



Reaching Youth: How to Capture a Valuable Audience

How to Reach and Influence Tomorrow’s Recyclers

According to 2007 U.S. Census data, nearly 30% of the population in the U.S. is under 19. Children, tweens, teens and college students literally are the recyclers of tomorrow and have a reputation for caring more about the environment in some cases than previous generations!

So who are they? Here is a breakdown these groups:

- **Children age 4-7**—Are much more aware than you think. By this age, they are able to recognize logos and some tag lines, so when reaching out to them be creative and colorful so they’ll be sure to remember your program!
- **Tweens age 8-12**—Are very conscious of their own identity. Not quite kids, but not yet old enough to be considered a teen, tweens often shy away from traditional children’s marketing, as they aspire to be more like teenagers.
- **Teens age 13-17**—Are the fastest growing and most engaged youth demographic. Teens are tuned in and fully wired with the ability to make independent decisions. They know what they want and how they want it.
- **College students age 18-21**—Are increasingly savvy and aware of the issues that surround them. In an ever-increasing digital age, this group grew up on-line and can be reached using non-traditional methods.

The table below outlines popular outreach techniques and those that are most effective for each age group. Keep in mind, however, that other factors such as culture, race and income will also influence the ways in which each youth can be reached, so do your homework.

	Parents	Peers	School	Social Networks	Text Messaging	TV	On-line
Children	x	x	x			x	
Tweens	x	x	x	x	x		x
Teens		x	x	x	x		x
College Students	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Mobilizing Them: It’s Never Too Early!

Typically, youth are eager to learn, if the information is presented in the right way. They are enthusiastic, energetic, and open to learning new things (especially elementary school age children).

Think the very young and the “tweens” are too young to make a difference? Think again! This age group knows precisely how to navigate through the media and marketing clutter and sniff out what works and what doesn’t, and are more engaged than ever. Reaching

out to even the youngest children is time well spent, as habits they pick up now will likely stay with them throughout their lifetime. But how do you get their attention? Here are a few tips.

- **Involve parents.** Create take-home materials for students to complete with their parents. They should be simple, fun and test students' and parents' knowledge of what can be recycled, how to get a bin and the steps involved in recycling.
- **Create art.** Ask students to design posters that depict recycling, your recycling program and its impact on the environment. Perhaps a contest can be held with the winning poster(s) being exhibited at City Hall or a local mall, as well as in the community newsletter or on your Web site.
- **Recycle in class.** Set up a classroom recycling area. Students can decorate a cardboard box or old trash can and identify a location for it, such as next to an existing trash can. Students can use their posters and presentation to educate others about recycling and how to use the box in the right way. You can create a spreadsheet for students to track results and measure success (pounds recycled, amount of "wrong" recyclables placed in the box, etc.). Then stage a photo-op with the local newspaper.
- **Make them experts.** Create a "recycling expert" award that is given to students who correctly answer questions on your recycling efforts. The quiz can include questions such as, "When is my recycling day?" and "What number do I need to call to get a bin?" (The answers should be posted on your Web site, driving kids and their parents to you for information.)