

# Industry under the spotlight

**Waste recycling businesses have been taught some "harsh lessons" by enduring the media spotlight, according to a green communications expert.**

One of the focuses of recent media attention which the industry could have been better prepared for was exporting recyclable materials, said John Twitchen, managing director of Sauce consultancy, the environmental communications specialist.

He spoke as Sauce ran a communications hub in partnership with the Chartered Institution of Waste Management and the Environmental Services Association during Futuresource, the waste recycling and resource management event at ExCel in London. The hub was designed to show the waste industry how it can improve its communications by working with the media.

Mr Twitchen said: "If every DVD player sold in the world is made in a factory in China, they will need cardboard boxes and plastic packaging for those

players – not to mention the parts which might be made from hard plastics and metal. So it's obvious that the recycling supply chain is not limited to your town or country or even Europe."

Other subjects covered by the media have included alternate weekly collections of rubbish and RFID chips in bins. "It is refreshing that the Daily Mail, the Daily Express and the Daily Telegraph weighed into these issues. But sometimes the perception from the industry is that they weighed in half cocked and not quite full of information. My view is that we should be providing that information to fill the voids."

Other areas chosen by the media were the environment and climate change, and how these had been shaped by the recession. "People are looking at how much food they throw away and energy they use," said Mr Twitchen. "So there are opportunities as well as questions which come under a harsh spotlight."

Despite the recession, business for waste recycling companies was not tailing off. "A lot of it is driven by European and UK targets – and Kyoto in the case of climate change. This sector was in a growth phase, and it is more expensive not to do it than to do it, so we have to carry on. If the government is investing in things which keep the economy going, this sector makes the most sense because, long term, it needs to grow."

Over the three days of the

event, Sauce ran a poll: one of the questions was whether it was the media's fault that reporting of the recycling industry had made residents think that recycling was useless – or whether the blame lay with the industry for poor media relations. "As the honest broker in the middle, we think the industry has a long way to go to improve the way that it communicates," said Mr Twitchen. Full results of the poll are on the consultancy's website.



## Businesses take advice

**More than 145,000 South East businesses and entrepreneurs turned to Business Link for advice and support over the past year, according to SEEDA, the development agency.**

Enquiries in January 2009 were nearly 70% higher than January 2008, as businesses sought advice on how to respond to recession. SEEDA, which funds Business Link in the South East, has spent £24 million to ensure the service can continue to meet demand in the coming financial year.

James Brathwaite, SEEDA chairman, said: "Business Link has evolved and adapted to provide services that suit the current economic climate, and South East businesses are responding - for example 8,500 businesses have now taken advantage of the free 'health checks' service launched in October."

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