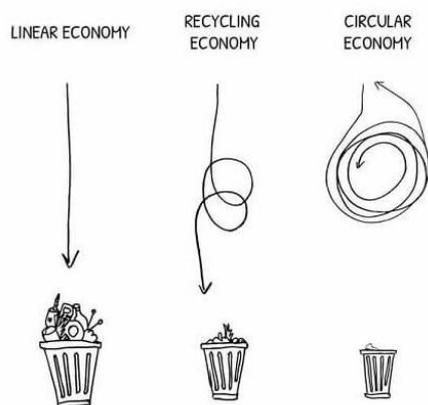


Small steps towards Circular Economy

by Andrzej Piotrowski – Waste Management Expert, Veolia Energia Polska S.A.

Today we are keeping more and more attention to new economic models which are starting to surround us. New models are supposed to give us a way out of the impasse we find ourselves in, brought on through years of linear economy which is based on a take, make, consume and dispose formula.

One of such new models is circular economy. It is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. It sounds easy but without thinking about the end of the product, at the beginning we will not achieve full circular economy model.



A perfect circular economy would be very difficult to implement, but we can do far better than we currently do. The majority of goods are still designed for linear economy. It will change but it will take time. What can we do now? We don't need to wait when global economy will be fully switched to circular economy, we can start creating circular economy locally now by small steps by reusing and repairing goods and extending their life time. In practice, it implies reducing waste to a minimum. When a product reaches the end of its life, its materials are kept within the economy wherever possible. These can be productively used again and again, thereby creating further value.

One of such examples are Repair Cafés. This idea was born in Amsterdam 10 years ago where journalist called Martine Potsma decided to do something about the waste problems she saw around her, creating the first Repair Café. And this first Repair Café eventually grew from a one location event to a worldwide community far larger than the founder initially envisioned. A Repair Café is a meeting in which people repair household electrical and mechanical devices, computers, bicycles, clothing, furniture and other items. They are organised by and for local inhabitants. Repair cafés are held at a fixed location where tools are available and where inhabitants can fix their broken goods with the help of volunteers. The objectives are to reduce waste, to maintain repair skills and to strengthen social cohesion.



Other small steps which can be useful towards implementation of circular economy are local initiatives to find and use unnecessary to someone goods which has been thrown away as waste but still were not picked up by waste service. For someone it might have a value. Social media allows

now to organize such groups of people hunting for such “opportunities” which were put near waste containers. Such groups are called “Attention garbage truck is coming” and are very popular in Poland. This biggest group for Warsaw has 100 000 members.

You are just picking a photo of an interesting goods and detailed localization. Who will be first at place will be the winner. Of course later You can use immediately such thing your place or renew it at Your home or at one of the Repair Cafés.



Such voluntary steps might at the same time reduce use of natural resources and reduce amount of waste finishing at the incinerator or landfill.

Other steps we can participate are:

- To take care about quality of selective collection according to state regulations
- To buy products in packaging that can be easily recycled or can go in compost,
- Seek out product and packaging which contains recycled content.
- Compost food waste at home if possible.

Global companies like Veolia also are participating in those activities.

We are supporting local Repair Cafes but also as a waste management company with owned infrastructure, we know exactly what happens to packaging throughout the entire recycling process. This ideally positions us to offer pragmatic and experience-based advice throughout the entire supply chain. Through our expertise, we can help to understand how to make product packaging recyclable and environmentally friendly. That is why Veolia launched new Sustainable Packaging Academy. This new initiative will help drive the circular economy for packaging and boost sustainability. The first of its kind, Veolia’s Sustainable Packaging Academy provides a new route for industry to achieve a real circular economy for all types of packaging and ensure materials can be easily collected, recycled and returned to industry for re-use. This approach brings in the consumer experience, waste collection, processing and end market realities to help provide the best advice on overcoming the challenges.

Only by a sum of small steps, together we will reach circular economy.

Andrzej Piotrowski – waste management expert – Veolia Energia Polska S.A.

Graduate of the Gdańsk University of Technology in Poland. Master of Science in Environmental Engineering and Master of Lean Management. Experienced in projects in the field of environmental protection like waste water treatment plants and waste management. Participant and speaker at many waste conferences and seminars. Worked for international companies like Sweco and Suez, now is working as Project Manager in waste business line in Veolia Energia Polska.

