



SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC PLANNING CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

1.0 BRIEF AND PROCESS

A stakeholder consultation process was established to inform Reverse Garbage's (RG) strategic planning process. Three focus groups were held involving 10 community participants and 8 RG staff/volunteers. An online survey also attracted 80 responses.

2.0 KEY THEMES FROM FOCUS GROUPS & SURVEY

2.1 WHAT DO PEOPLE VALUE ABOUT RG?

Customers described RG as the place to go to for **unique materials** that cannot be found anywhere else. Of particular value are the **industrial, theatrical and large scale materials** that normally bypass the retail sector.

Survey respondents were asked to rank the most valuable functions of RG. In order of importance:

1. diverting materials from landfill (64% ranked this 1 or 2)
2. providing an ethical reuse shopping option for people and businesses (65% ranked this 1 or 2)
3. educating the community about sustainability through school and community workshops (23% ranked this 1 or 2 and 33% ranked this 3)
4. being a hub for sharing creative reuse ideas and resources (47% ranked this 3 or 4)
5. supporting artists and creative businesses by providing access to low cost materials (low response rate to this question - 10% supported this while 30% ranked it poorly)
6. supporting community festivals with creative sustainable products and services (2% agreed and 14% ranked this 3 or 4).

"I like the idea of ending waste."

"I come to get my creative juices flowing."

"When you think art, you think RG."

"The first time I walked in I thought it was Aladdin's cave."

"I come for inspiration."

"A not for profit re-use centre for creative people and the community. Providing materials for schools, theatre groups, businesses and the general public at very affordable prices."

Comments from focus groups and RG online survey

2.2 WHAT DOES RG DO WELL?

- Strong loyal repeat customer base
- RG has a strong brand that has the capacity to attract new customers through the *reduce - reuse - recycle* message.
- RG's power to educate, either through its long term presence in Marrickville or via its workshops was noted as a real strength.
- RG is willing to innovate – having tried many initiatives over time

2.3 WHAT COULD RG DO BETTER?

- Better relationships with donor companies
- More consistent and visible pricing
- Better internal communication within the organisation
- Clearer acceptance criteria
- Strengthen focus/ refocus on industrial waste
- Improve customer service – support a fun happy vibe
- Increase information about “how to”, ideas and inspiration

2.4 HOW CAN RG INCREASE SALES & REVENUE GENERATING ACTIVITIES?

- Expand customer base beyond the usual suspects
- More ideas and direction for people who don't naturally see the upcycle opportunities
- Workshops
- Online shopping options

2.5 HOW IS THE PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE OF RG PERCIEVED?

- Comments pointed towards a desire for a cleaner, safer feel – some noting recent improvements
- Clearer signage and organisation were mentioned as valuable improvements

2.6 WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXSIST FOR RG?

Ideas that could implemented now:

- Increase activities in the new workshop space
- Initiate creative activities such as a sculpture competition – which include auctioning sculpture for RG fundraising
- Link to high profile activities such as Sculptures by the Sea and seek more coverage in mainstream media such as renovation shows and weekend newspaper features.

Longer term potential initiatives:

- Create a **brokerage** business arm connecting donors with users - Some examples:
 - when businesses clear entire office floors of IT equipment and furniture, RG can broker where the materials are diverted to;
 - finding a pub or cafe seeking to purchase high volume materials after a big event or preventing new chairs and tables used for a single event from going to the tip.
- Operate a **clearinghouse** for large scale items (eg theatre props and sets as theatres regularly change their sets for new performances). As above, where possible materials do not have to moved to RG but can go

An adventure in shopping. The 'original'. An icon of sustainability in Sydney.

Great place to find little treasures at good prices. Many people are overwhelmed by how expensive most shops in Sydney are at the moment. Reverse Garbage gives people the chance to purchase some very novel or beautiful items at a price which is reasonable and often even very low.

An absolutely amazing resource - a cornucopia of reuse materials, furniture and oddities - you never know what you will find.. My creative practice would be much poorer without the treasures I have found at Reverse Garbage.

Quotes from online

from donor to user as there is normally sufficient lead in time to find a recipient. There will be times when materials do have to be picked up and stored in a warehouse space (council sponsored?) which could serve as a virtual shop.

- The concept of a **tiered approach** to operating the business was suggested and explored. ie:
 - the first tier is low value materials/available in RG warehouse;
 - second tier is where you purchase RG expertise/value add eg work shops, master classes, parties and craft packs;
 - third tier valuable/higher end items available in 'gallery' location, and
 - the fourth tier is online RG services - brokerage and clearinghouse functions with a dedicated staff member in the brokerage role.
- Pop up shops and an additional location were both discussed as future opportunities
- Establish a skilled volunteer/ambassador program for media spokepeople
- Encourage staff or volunteers to apply for a Churchill Fellowship or Fulbright Scholarship to examine industrial waste repurposing.
- Build a digital RG community by developing an RG app which shows 'before and after' shots, alerts people to new materials, shows people what they can do with an item and refers suppliers and customers to a RG online brokerage service. It was suggested that the organic sharing of messages in this digital community would help to find more users and introduce new people to RG.
- Raise awareness of RG by aiming for a regular spot in media targeting middle to higher incomes, eg Spectrum *What's On* section of the Sydney Morning Herald.

3.0 ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 OBSERVATIONS

RG plays a unique role by giving members of the community access to rare and hard to come by materials. This role is highly valued by the RG customer base.

There is a very tangible RG community that values the organisation highly and who are willing RG advocates.

Externally the volume of waste available to RG has changed considerably in both volume and type. This is placing pressure on RG to respond to the flow of material and to find storage space. It is not clear how RG's internal organisational processes for responding to the waste stream have changed over time or if they have been evaluated to see if they are still serving their intended purpose.

As the external environment has changed significantly, including new digital business models and the emergence of new frameworks such as industrial ecology, the circular economy and innovation practices, it seems opportune to review which frameworks best match RG's purpose and will help to drive the income generating arms of RG in order to fund the social justice elements of RG's mission.

There was a general sense on the two workshops with community members that RG has shifted away its original purpose of redirecting industrial waste and as a consequence has blurred its unique identity and role.

The key questions arising from the focus groups and survey is 'what is RG's purpose and which activities enable RG to realise it's purpose and have the most impact?'

The opportunity also exists to consider which relationships that will help fulfil RG's purpose are currently missing from the RG radar, such as relationships with peak associations covering industry partners, manufacturers, designers, corporates, key local councils. How can RG build relationships with other agencies to increase it's reach? How can the RG Board and other members of the RG community help to build these new relationships?

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The RG Board revisits the purpose of RG to determine if it is still suitable or needs to be revised.
2. That RG develops a process for identifying which frameworks it will rely on to inform the RG business model. For example, what research or expertise will RG use to determine the criteria governing which materials RG will and won't accept? Porter's value chain (see figure 1 and Appendix A in the full report) is a useful way of identifying the core components of a business requiring dedicated resources and processes to optimise them.
3. That RG undertake a process for mapping existing and potential customer user groups be developed. One possible way of resourcing this is to team with the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program at the University of Sydney Business School (see Appendix B in the full report).
4. RG maps external organisations with a shared purpose to collaborate with in order to raise RG's profile and also extend its reach.