

Waste Management

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As an avid gardener, I always notice the plantings and landscaping when I make visits to manufacturing shops. The foundation plantings, shrubs and the neat appearance of the landscaping are meant to convey a positive image about the plant, the premises, the company and its people. However, I seldom take photos of the landscaping on my visits. What I really long for is a photo of a nice trash dumpster.

The trash dumpster, I must explain, gives me a far clearer insight into what I will find when I go inside the shop than does the landscaping. Tom Peters once commented that the cleanliness of the passenger cabin of an airliner implied the quality of the maintenance and care of the airplane's mechanical systems. I'm inclined to agree.

So what makes for a photo-worthy dumpster shot? Here are my criteria:

Debris magnet? Is the area around the dumpster strewn with debris overflow, waste and scrap materials? Do the materials around the dumpster look like they've been there awhile? First In-First Out (FIFO) can be applied to a company's waste stream as well. Why are you maintaining an inventory of waste? If the area is debris-strewn, a photo of it is the last thing that you want.

Dumpster capacity. What is the size of the dumpster? Is it the "Gi-normous/7-11 Big-Gulp sized, hide-a-couple-of-tow-motors-in-its-depths" monster of a dumpster? How much of your monthly "cash-burn" is hiding in the dumpster's deep, dark depths? Is it of medium capacity, with its contents not overflowing the top? Or, is it so small that you wonder how a shop that big can get away with a dumpster of that size?

Waste removal costs are based on volume, and if you have the super-size

dumpster, you probably get to pay twice — once for the extra volume you shouldn't need and again for the stuff that you're paying your employees to put in it (not to mention the charges for each emptying).

A large dumpster on a twice-a-week schedule is a lot of waste—including an extra chunk of your cash flow to the waste company. If a company can't manage the capacity of its dumpster, how good a job is it likely to do managing the capacity of its 50-plus production machines? ISO 14001 programs at several PMPA member companies have demonstrated significant savings by waste reduction. The programs led to both smaller dumpsters and less frequent waste pickups, resulting in bottom-line savings for these companies.

Compliance issues. Of course, everyone is aware that the federal storm water regulations forbid having process wastes outside where rain or storm water can cause them to be discharged or dispersed, eventually finding their way into the nation's surface waters. Best management practices for industrial storm water pollution control involve keeping rain and snowfall off materials and process wastes.

Almost all dumpsters leak. Should that leachate naturally flow to the storm sewer or sanitary sewer? Or, should it be treated as a spill and contained with dikes, berms or curbing? The most common management practice we have seen is to have a shed roof over dumpster, drums or material stored outside to prevent infiltration of water from weather. Here's a great primer to the issue: <http://tinyurl.com/lzw4a>.

Recycling of metallic materials is essential. It goes without saying that scrap streams should be segregated



and under control, as well as under roof. But how about beverage cans? Any sizeable company will find that it has a sizeable stream of waste beverage cans. These, too, should be managed — not ignored — a valuable metallic resource going out with the trash.

Pride in ownership. OK, it's a dumpster. Its purpose is to hold trash. What the heck does pride in ownership have to do with a waste bin? Well, nothing really, and yet everything. How it is situated in its space; where it is located; easy, safe access; and fencing are all details that reflect the thinking of the management and employees of the company to which the dumpster belongs. If care and attention is paid to this ugly necessity, my bet is that the folks in the shop are paying close attention to the details of their work inside.

Waste management. Does your company actively manage its waste? Do you have an ongoing program for waste reduction? Has your company implemented an ISO 14001 system to help achieve sustainable environmental goals and compliance? Can you demonstrate savings as a result of these efforts? More importantly, if I showed up at your shop one day and asked for permission to take a photograph of your trash dumpster, would you let me?