

# Irony patrol: Recycling bins

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October 16, 2012



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Microsoft has a large corporate recycling effort. Every office, every mail room, every kitchenette, every conference room has a recycling bin. The dining facilities earned Green Restaurant Certification, and there is a goal of making the cafeterias a zero-landfill facility by 2012. (Hey, that's this year!) A few years ago, I found one room in my building that didn't have a recycling bin, and you'd think it'd be one of the rooms near the top of the list for needing one. The room without a recycling bin was the copy machine room. As a result, people were throwing their unwanted cover sheets and other paper waste into the regular garbage. I decided to be somebody. I took a recycling bin from an unused office and moved it into the copy room. **Bonus recycling bin irony:** For many years, each office had three recycling bins, each labeled for its intended contents: white paper, mixed paper, and aluminum cans. Improvements in automated sorting technology removed the need to separate these recyclables manually, and in 2008, all three recycling bins were replaced with a single recycle bin, which was labeled with the simple three-arrow recycling logo. The irony is that Microsoft was going to toss all the old recycling bins into a landfill because they couldn't find anybody who wanted them. Alert Microsoft employee Tom Roth found the right people in Building Facilities and got them to stop the trucks as they were about 100 feet from dumping 40,000 perfectly good plastic bins into a landfill. Tom's son Justin works in the recycling industry, and he used his contacts to get the word out, and soon requests for recycling bins were coming in from all over the state of Washington. It took three months, but they eventually found homes for all of the recycle bins.

Ironic disaster averted.

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