

# **Junk Mail: University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview**

## **Defining the Problem:**

At the University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview – West Bank, it is estimated that 50 percent of the incoming mail is unwanted junk mail. Not only does this quantity of junk mail slow down mail room staff efficiency, but as the mail passes between the hands of various departments to arrive at the recipient, a large amount of time that has been used to process this mail has been poorly utilized and has placed a burden on every Fairview employee involved. This unwanted junk mail includes duplicate mailings for the same person with misspellings and abbreviations, staff members who no longer work with Fairview and inappropriate mailings sent to the wrong person.

\* Medical journals and other job-related materials that are not considered “junk” will not be collected and are not affected by this project.

## **Goals:**

1. To improve Fairview Mailroom staff efficiencies by reducing the need to sort and deliver unwanted junk mail.
2. To decrease junk mail over a 6 month period through an intensive intervention; a pilot project between Fairview West Bank mailroom and Partnership Resources, Inc.

## **Measures of success:**

1. Significant reduction in mail arriving at the hospital as noted by weight.
2. Significant reduction in staff time to sort all incoming mail as noted by FMRS.

## **Case Study of University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview; Fairview Northland Medical Center:**

University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview; Fairview Northland Medical Center hospital reduced 134 lbs. of junk mail within the first three weeks, resulting in a 2,300 pound decrease for the year.

Northland Hospital is small compared to Riverside and therefore, the process may be different because of the difference in staff. Throughout the process, Northland did not keep a record of the amount of time spent sorting mail but it is estimated that it decreased from an hour and a half to less than a half hour daily. To contact the companies, Northland tore off the back sheet of a catalog or mailing and wrote in marker, “Please remove from mailing list.” They then faxed the entire sheet to the number listed. If there was no fax number, they would call. If there are multiple mailings from one source, only one call is necessary in order to provide them with the information for all of the employees. Northland noticed a decrease in junk mail within the first couple of weeks although it can take up to three or four months to finally be removed from the mailing list.

One aspect to note is that every time an employee orders from a company that they have been removed from, the person is put back on the mailing list. After the initial junk mail reduction, employees that do no order and no longer work at Fairview will no longer receive the mailings.

**Implementation Process:**

1. Meet with key stakeholders to address the issue of Junk Mail. Approve project and set up a plan for implementation. Initial questions to address.
  - a. Define junk mail for your site (Lands Ends Catalogs, conference mailings...etc).
  - b. How will you sort out the junk mail? Will the mail room staff sort it or will employees be asked to sort junk mail and place it in a designated bin?
  - c. Who will notify vendors to remove staff from mailing lists?
  - d. Will you need to transport junk mail to a location where you will notify vendors? If so, how will you transport mail?
  - e. How will you measure success? By % decreased, weights, employee and mailroom staff feedback?
2. Select a sufficient time frame to contact vendors. You may not see a reduction in junk mail until 3-4 months since mailings are labeled and addressed in advance.
3. Educate staff about new process for junk mail. Tell them if they want to continue to receive personal catalogs, they should change the address to their home or another non-work location.
4. Start collection and contacting vendors.
5. Check progress, adjust process as needed.
6. After designated time period, end project.
7. Analyze and promote results. Were you successful? What was the impact?

**Fairview Overall Results:**

**University of Minnesota Medical Center, Fairview- West Bank:**

Start Date: January 2, 2012

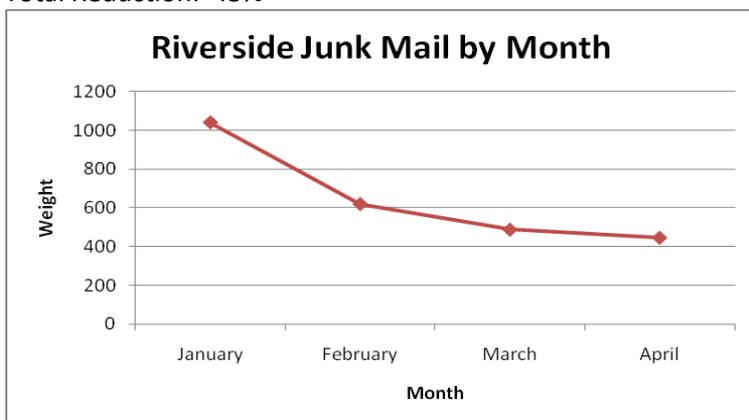
End Date: May 4, 2012

Total Junk Mail reduced: **3,297 lbs.**

Junk mail weight January: 1038 lbs.

Junk mail weight April: 447 lbs.

Total Reduction: 43%



**Fairview Southdale Hospital**

Start Date: May 14, 2012

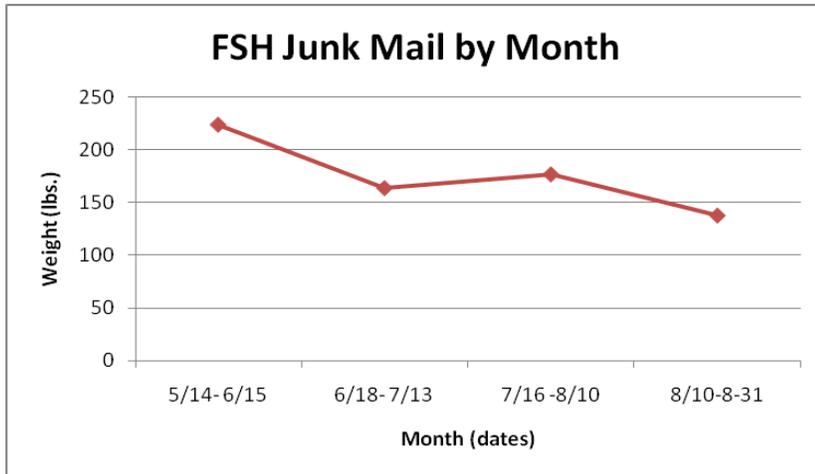
End Date: August 31, 2012

Total Junk Mail Reduced: **790 lbs.**

Junk Mail Weight May: 272 lbs.

Junk Mail Weight August: 138

Total Reduction: 50%



**Resources:**

- <http://www.rethinkrecycling.com/>
- <http://reduce.org/>
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/living-green/living-green-citizen/reduce-reuse-recycle/too-much-junk-mail.html>