



Barrier Study Fact Sheet

Purpose of the Study: A barrier study was conducted to identify potential barriers limiting retailer participation in paint take-back programs. The study identified barriers and motivators to participation. The information was then used to develop a targeted outreach strategy when recruiting stores to become collection locations.

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Background: Consumers need convenient opportunities to recycle leftover paint. Setting up paint collection sites at retail paint and hardware stores gives consumers more options for recycling paint in their communities and is an important goal of the Be Paint Wi\$e project. A barrier study was necessary to identify potential barriers limiting retailer participation in paint take-back programs. Despite having a local government sponsored retail take-back program in place for 10 years, San Francisco had difficulties recruiting retailers, and thus took on the barrier study as a way to build from learned experiences and gain new perspectives. The study provided valuable information in identifying barriers, both real and perceived, as well as other factors influencing participation.

Who Did We Survey? 32 paint retailers in San Joaquin (11), Tehama (5) and San Francisco (16) counties. Specifically, 3 big box, 11 franchise and 18 ‘mom & pop’ stores were surveyed in person and on the phone. Of the stores, 12 were already participating in the program and 20 were not.

How Were the Interviews Conducted? Experienced surveyors first contacted stores via phone to participate in the survey and then conducted face-to-face interviews with store employees and managers. The interviews took about 45 minutes each and interpreters were used when needed.

What We Learned:

Strongest Barriers

- **Lack of Space** – This was of particular concern in San Francisco, where almost twice as many retailers raised this concern than the other two counties. Retail sites in urban settings are notoriously cramped with little storage space. Interestingly though, nearly all big box stores also cited space as a barrier, despite the larger amount of floor space available.
- **The “Dump” Effect** – Retailers cited concerns that customers would not follow the program guidelines and bring them the wrong kind of paint (only latex is allowed in California), too much paint, or “dump” paint at the premises after hours. All the big box stores said concerns over the dump effect would prevent them from participating in the program.
- **Other Hazardous Waste** – Some stores were concerned that customers would bring other hazardous wastes to their store.
- **Program Administration**– Program administration was the biggest concern for big box retailers. Over 30% of the barriers cited by big box stores revolved around the complexities of running a program, including lack of communication and ambiguity in rules, regulations and compliance.

Strongest Motivators

- **Public Relations Value** – This was the greatest overall motivator. 70% of retailers strongly agreed that their patrons would value the store’s

participation. All of the big box stores agreed or strongly agreed that their participation would be a good marketing device.

- **Increased Foot Traffic** – Increased foot traffic means the potential for increased sales. 71% of respondents strongly agreed that participating in the program could increase their foot traffic and positively affect sales.
- **Environmental Benefits** – Responses varied by region. San Francisco retailers felt strongly that their participation would have a significant effect on the environment. San Joaquin and Tehama retailers saw this as less of a motivator. Interestingly, although no big box stores agreed to be collection sites, this was the group that felt strongest that their participation would significantly benefit the environment.
- **Good Customer Service** – Giving back to the community is a significant motivator. Tehama County retailers felt the strongest about this, followed by San Francisco. In areas where retailers have strong community ties, this seems to be an important motivating factor.

Recommendations

- **Ensure the Necessary Infrastructure** – The two major participation barriers focused on lack of space and abandoned paint, both of which are correlated with program infrastructure. To reduce these barriers, it is recommended that program administrators work with stores that have limited space to customize collection. For example, most retailers that participate in the San Francisco program use small plastic totes (rather than cabinet or drums) to store paint because they can be stacked and are easy to maneuver down stairways and through crowded aisles and alleyways. As for abandoned paint, program administrators could create clear and effective signage directing patron drop-off behaviors, such as signs. However, it is advised that signage only be placed in locations that have experienced this behavior as not to create the impression that abandoned paint is the norm.
- **Communicate Clearly & Demonstrate Accountability** – Big box stores cited this as a concern, namely the lack of communications between program organizers and ambiguity in rules and regulations. Such barriers may be overcome with documents clearly organized in a handbook form for participants. A second step could be creating an online paint pick-up system ensuring accountability with the administering body.
- **Consumer and Retailer Spokesmodels** – Current participants stated that being in the program positively serves their community, while non-participants failed to notice this correlation. To show the value of participating in the program, stores can solicit positive customer feedback on the program showing the benefits. Retailers can then share the positive and beneficial reactions of the program from consumers and colleagues to build support for the program.
- **Linking Back to the Community** – Being able to give back to the community is a strong motivator for program participants. One way to link back to the community would be to use a portion of collected paint on a community based project, such as a mural or donating to a local charity.
- **Appealing to Retailer's Environmental Values** – Concern for the environment was the strongest motivator and should be used to indicate how a retailer participating in paint recycling positively impacts the environment. This could be as simple as having 'astonishing facts' in materials to encourage participation to show how much paint people waste and do not recycle.

Summary

The Be Paint Wi\$e Project will use the information learned from this study to create a successful paint take back program. Armed with an analysis of real and perceived barriers and motivators, the goal now will be on implementation, evaluation and making necessary adjustments. The study encouraged a "trial and error" approach for achieving the biggest program success.

The Be Paint Wi\$e Project continues to use this new knowledge to help the program excel and succeed long-term and has shared the study results with PaintCare, the Producer Responsibility Organization that will implement paint stewardship in California.