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Waste Automation Press

A Look Ahead

By Azzi Shirazi

I am new to the waste industry. From my observations, I have found less automation than is necessary in a plant. My generation of millennials have grown up with dial up internet at age 6 and we had fast streaming internet and smart phones by age 14. Sure, we have taken it for granted at times. But the important lesson is seeing machines do what humans never thought was possible. It makes a plant more safe and more efficient to have robotic sorting. Not to mention, less wages and less cost. If you are worried about the jobs being taken away then rest assured there are more jobs being created. Between 2015 and 2030, spending on technology will rise by 50% and, by that time, between 20 million and 50 million jobs will be added internationally.

Are you thinking about robotic sorting in your plant? My personal favorite for robotic sorting is Zen Robotics. Their AI is superior to all other forms of software programming robotic arms. They are based out of Finland. They are more pricey and currently they are specifically targeting C+D plants.

Penn Waste recently spent \$3.5 million to upgrade its single-stream MRF in York, PA. The investments resulted in a 30% boost to the facility's capacity, from 35 tons per hour to 45 tons per hour.

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Trends for the 2018 Year

- Robotic Sorting
- Expanded Curbside Recycling



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Director of Recycling Operations Tim Horkay said "Commercial recycling isn't easy right now, but thanks to this system and its upgrades, we are out in front and in a position to take on more material". More volume is always better for the plant.

Another topic to cover as we wrap up this year is "zero waste" movement. Should your plant expand the curbside list? I live in San Francisco. Let me tell you, the food is delicious, the places to visit are one of a kind but the trash is just as plenty and just as visible. San Francisco has been one of the earliest and most ambitious adopters of new recycling programs in an effort to reach its goal of "zero waste" by 2020. The city's Department of the Environment had been discussing a recycling expansion for multiple years and this became possible after service provider Recology completed a \$11.6 million upgrade of its Recycle Central MRF in 2016.

D.C has recently begun promoting its Zero Waste DC initiative this fall ahead of the official January 2018 effective date. In 2014, a local law was passed directing the District of Columbia's Department of Public Works (DPW) to issue a new streamlined residential and commercial recycling list. This was also seen as an opportunity to add new material. A parallel law began requiring food service establishments to only use recyclable or compostable materials as of January 2017.



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Like San Francisco, Boulder County's recent recycling expansion was aided by a MRF upgrade. Long-time operator Eco-Cycle, which was recently awarded a contract extension, first raised the potential value of installing new optical sorting technology back in 2011. According to Darla Arians, division manager of the Boulder County Resource Conservation Division (BCRC), this was factored into the list of upcoming capital projects and eventually came to fruition this year. Using funds from a previously collected sales tax for recycling projects, BCRC completed a \$2.8 million upgrade this summer. That has helped reduce labor costs and expanded the range of acceptable plastic materials.

Thanks for reading. Here's to a great 2018.

Resources:

All Information is provided by Waste Dive.