



TRASH MAN NO MORE HAULING YOUR PLASTIC BOTTLES AND ALUMINUM CANS TO THE SUPERMARKET: RON GONEN'S RECYCLEBANK WILL PAY TO TAKE THEM AWAY.

RecycleBank

WASTEFUL THINKING // Not everyone bothers to recycle, a fact of life that Ron Gonen found endlessly frustrating. "Too much stuff is going to the landfills, and it's going there at a significant economic and environmental cost," he says. But Gonen didn't blame the consumer. The old system, which depends on people sorting and hauling their trash to supermarkets for nickels and dimes, asks too much of the average shopper. So in 2004 the former Deloitte consultant created RecycleBank, a for-profit Philadelphia startup that pays people for their recyclables (mostly in the form of gift certificates to retailers like Whole Foods and CVS), then trucks the trash away and even sorts it at the plant. Homeowners like being able to track their trash—Gonen installs RFID tags on their bins—to see both how close they are to their next coupon and how many trees their recyclables have saved. The three dozen towns and cities in the Northeast that Gonen has contracted with like RecycleBank because it helps them reduce landfill costs. As for Gonen, he's happy because he's making money—and figures he has diverted 56 million tons of trash from landfills. Coming soon: RecycleBank is heading west.

— Jenny Mero