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I Believe You Have My Stapler: How to Encourage Reuse with an Office Supply Rehome Program

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I Believe You Have My Stapler

How to Encourage Reuse with an Office Supply Rehome Program

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NUTRITION INFORMATION

Many large academic libraries are split up into different programs or departments. These individual departments are responsible for providing office supplies for their staff and service desks. These supplies can include low-budget items like staplers and pens, as well as bigger pieces like whiteboards and desk organizers. After the supplies are ordered and used, there can be a surplus for a variety of reasons. Someone may have retired and their office needs to be cleaned out. Sometimes the supplies come in bundles, and only a portion are needed for that specific unit. Or a new process may have been developed and that specific item isn't needed anymore. At the UC San Diego Library, whenever there are extra supplies, the administrative assistants for that department forward them to the Campus Facilities Management's Surplus Sales unit.

UC San Diego's Library Sustainability Committee (LSC) is made up of members across different departments. We noticed that items being sent to Surplus Sales, such as staplers, were in high demand in other units. Committee members strategized on how to make use of these extra supplies and created the

Office Supply Rehome program. Administrative assistants gather extra supplies. LSC hosts quarterly Office Supply Rehome events where library staff can peruse the gathered supplies and take what they need. By reusing supplies already in the library instead of ordering new ones, the library saves approximately \$1,000–2,000 per year.

An added benefit is that the Rehome program allows staff to test out new supplies, like recycled paper clips or 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper. If they like how these "green" supplies work, the next time they need to order more, they are more likely to select more environmentally friendly products.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After participating in this event, staff will be able to get a visual on the number of supplies that would normally get sent to Surplus Sales; staff can reflect on their use of office supplies in order to be more mindful of what they purchase in the future.

NUMBER SERVED

Typically we have 30–40 staff attend the events, but it can easily be scaled up or down.

COOKING TIME

1 hour for actual event, with a little setup and cleanup time before and after.

DIETARY GUIDELINES

Activities like this one help the library align with the triple bottom line. The triple bottom line looks at sustainability holistically and examines the intersection between people, planet, and profit. By reusing office supplies across the organization, not only is the library saving money, but it is also building a shared culture of reducing, reusing, and recycling.

INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

- Storage room or supply cabinet to hold extra supplies
- Access to conference room or space to host event
- Whiteboard or notepad to document what was taken

PREPARATION

1. Find a storage closet to hold extra supplies.
2. Work with the administrative assistants (the folks who order supplies for staff and deal with extra supplies) to inform them about the project, show them

where the closet is, and help move items to and from the closet.

3. Publicize the event to staff using, for example, an internal blog and library-wide email.
4. Encourage staff to bring supplies they're not using anymore to the event.
5. On the day of the event, pull items from the closet and display them neatly.
6. Provide a whiteboard or notepad where staff can note what they are taking.

COOKING METHOD

1. Welcome people at the door. Keep an informal count of how many people attend the event.
2. Allow staff to browse through the items. Help answer any questions or look for specific items.
3. Ask people to write down what they take and how many.
4. After the event, look up items on campus marketplace website to determine potential cost savings.

CHEF'S NOTE

While US San Diego's Library Sustainability Committee hosts an open event once a quarter, the storage closet is accessible year-round. Administrative assistants are encouraged to bring new staff to the closet to go "shopping" for office supplies before they purchase new materials.

ALLERGY WARNING

This event encourages the reuse of materials across the organization. Make sure that staff are aware these supplies are not for home use.

EASY SUBSTITUTIONS

If you don't have a large whiteboard in your room, you can also take pictures of the supplies as people are leaving the room.

ALTERNATIVE RECIPE

If your organization has multiple branches in different locations, you can consider keeping an inventory of the extra supplies on an internal blog or website. We found it was manageable to keep materials in one location, then constantly update the webpage.