

SWICO Recycling has achieved a great deal in 2009 – and has a great deal planned for 2010

CD and mobile phone recycling, logistics and efficiency are important issues for Paul Brändli, Managing Director of SWICO Recycling.



Paul Brändli: “CD recycling is still overlooked too much. That is why we are working on a project for the whole of Switzerland.”

Which events stood out in the anniversary year 2009?

Paul Brändli: We celebrated our 15th anniversary during the Greenforum 2009. Around 180 members and partners of SWICO Recycling and high-quality speakers met to discuss recycling as part of sustainable resource management, flows of materials and globalisa-

tion. To mark our birthday, we also produced a promotional film that explains our system in six minutes. This film is a great help to us in making SWICO Recycling and our concerns known. These measures, and others, have enabled us to raise awareness among the population and companies of the importance of recycling and SWICO Recycling’s pioneering role.

Has SWICO Recycling felt the economic crisis?

Amazingly we have hardly noticed it. Consumers continued buying in 2009, albeit at lower prices, which has hit the turnover of our Convention signatories, depending on their industry. However, the Advance Recycling Fee (ARF) did not change, and the quantity of goods disposed of with us even increased by around 2 percent. On the other hand, the economic crisis left its mark on the raw materials markets, which we have felt indirectly. To cushion the risks posed by the price fluctuations in raw materials, we worked with waste disposal organisations to develop an indexation model, which we launched on 1 July 2009. This

model spreads the risk fairly between recyclers and SWICO Recycling.

With an office move and expansion of the team, 2009 was a year of change for SWICO Recycling. How did you find that?

These steps have clearly increased efficiency and reduced costs: our new open-plan office in the Carbahaus costs us less and allows direct and rapid communication between all employees of both SWICO Recycling and the association, enabling us to utilise valuable synergies. We also achieved cost reductions in IT as we have outsourced the entire department.

Foreign operators were eligible to bid in the 2009 recycler tender process for the first time. Why did SWICO still opt for Swiss providers?

Economic and environmental criteria were critical in the evaluation of domestic and foreign bids. The result is that the additional transport makes working with recyclers abroad less environmentally friendly and more expensive than working with Swiss providers. Moreover,

we were not satisfied with the quality of foreign recyclers.

Another focus was mobile phone recycling. What did you achieve?

We collected over 1.7 tonnes of mobile phones on the campaign day in May, which we organised in conjunction with the Pusch foundation for practical environmental protection in Switzerland. To put this in different terms, that was 14 000 phones which corresponds to 70 percent of the mobile phones sold over 2 normal days. Furthermore, we developed a schools programme for environmental teaching, gauged to the appropriate levels, which explains in a fun way how a mobile phone is built and what materials and pollutants it contains. The goal of this, as of the campaign day, is not just to increase the proportion of mobile phones returned but, in particular, to raise awareness of this issue among children, young people and adults alike. We now need to stay on the case to ensure that the teaching folder is used more widely and the issue is kept in the population's consciousness with another campaign.

Which other projects will SWICO Recycling be tackling in 2010?

We are also seeing a low proportion of returns of CDs, which contain valuable polycarbonates, a type of plastic. That is why we have decided to adopt the project of the reDisc association www.cd-recycling.ch/verein.htm and to extend it to the whole of Switzerland – providing that three wholesalers become involved in the collection of CDs. What is important is that it must be really easy for consumers to dispose of CDs. That is why the ideal solution would be another box next to the existing PET and battery collection boxes. This would also allow us to use the same logistics route as the wholesalers already have for PET and batteries. And separate collection is also of interest to the end recyclers

because sorting the smallest devices is not economically viable. We are also concerned with the issue of logistics in another respect. We are currently reviewing logistics with the recyclers and a logistics coach based on the dissolution of regions for the recyclers. The dissolution of the 36 areas in 2009 is a significant change which will facilitate a free market economy. The recycling partners can now operate throughout Switzerland.

“We would like to drive the disposal of small electronic equipment such as mobile phones, CDs and MP3 players.”

What successes are you hoping to achieve in 2010?

We would like to continue to drive forward awareness of the disposal of small electronic equipment such as mobile phones, CDs and MP3 players. We will look and see whether we can establish a box with separate compartments for small electronic equipment alongside the collection box for CDs.

Overall I am very keen to make the entire population even more aware of the recycling system in Switzerland, and that includes companies. The new sales channels mean that there are many providers, such as online or mail order retailers, who do not operate from Switzerland. This raises the question of whether the ARF should be levied for these sales. We have developed proposals on the revision of the VREG (Regulation on the Return, Take-Back and Disposal of Electrical and Electronic Equipment) and submitted these to the Federal Office for the Environment. The goal is to make

market conditions the same for all companies, but participation should remain voluntary.

Thank you for your time!

Interview: Martina Peyer
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