

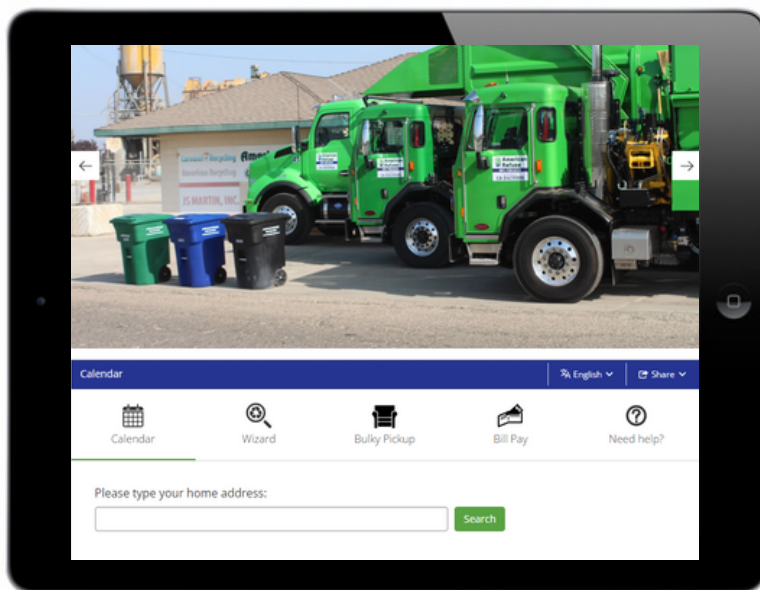


CUSTOMER STORY | American Refuse, Wasco, CA

In the San Joaquin Valley, the environmentally conscious and full-service waste company American Refuse caters to about 20,000 people with residential, commercial and industrial solid waste collection. From roll-offs to curbside pickup, the company handles trash, recyclables and organics/green waste.

American Refuse owner/manager Jeff Martin was on a mission to make life easier for his customers and company while also caring for the planet. He wanted an app to provide customers with every bit of information about their trash, recyclables, and collection times — whenever and wherever they needed it.

Martin says American Refuse had tried to provide customers with necessary information through fliers and direct-mailers in the past, but they inevitably ended up in the trash. It made him realize, “wow, this was a waste,” Martin says. “I don’t feel like we got that much information (to customers) out of what we were sending,” he says. “But we needed to do something.”



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"We wanted it all to work; we wanted to be as useful as we could for our customers."
Jeff Martin, Owner



Getting the ball rolling

Throughout his time working in solid waste and recycling, Martin had met “hardcore recycling advocate” Joe Garbarino of Marin Sanitary Service in Marin County, Calif., and he was able to spend some time in his facility. Martin says Garbarino is known for thinking outside of the box, and used an app called “[Where Does It Go, Joe?](#)” that’s powered by ReCollect, to help customers determine the best place to dispose of their items, stay on top of their collection schedules, find available services and more.



“It was really good. I was like, ‘We’ve got to get one of those,’” Martin says. So he got the American Refuse team together, got in touch with ReCollect, and got started building an [app](#), complete with a [Collection Calendar](#), [Waste Wizard](#), [Special Collection Tool](#), and more. Martin says he needed an app that would be compatible with the company’s existing software. He and his team just had to gather he needed data and then test before the tools could launch.

After employees gave the app a go, the company rolled it out to a handful of community members at a time, making sure each component was working correctly and its customers were getting as much out of it as possible. Then, the company promoted the app at city council meetings, helping city leaders get on board and spread the word.

“It ended up working out really well; I haven’t heard any negative feedback,” Martin says.

It’s nice having that reminder

Prior to launching its app and corresponding [web widget](#), Martin says the company especially struggled with communicating with its customers, helping its customers keep tabs on collection days, and fielding a high volume of calls when customers forgot their collection days.

The trash day reminders were a big deal for the company, Martin says, adding that phone calls for missed pickups is a “big issue” for them. For some people, Martin says, recycling, organics and trash are each collected on a different day. “It is kind of a lot to remember, so it’s nice having that reminder.”



Giving customers the ability to schedule pickups for bulky items has also “made some big headway for us,” Martin says. “We want to provide that service,” Martin says — especially because it keeps folks from illegally dumping those items.

Checking all the boxes

Above all, the company hoped to give its customers better access to help whenever they needed it — “where customers can talk to us any time of day, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They have a method for reaching us so we can provide the service they need,” Martin says.

“We need that type of fluid communication between us and the customers, and that’s what’s helping us through this app.”

Martin says the company also wanted something customers could access from their phones that would be simple and easy to use. This would not only free up staff members from having to schedule pickups, troubleshoot missed collections and more, but it would also allow American Refuse to increase its ability to serve its customers without having to hire another employee as well.

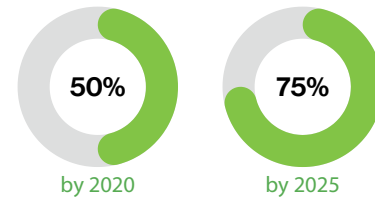


As a byproduct of all of these pros, the company could become a more desirable hauler and waste management company so “we can actually go out and get more business,” says Martin.

“I think all those things combined was what we were looking for.”

Preparing for the future

In 2016 emission reduction limits were signed into law for California through SB 1383, which reduces landfilling of organic waste.



SB 1383 Organics Landfill Reduction Goals

As more California communities add recycling and organics collection to their collection lineup for the first time, the burden of educating new recyclers about services often becomes the burden of haulers like American Refuse. With digital tools, they were prepared to help people understand what goes where.

As an example, Martin points to the pizza box. Depending on box's condition, it could go into three different cans. Should the box be empty and grease-free, it may be placed into the recycling cart. If the box contains pizza or its remnants, it may be placed in the organics bin. But if the box contains pizza and the person holding it does not have a curbside organics collection program, the box would have to be placed in the trash can.

When SB 1383 was implemented, American Refuse was ready and able to effectively and efficiently communicate with customers because the company had been using digital tools for recycling communication for years. They had built an audience for their app, and people were already used to looking there for information. This has alleviated much stress for American Refuse and its customers, some of whom are now recycling or experiencing organics collection for the first time. Learning what goes where and going from one can collection per week to two or three per week “is a bit of a shock,” Martin says.

Through their app, “we want to get to every one of those people as soon as possible so we can teach them” what to do, and show them what a difference it makes, he says. “We’ve been doing this for years, and we see the difference.”



Using American Refuse’s app, its customers may now quickly search to learn which bin their items should be placed in, which cuts back on calls, wishcycling, contamination and frustration.

“I think it does make a difference,” Martin says.

Connecting the dots

From servicing customers to educating them about those services, American Refuse’s app has been paramount to their success.

“The part of ReCollect that really brings it together is that we can deliver education to the customer and provide it right at their fingertips anytime, day or night,” Martin says.

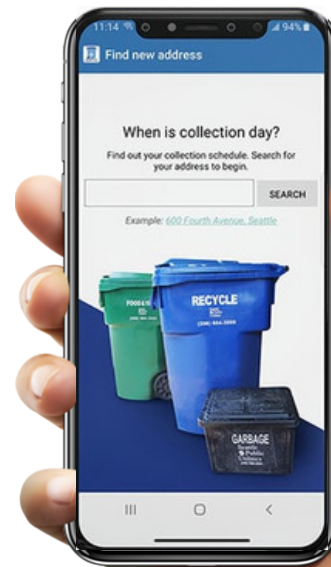
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“We’re one of the smallest companies (in California), yet we were the best prepared for SB 1383. It makes me feel good that we did our homework years ago. We invested in it, and we saw it coming, and we’re well prepared. And ReCollect is a big part of that.”

Jeff Martin, Owner

Once people learn where “things are supposed to go, they want to do the right thing.”

In the future, Martin says American Refuse wants to continue fighting the good fight by helping its customers properly dispose of their trash and recycling, keep its app fresh and up-to-date, and continue helping its communities meet the regulations of SB 1383.



About Routeware

Routeware has been digitally transforming the waste and recycling industry for over 20 years. Our mission is to help waste and recycling leaders use technology to delight customers, improve operations, and protect our planet. Routeware solutions are used by smart cities and haulers in every US state, across Canada, and in the United Kingdom, benefiting over 100M people.

Routeware has acquired a number of leading waste and recycling technology companies in recent years including ReCollect Systems, Core Computing Solutions, EasyRoute, Webaspx, RouteOptix, and Andrews Software Inc.

Find out more at www.routeware.com



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