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Simple plan makes it easy to recycle

Recyclable materials -- paper, plastics or pop cans -- too often are disposed of at the nearest bin. Whether that bin is a trash can or a recycling bin often is irrelevant, probably because of convenience.

Generally, offices have centralized recycling bins. Walking to a centralized bin to dispose of paper is not difficult or unreasonable. But in the busy workday, objects that could be recycled get disposed of at the nearest receptacle -- the desk-side trash can.

For years, a trash can sitting next to a desk has been an office staple, much like paper clips or computers. Some Purdue employees toss paper or other recyclable materials into the trash.

Coinciding with the beginning of Green Week, Purdue University announced it would reverse the desk-side trash can tradition in an effort to increase participation in its recycling efforts.

When the program is campus-wide by next summer, trash cans will be centralized and recycling bins will be beside each desk.

The change should reduce the amount of trash created by the university, potentially lowering the fees it pays for garbage pickup, as well as slashing the amount of items sent to landfills.

The university's goal is to recycle 65 percent of Purdue's current waste levels and increase recycling participation on campus.

Participation in recycling is the challenge faced by many businesses. Employees have to buy into recycling. This new program might spark other ideas on ways to increase recycling efforts at other businesses.

Making recycling more convenient is likely to increase participation. And recycling has a host of benefits beyond just the savings in landfill space and reduced expenses for trash disposal service.

According to epa.gov, recycling expands domestic manufacturing jobs. It reduces need for incineration, which lowers greenhouse gases. Recycling also prevents pollution and reduces energy consumption caused by producing items from unrefined material.

Purdue has hit on a simple idea to make it more convenient to recycle, while still not inconveniencing those looking to dispose of legitimate trash. It's an idea worth copying or refining by others.
