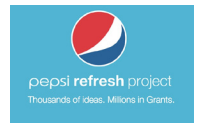


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RECYCLING WITH A SOLAR twist

A novel concept can help foster a more proactive approach to recycling.

By Jamie Chua

Mr. Harris believes that the primary market for Smart Binz is the youth because they are at the forefront of sustainability since they grew up at a time when recycling has become common.

“We still have a choice whether to recycle or not. At some point in the near future, it will be adapted in all of our lives. You would not have a choice anymore. We all recycle. It is just part of our life,” he explained.

Given this, the company thinks that college campuses will be the most suitable starting points for the solar-powered recycling bins. Smart Binz wishes to partner with big companies in order to deploy the bins. Aside from encouraging environmental responsibility, the strategy could also spur new ideas among students regarding clean technologies.

“Recycling should be about saturating the market and convenience,” Mr. Harris said.

Beyond actual recycling efforts, Mr. Harris also highlighted that the message of recycling itself should be communicated correctly by big companies. For example, some corporations provide a money-rebate incentive to consumers for them to return used bottles. Mr. Harris believes that this simply sends out the wrong message to consumers. He stressed that recycling should be done because it is the right thing to do and not because one is paid to do it.

Passion, vision, determination and impact – these are big words that describe Christopher Harris’ Smart Binz Corporation which aims to reduce litter and increase public awareness on recycling through the creation of solar-powered recycling containers.

In August, the Toledo, Ohio-based company received a \$50,000 grant as one of the top 10 winners in the Pepsi Refresh contest, which rewards individuals and organizations for their innovative ideas that help communities. Over 1,000 ideas can be submitted monthly, to be voted on daily. The ideas with the most votes win grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$250,000.

The Smart Binz product addresses two environmental issues – the use of alternative energy sources and recycling of waste. In an interview with EcoSeed, Mr. Harris pointed out, “Why does it have to be an ordinary garbage can?”

The recycling bin features a solar module that can power as many as 100 light-emitting diode lights situated underneath the bin’s side panels. The bin lights up through a sensor at night, making it easier to recycle even at dark.

However, Mr. Harris admitted that there are challenges to the prototype in terms of the solar illuminator and the battery as these can be affected by different climate and weather factors, particularly in very cold areas that do not get sunlight for days.

Smart Binz will use the \$50,000 grant to further research and develop plastic injected molds, as well as to produce the actual units. Mr. Harris projected that the bin will be available in the United States and internationally by 2011.