

## Community Investment Marketing—It's About Giving March 29, 2011



"I use electronics as a way to put people to work," said Bill Morris, presenting to a class of entrepreneurs enrolled in the 8-week [Greater Good Academy](#) on March 19, 2011.

But using electronics to put people to work is just the beginning of the story of [Blue Star Recyclers](#). The Colorado Springs electronics recycling company focuses on connecting with the community. It seeks to make electronics recycling convenient and environmentally ethical—while also providing good-paying jobs to developmentally disabled adults; a population that consistently finds it hard to secure a job. It's a true triple bottom line business.

Bill, President of Blue Star Recyclers, and Andy O'Riley, Vice President of Materials Processing, were invited to speak to the winter 2011 Greater Good Academy (GGA) class about community investment marketing. And while that may sound like mere marketing jargon, it's a highly effective approach of building customer loyalty that creates a lasting impact in a community. As Bill noted; .. 'rather than spend thousands on advertising, we've found that community events is a far more effective approach to let people know about our good work.' Blue Star Recyclers is a beacon of community-focused marketing. Why? Because they focus on giving back and telling compelling stories about their employees and the dignity of work.

"The whole theme behind what we do at Blue Star is to give to, not take away from," Bill explained. He said the same giving principle applies to a community investment marketing effort: show the community what your business is giving back, and show other businesses how they can partner and collaborate as well. For example, Blue Star partners with various southern Colorado non-profits to host fundraising electronic collection events. Community members can drop off their old electronics for recycling

with the net proceeds going directly to the non-profit. Thousands of dollars were raised in 2010 through this approach. In this way, Blue Star builds its brand, while supporting local non-profits and the community.

The company decided to move away from traditional marketing methods and move toward grassroots and new media when it realized that community events would have a larger impact. "Showing people what we do through an event and partnerships has proven far more effective than doing print advertisements," noted Bill. "We talk about all the environmentally bad things that happen when you put waste in the trash. Then we talk about all the good things that happen when you recycle that waste," Bill said. He noted that many electronic recycling companies end up shipping their product offshore, rather than handling the potentially toxic materials safely here. He encouraged the GGA entrepreneurs to share their personal stories when marketing their early stage companies. He said to make sure it's an educational story--show a problem, then share how their business is a solution to that problem.

The GGA entrepreneurs were interactive and eager to ask questions, such as "Starting again, would you have done anything differently" or "How could your program apply to my business?" The advice Bill and Andy shared with the entrepreneurs provided fertile ideas and insights of ways to creatively market.

Andy summed it up with the most succinct advice to the emerging entrepreneurs: "The thing that makes you passionate about your business is the same thing that will make your customers passionate about what you do."

For more information about Blue Star Recyclers, visit: <http://www.bluestarrecyclers.com/>.

To learn more about the Greater Good Academy, 8-week business development program, contact Richard Eidlin at 303-478-0131 or [Richard@greatergoodacademy.org](mailto:Richard@greatergoodacademy.org)