Recycle Change (Panel 2)

RECYCLE CHANGE

The story of Paul the trolley pusher

Location: Johannesburg
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Paul's story illustrates the tradeoffs recyclers make to optimize their income whilst keeping their living costs to a minimum. He works long hard hours and lives cheaply. In this way he manages both to support his household and extended family, and save for the future.

The business of informal recycling depends on the prices paid by buy-back centres for particular categories of waste. On a good week Paul can earn up to R1 100. Typically he
makes R 800-900 per week. To earn R1 100, Paul must pull almost 600 kg over five days. He sells his reclaimed materials every two weeks, when he has accumulated enough quantity of each item to make the transaction worthwhile.

Paul lives with his partner and baby in an illegally occupied warehouse in the eastern end of the Johannesburg CBD. They occupy a makeshift room 2m x 2m, in a building with no formal electricity or water services. Paul pays rent to a building committee who manage security and cleaning for the residents. Living cheaply enables him to support his family in Joburg whilst at the same time sending R 1000 a month to relatives Lesotho, where his home is. He also deposits R 1000 a month into his savings account.

Living centrally means Paul walks far to source material before it is claimed by other recyclers. Closer - in suburbs such as Yeoville and Kensington have too many recyclers already working these areas. Increasing competition requires him to set off earlier and earlier in the morning to get ahead. But he lives conveniently close to the three recycling centres he sells his stock to.

Before taking the materials to be weighed at the recycling stations, Paul separates items according to category. Being able to accumulate, store and sort material near to the buy-back centres is a key part of his business. It is important to note that while Paul is an example of a success story of the informal recycling industry, many recyclers in Johannesburg are not in the same position. For many it is simply a means “just to make enough money to eat” as twenty year old Njabulo who lives under the M1 highway bridge explains. Nevertheless, recycling remains a viable and accessible industry in Johannesburg.

Paul the Trolley Pusher

**RECYCLABLES**

**PET**

- **R2.50** per kg
- Polyethylene Terephthalate, plastic bottles, water bottles, soda bottles

**HDPE**

- **R0.80** per kg
- High Density Polyethylene, milk bottles, soft drink bottles, paint containers

**HL-1**

- **R2.00** per kg
- Mixed Lables - I, empty jars, drinking jars, office paper, Wiffos

**GLASS**

- **R1.00** per kg
- Glass, beer bottles, wine bottles, water bottles, seventeen bottles,computer monitors

**LOAD PAUL CARRIES**

- **600 kg**
- maximum in a 5-day week

**TO EARN UP TO**

- **R1100**
- per week

**WORK WEEK**
01. MONDAY
London
Paul wakes up on a Monday morning, leaves home in Doornfontein at 5am, travels the enormous mileage to get a headstart on his competition. Once he has completed the loop, he returns around 2pm.

24.6 km

02. TUESDAY
Killerby
Paul wakes up on a Tuesday morning, leaves home at 5am. The loop is his shortest making for his shortest work day. He returns around 10pm.

10.2 km

03. WEDNESDAY
Windsor
Paul wakes up on a Wednesday morning, leaves at 3am. The loop is his longest most difficult route. He returns around 2pm.

34.0 km

04. THURSDAY
Northcliff
Paul wakes up on a Thursday morning, leaves home at 3am. His business stretches this far north in order to deal with fierce competition for this valuable industry. He returns around 2pm.

28.7 km

05. FRIDAY
Newtown
Paul wakes up on a Friday morning, leaves home at 4am. This long day completes a physically tiring work week walking Johannesburg. He returns around 2pm.

31.5 km

WINDSOR ROUTE

START POINT A
DOORNPOETEIN

FURTHEST POINT B
WINDSOR

ROUTE LENGTH
THIRTY FOUR km

Increasing competition requires him to set off earlier and earlier in the mornings to get ahead.

JHB METROPOLITAN AREA MAP

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