmental movement that takes place annually during the first week of September. It encourages individuals to reduce the amount of waste they throw in the trash that ends up in landfills or waste to energy. Individuals can participate by switching to reusable water bottles or trying a zero waste food recipe.

Value of Zero Waste Week:

- Provided resources to local zero waste day drop offs & events to get rid of hard to dispose of items
- Discussed ways end users can create meals without generating any food waste
- Educated end users on 'What Goes Where' with a game that featured photos from recent waste analysis of their office spaces
- Conversated with end users on how they can reduce waste in their day-to day lives



Campus Zero Waste Festival

Our campus client celebrates a Zero Waste Festival each year before Spring Break. The Zero Waste Team, which includes staff and student interns, works together to educate students and visitors on waste reduction options and activities across building locations and common areas.

1 Zero Waste Pledge

Students, faculty & staff commitments

2 Reuse Activities

Make a t-shirt into a shopping bag

3 Games & Prizes

Incentives to increase participation



ACTIVITY:
Attendees read and signed a "Zero Waste Pledge"

COMPANY:
Casella spoke with attendees about waste reduction



DEPARTMENT:
BU Dining was on hand to address sustainable catering

ACTIVITY:
Making reusable shopping bags from t-shirts



PRIZES:
Completed activity stamp cards were put into a drawing

COMPANY:
Spareit spoke with attendees about waste data reporting



Great People Great Event
Thank You Very Helpful
I loved it Informative Event

Case Study: Earth Day: Engagement

Goal: Drive strong turnout and engagement for an in-person Earth Day event across multiple sites.

Solution: Short QR Code Survey

Results:

- Boosted participation with games, tabling, and an online survey
- Created open, relaxed communication between partners and users
- Showcased site sustainability programs and corporate goals

Lessons Learned:

- Increased participation through **interactive components and sustainable giveaways**
- Attracted users to tables to “break the ice” - then able to commence in meaningful dialogue
- Survey effective when actively promoted - not as effective passively
- Multifaceted communication plan integral - get the word out in advance through multiple virtual and in person outlets
- Hold events in centrally located areas at peak time to increase attendance through foot traffic

Case Study: Earth Day: Engagement - Survey Results

Results:

- 96 responses overall, 25% of attendees provided responses
- 10 questions: 5 relating directly to user experience & 5 pertaining to contact information

How did you hear about this event?

● Newsletter	19
● Onsite Signage	31
● Yammer	4
● Word of Mouth	21
● Walked Past Event	31
● Other	4

Would You Attend This Event Again In The Future?

● Yes	93
● No	0
● Maybe	3

How Likely Are You To Recommend This Event To A Friend Or Colleague?

Average Recommendation: 9.2/10



Case Study: Interview Questions

A higher education campus client hired ZWS to provide a multi-phased approach to achieving the TRUE Zero Waste Facility Certification. We performed 2023-2024 comparative waste audits, provided training for building occupants, and conducted interviews with students, faculty, and staff about their own knowledge and comfort levels around waste reduction and making proper decisions at the bin system.

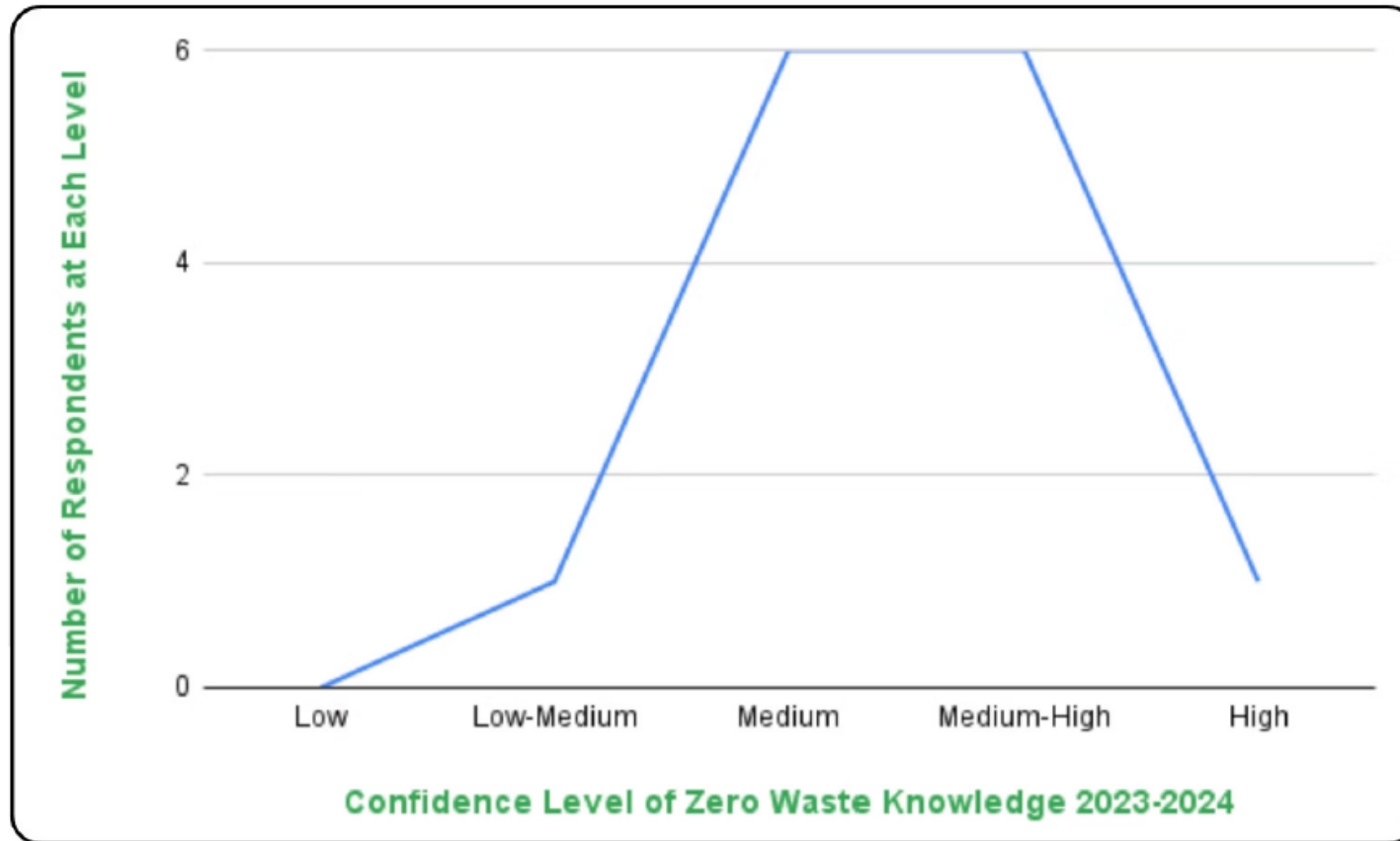
- ① **ATTRIBUTES:** What do you like best about the current waste reduction and recycling programs?
- ① **RECOMMENDATIONS:** Do you have recommendations on how they could be improved?
- ① **EDUCATION:** Are the current Zero Waste messages at the bin system and on signs easy to understand and follow?
- ① **INCENTIVES:** What are some strategies that have created the biggest shifts in behavior change to get to zero waste?
- ① **PARTICIPATION:** Do you feel your recycling and composting knowledge and skills have improved in 2023?
- ① **TRACKING:** On a scale from 1-5, how well informed do you feel you've become over the past year around Zero Waste?

Case Study: Interview Questions, con't.

RESULTS FROM INTERVIEW

QUESTION #6:

On a scale from 1-5 (with 5 being the most), when it comes to your knowledge of Zero Waste, how well informed do you feel you've become over the past year?



Audience Poll Question #3

Communication Strategies

Drivers of Engagement

Frame every initiative around a clear "why now?" so participation feels timely & legitimate, not like another corporate mandate.

1

External Policy & ESG

Turn local ordinances and corporate ESG goals into facility-level realities: required organics collection, reporting deadlines, potential fines. Position leadership as **proactive**, not reactive.

2

Clarify How to Participate

Campaigns should answer: what goes where, what has changed, and what the **top 5 problem items** are. Use real photos from your own bins – not stock imagery – for instant credibility.

3

Launching New Systems

Treat new collection systems like **product launches**: tease, explain benefits, pilot first. Feature pilot champions when rolling out wider.

4

Motivation Through Moments

Leverage America Recycles Day, Earth Month, or ESG report releases. Run focused **30-day sprints** with a clear metric and visible progress updates.

Best Practices & Pro Tips for Engagement Types

Effective zero waste programs thrive on targeted engagement. Here are specific strategies tailored to different stages of the employee journey and communication needs.



Onboarding

- **Pro tip:** Make waste sorting part of the “day 1 facility tour”–pair it with restroom and emergency exits so it’s treated as basic workplace infrastructure, not optional.
- **Execution:** Give new hires a wallet-sized laminated card (or QR code) with their site’s “top 5 items” and bin locations; test them with a 30-second “sort this cup” demo during orientation.
- **Why it works:** Builds habits before bad ones form; 80% of sorting errors happen in the first 2 weeks on the job.



Communication Strategies

- **Pro tip:** Use “bin selfies”–staff or custodians take photos of correctly/poorly sorted bins and share via Slack/email with a 1-sentence callout (“This is why we pair bins”).
- **Execution:** Create a “Contamination of the Month” series–real photos of the #1 contaminant with a fixable action (“Line your bin to catch pizza boxes”). Keep all messaging under 15 words.
- **Why it works:** Visuals are processed 60,000x faster than text; real photos from your site build relevance over generic stock images.

Best Practices & Pro Tips for Engagement Types, con't.

Effective zero waste programs thrive on targeted engagement. Here are specific strategies tailored to different stages of the employee journey and communication needs.



Face-to-Face Interactions

Pro tip: Train 1-2 “bin coaches” per floor (rotate monthly) to do 2-minute “lunchtime huddles” near high-traffic stations.

Execution: Give coaches a cheat sheet: (1) show the most common error, (2) demo the fix, (3) ask “What trips you up?”

Why it works: Personal interaction cuts contamination 25-40% faster than signage alone; people remember faces attached to rules.



Gamification / Competitions

Pro tip: Base scoring on improvement, not perfection—e.g., “+10 points for every 5% contamination drop vs last month.”

Execution: Use free tools like Google Sheets for live leaderboards updated weekly; award “Most Improved” rather than “Best” to avoid resentment.

Why it works: Improvement metrics are fairer across departments and sustain engagement longer than static rankings.



Education Campaigns: Communication That Sticks

→ Use Multiple Formats

Use visuals, intranet pages, short videos, digital signage, and **supervisor talking points** – no single channel reaches everyone.

→ Keep It Simple, But Specific

Focus on the **top contaminants**, use clear "always/never" rules, and just 2-3 key actions per campaign. Simplicity drives compliance, accountability, and eventually, ownership.

→ Tailor to Your Audience

Corporate office vs. warehouse vs. retail floor need **different examples, images, and emphasis**. One size rarely fits all, unless residential program. Explore targeted education campaigns.

Targeted Education Campaigns

Beyond Signage: Targeted Communications

While bin signage is an important part of educating end-users on proper disposal methods, it shouldn't be the only form of education. There are things that bin signage just can't communicate, which is why it is helpful to use different forms of education to get certain messages across.

Examples of Alternative Education for Targeted Messages

- Sticker decals placed on bins that say "No Liquids"
- Short video clip showing someone removing bubble wrap before recycling a box
- Webinar that teaches employees about the new compost program that will soon launch
- Newsletters highlighting a new site-specific common contaminant each month
- Poster to guide the step-by-step order of waste disposal in a cafeteria with 3 wastestreams (example on right)

PAPER TOWELS
AND NAPKINS
CAN GO
IN COMPOST



HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Just a reminder that paper towels and napkins cannot go in recycling or compost and must be disposed as Landfill.

Thank you for helping Intel be a local and global partner.

CENTRALIZED COLLECTION STATIONS HAVE BEEN LOCATED
PRIMARILY IN THESE AREAS. PLEASE MOVE YOUR MATERIALS TO
THE STATION ONCE PER DAY OR AS NEEDED*

YOU CAN SORT YOUR TRASH AND RECYCLABLES AT THE STATION.
ALL OF THESE ITEMS CAN GO IN THE RECYCLING



Shadow Boxes

- ❑ Show employees exactly what belongs in each stream using site-specific items.

Pictured: Dyvert brand shadow box lids.

- Shadow boxes are educational inserts or lids placed around waste bins.
- Reduce confusion by creating simple, easy-to-follow reference points at the point of disposal.
- Support consistent disposal habits through clear, immediate visual cues.
- They can be customized by area, building, or event to match the materials people are most likely to encounter.



Make it Personal: Impact of Plastic on Our Health

Plastics Aren't Only Harmful To The Planet

Did you know:

- Black plastics may contain toxic flame retardants
- PFAS are found in many water- and grease-resistant products
- These chemicals can harm our health, including cancer risk and development

How to incorporate:

- **Connect education, outreach material, and sustainability events** to messages regarding impacts of plastics on our health
- **Highlight the importance of putting waste in the right place** to prevent plastics from making their way into our food and water supply through the environment
- **Emphasize the connection between the environment and our own bodies**, and ultimately keeping the environment litter-free



QR Code Education - What Goes Where?

Program Details

- SBM can adjust our database of common items and which waste stream they go in
- Customized for each site
- Determine if new signage with the QR code is needed
- Just add the QR code to existing signage
- Communicate the easier way to help others learn about “what goes where”

Wonder where you put the waste?

Scan the QR code



Don't know where an item goes?

Click the icon to find out...



LANDFILL
Chip Bags

Although chip bags are made of mostly plastic, they are not recyclable in a commercial recycling facility.

Did you know a plastic bag can take 1000 year to break down in a landfill?

sbm

Communication Best Practices: Introducing Compost Case Study

Summary

The best method for introducing the front of house composting stream is a combination of communications that occur before, during and after disposal. By incorporating reminders throughout the waste disposal process, end users were more likely to choose the correct stream.

Best Practices for Communications

Before

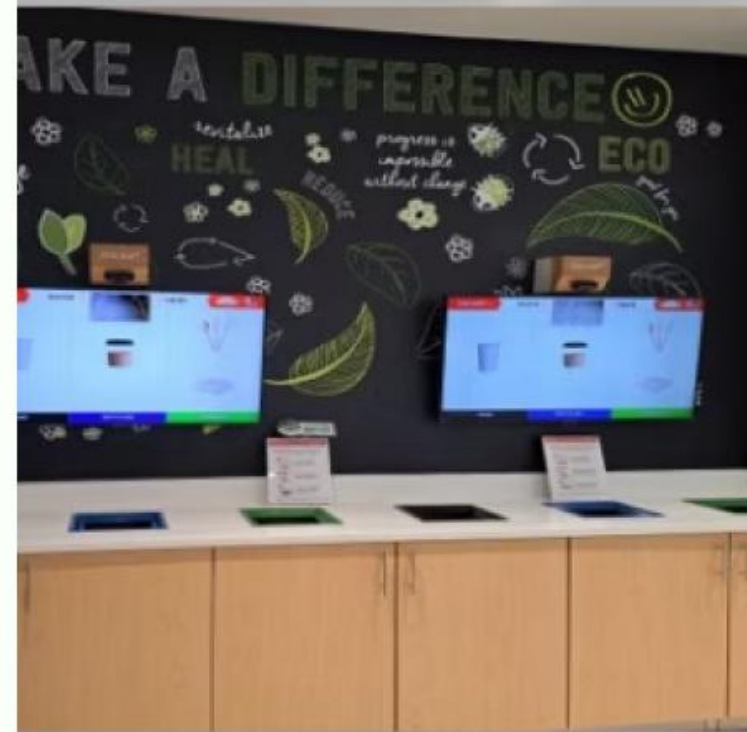
- Table tents with waste stream information
- Signage added to point of waste generation
- Post articles about environmental and sustainability benefits of compost program
- Informative posts on company social media platforms

During

- Oscar Sort (*see bottom left image*) as an innovative engagement and education tool for end users
- Signage at the point of disposal
- Product displays from café consumables

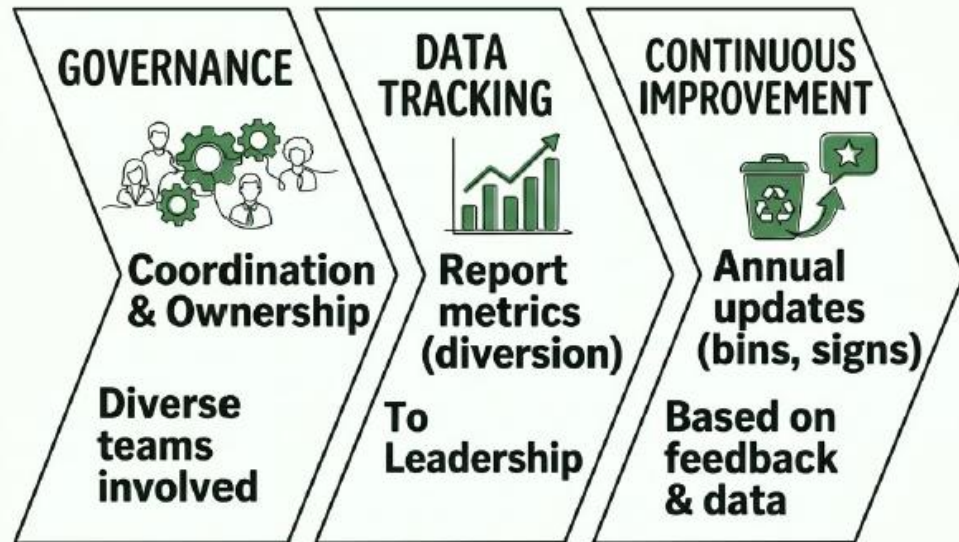
After

- Best Practice Training for end users
- SharePoint Page with program-specific resources & waste analysis highlights



Program Management & Data Tracking

Implementation Structure & Metrics



Build a System That Learns

A zero waste program without measurement cannot close the loop:

- **Governance:** Assign clear ownership – who coordinates between sustainability, EHS, and facilities?
- **Data:** Track diversion, contamination, and participation so leadership sees real trends, not anecdotes
- **Tune-ups:** Schedule semi-annual reviews of bin placement, signage, and training based on what the data reveals

✔ Consistent data and reporting **back to employees** transforms Zero Waste from a "feel-good" initiative into a credible business priority.

Waste Contamination Tracking with Zabble

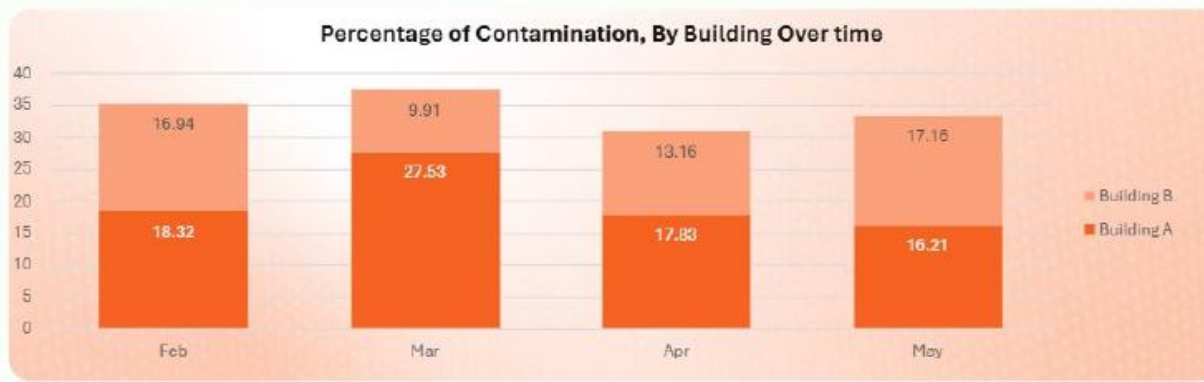
Case Study Profile

Industry: Technology

Location: California

Goal: Track and reduce contamination within each waste stream

Zabble uses AI-powered confirmation to identify contamination in waste streams and capture data in real time, giving teams a clearer picture of what is entering each bin and where issues are occurring. By turning waste audits into actionable insights, the tool helps organizations target education, improve sorting behavior, and reduce contamination more effectively over time, supporting broader waste reduction and diversion goals.



Recycle Stream Contamination: Word Cloud

Waste Contamination Tracking with Zabble - Driving Data-Based Change:

- **Target** specific locations for outreach
- **Identify** sources of contamination
- **Use real data** for education and events
- **Accumulate data** for reporting and regulations
- **Track** progress over time
- **Maintain** optimal waste containers

Targeted Communication



Outreach Events



Other AI Tech for Waste Management*



rubbish



*It is critical to have a human team conducting your waste audits. AI tech is for assisting in the capture of data and images and for developing data analytics reporting.



Key Takeaways

Design for Behavior

Make the right action the **easiest action**. Consistent bin placement, color-coding, and clear signage labeling can reduce decision overload.

Give People a "Why"

Connect diversion to **outcomes they care about**: cost, community, brand. Make it about team identity, not corporate compliance.

Engage at Every Moment

Onboarding, daily nudges, and face-to-face interaction all reinforce the same habit. **Repetition across channels** is the strategy.

Measure & Improve

Track contamination and diversion. Share results. **Celebrate progress**, act on feedback, and tune the system every season.

Thank you!

Please Contact Us!

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Thank You to Our Panelists



Sydney Rogers-Lemke

Senior Manager, National Sustainability

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Stacy Savage

Founder & CEO

Zero Waste Strategies





Today's Recording Online

Link will be emailed in coming days



Full Archive of Past Programs:

<http://buschsystems.com/category/webinar>



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Upcoming Conferences



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May 12
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