

Columbian Passions

RECYCLEFORCE

For some business people, their professional roles can also be used as a catalyst to assist charitable organizations in their area of expertise. Take Columbian Stephen Day for example. Steve serves as the President of Risk Managers Insurance Agency Inc., which handles all the insurance needs of RecycleForce through its parent company Managepoint. In 2006, the Director of Recycleforce, Gregg Keesling, came to Steve with a business plan to start a non-profit company that would provide men and women recently released from incarceration the opportunity to gain employment by recycling electronics. From the start, Steve was determined to do everything in his power to help RecycleForce meet the needs of the Indianapolis community. So far, the partnership has been a resounding success. With Steve's partnership playing an integral role, RecycleForce has grown from two workers and 600,000 pounds of recycled materials to employing more than one hundred employees and processing 10 million pounds of recyclables annually.

Managepoint provides RecycleForce with job and safety training, programs, payroll, benefits and benefit education, and employee assistance programs. Managepoint also ensures RecycleForce is compliant with all federal, state and city regulations regarding employees, environmental issues, insurance requirements, taxes, etc. Gregg often states that his nonprofit would not exist in its current form without the services provided by Managepoint. These services free up the staff at RecycleForce to focus on its core mission. For Steve, the most rewarding part of helping a company like RecycleForce is a combination of knowing they are recycling material along with human lives. He adds, "RecycleForce is on the forefront of changing how the ex-offender re-entry system can become more effective, not only in the cost to the taxpayer, but also its impact on the lives of those coming home."

The majority of individuals coming out of prisons are unemployable in the public or private sector due to all the constraints put on them by the courts. Ex-offenders must strictly satisfy all probation requirements, pay fees for monitoring devices, take special classes etc. All of this makes it very inconvenient for an employer to include them in their operation, even if the felony history is not a problem. The goal of RecycleForce is to get these individuals through those first 6 months to a year out of prison and get them to the point where they are employable by the other businesses.

RecycleForce provides a wide array of comprehensive recycling services to numerous clients and partners across Indiana. Residents and businesses alike use RecycleForce to get rid of piles of junk and electronic waste in a timely and cost-efficient manner. All services are low or no cost, meaning there is no excuse to contaminate landfills with unnecessary and harmful electronic waste. Not only does RecycleForce help save Hoosiers the hassle of disposing of their large electronics and appliances such as computers, refrigerators, copiers, etc.—the company helps provide workers in the greatest need with good paying jobs. RecycleForce is a certified not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization. Best of all, you can help in RecycleForce's cause by simply recycling your own unused electronics. Almost anything with an electrical cord can be taken to the RecycleForce drive through drop off at 1125 Brookside Avenue, 46202. The

drive through dock is open from 8AM to 4:30 M-F and from 9AM – 1PM on Saturdays. Over 60% of the revenues used to fund the activities of this organization come from the sales of recycled items.

Using the revenue generated by its recycling business, RecycleForce is helping formerly incarcerated individuals rebuild their lives by providing valuable employment and comprehensive social services. As many former convicts struggle to attain employment, they are compelled to return to crime and illegal activity as a means to provide for themselves. Sadly, statistics show 4 out of 5 ex-offenders who lack access to a program similar to RecycleForce will wind up back in the prison system within 6 months after prison release.

With the help of Columbian Steve Day and companies like RecycleForce, however, opportunities for released offenders are beginning to grow. With the help of the RecycleForce program, 75% of those who participate stay out of prison for good.

The RecycleForce model offers program participants an integrated focus on jobs skills, character development and personal counseling. The program extends well beyond the six-month transitional job opportunity as well. By working with industry partners and employers committed to hiring ex-offenders, RecycleForce helps facilitate program participants' transition from temporary work to full-time, gainful employment.