

Recycling Experts

When the price of personal computers dropped to a staggeringly low cost of \$499 in 2000, Roy Dann said, “That was a warning sign to me.”

A warning sign that the computer world was in the midst of drastically changing – and all the industries associated with it, including manufacturing, distribution, sales and maintenance.

Since the day Dann graduated from Washington University in St. Louis, Mo. with a Master’s degree in Mechanical Engineering, he has been involved in computers. For the first few years of his career, he was in the computer hardware wholesale business and eventually wound up starting and owning his own firm when he moved to California.

But when PC prices spiraled to under \$500, that was the day the game – and the industry –



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changed forever.

“At that price, there was no money left to be made for the middle man,” Dann says. “The market was becoming slimmer and slimmer. At the same time, the cell phone market was growing dramatically. So I was looking for something else to get into. Everything I’ve ever done professionally was in computer hardware. For me to get out of that field completely would have been very difficult.”

So Dann assessed his situation, conducted months of research, and discovered that the ideal field for him to enter at that point in his life and career was recycling electronic devices – everything from computers, hard drives and TVs to cell phones and batteries.

At the time – and still today – e-waste recycling is one of the fastest-moving industries in the world. And Dann’s company, Cal Micro Recycling, is among the leading e-waste recy-

cling companies in California for government agencies, schools, manufacturers, corporations, cities, and general businesses.

Just based on the amount of e-waste weight Cal Micro recycles annually – more than 30 million pounds -- it is ranked among the top three certified companies in the state and has revenues of more than \$14 million.

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Globally, nationally and locally, there are government entities and other environmental organizations that keep a very close eye on the disposal of electronic devices with the strictest of regulations.

That’s because these devices contain lead, mercury, chromium, cadmium, gold, silver, platinum, cyanide, sulfuric acid, copper, palla-

dium, arsenic and other harmful materials – harmful to the environment and to the population.

The key reason for e-waste recycling is to keep electronic devices and materials out of America’s landfills.

“The problem with e-waste is that you can’t incinerate them because it produces toxic gas,” says Dann, who has an 80,000 square foot processing facility.

“Secondly, you can’t bury them in the ground because after rain, the lead and other harmful metal materials inside of it seep into the ground and it starts dispersing. And you can’t stop it. As soon as the chemicals are introduced to our environment and landscape, the cycle of pollution is put into place.”

Through such common environmental occurrences as erosion and heavy rain, the pollutant



Apple certainly knows how to recoup money – it recaptured 2,204 pounds of gold -- worth \$40 million -- from recycled devices in 2015 alone.

Moreover, to further illustrate the impact, recycling one million laptops saves the energy equivalent to the electricity used by 3,657 U.S. homes in a year, according to the EPA.

“The best thing – *the only thing* -- to do is recycle and re-use the devices,” Dann says.

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— Roy Dann, President, Cal Micro Recycling

chemicals end up in oceans, streams, lakes and eventually in drinking water.

Studies, research, and reports on this topic are staggering. For instance:

According to the Environment Protection Agency, the U.S. produces more e-waste annually than any other country.

The amount of electronics that Americans throw away every year is 9.4 million tons.

Sadly, only 12.5% of the e-waste is recycled, according to the EPA.

Nearly 50 million tons of e-waste are discarded every year -- and only between 10 to 40 percent of it was disposed of properly, according to the United Nations.

Approximately 350,000 mobile phones are disposed of each day, according to the EPA. That equates to more than 152 million phones in one year.

That’s \$60 million in gold and/or silver tossed away every year.

For every million cellphones that are recycled, hundreds of pounds of materials can be recovered: 35,000 pounds of copper, 772 pounds of silver, 75 pounds of gold and 33 pounds of palladium, according to the EPA.

“This way, we spend less energy, less money and less destruction to the environment.”

He pauses for a moment and says, “The way things are going, trash is eventually going to overrun the earth. That’s a very scary observation. So I feel I’m doing society a great service by delaying this process. On average, we process roughly two million pounds of e-waste monthly, effectively preventing them from ending up in our landfills.”

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