



Axel - Inspiring the community to reduce their waste

What was your goal and what did you achieve?

My project was about reusing stuff that we have and trying to create less waste in our community. I was hoping to find out what some people did with their waste and then help educate them on better ways to recycle and reuse. I started off with a survey. I asked a little bit of information about where they live and how they live, who's in their family and how they dispose of their waste, and I did that for 10 people and got all the information for that, from people randomly (not just from school). I went to a couple of different suburbs and put them in letter boxes and asked them to fill out the survey and post it back to me.

What questions did you ask?

Well first I explained a little bit about what I'm doing and then I asked how many people are in your family, and what age groups are they in, how do you get to work on a weekday or how do you get around on a weekday, how big is your yard, is it big or small, do you live in an apartment or something like that, and I also asked if you'd watched War on Waste which is an ABC program

which is really, really interesting and I watched that twice to get all the information about it, and then if you were influenced by it, and then I asked questions, I did this matrix, of how do you dispose of all the different wastes and then I got all the answers together, and then put them into graphs and tables.

Most of the people, sometimes they didn't answer some things, because I based this on my household, but basically most of them understood it and it was kind of interesting how many people had actually watched the War on Waste because I wasn't expecting many people to know what it was. But when people started replying with 'yes' they had watched it, I was like 'some of these people know what they're doing' and then I got all the results back and I was really, really interested with some of them who really, really recycled and some of them chucked lots and lots of their waste in the red bin, the council general waste bin.

After that I decided to give the information back to them on how to recycle better, like the people that were already recycling really, really well I congratulated them on that and basically said

keep it up, it's really good, but the people who kept chucking stuff in the red bin I just said 'well there's a couple of things that you can do, like sort out your rubbish before you put it in the bin, and maybe start having like a little recycling bin, or a big recycling bin, and you can sign up to things like RedCycle which is done by Coles' and stuff like that, really small stuff that can really, really help.

What were the reactions to your surveys?

Some of them sent back pictures of how low their red bins were, which is really, really good to know that I've been making an impact on the community. I wanted to find out today how people wanted to expand on this idea, cause I found out there a couple of places, like there's a company called NAWMA which you can take in stuff you don't want to use anymore, and they'll turn it into stuff that can be sold so it is basically like pushing it back into the community, and not bringing it to landfill. I put that people can decide how you want to receive information – Facebook groups or an app or like have education so maybe forums, stuff like that, and I've also got 'other'.

Who did you work with?

I worked with our YEC coordinator, Mr Catchlove, and Seb. Mr Catchlove set me on the right path and get started, and the rest of it I did with my mum.

Have you shared your results with others?

Not really, the school Parliament, they were supposed to tell everyone about it but they didn't, I'm not really disappointed by that because I'm not trying to affect the school community, I'm just trying to affect the larger community. And this year I've also done 'ways to dispose of unusual things' like toilet rolls which I've turned into plant pots, then phone recycling and telling people how they can dispose of things like light bulbs and batteries so you don't throw them out.

What was your biggest success?

Probably being able to communicate with all the people that I surveyed, and then them being able to tell hopefully everybody else what they doing, and how it's affected them and keep on spreading the word so we can make it quite a large thing.

Next steps?

I'm going to find out what the two largest things on this chart are and hope to develop them or ask people to develop them.

What did you enjoy most?

Coming home and being able make all these things, showing people how to do it and how easy it is.

What advice would you share?

I'd say try and start off with a wide range of people don't just go like 'oh here are my five best friends', go with there's one in Salisbury, there's one in Elizabeth, there's one in the city, so give it quite a wide range and probably do more people, like survey more people to get a really, really wide range.

This case study was transcribed from an interview. These are Axel's words and opinions.

