Environmental Science

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Interview about waste management in Aruba

Renaissance Hotel & Casino

Interviewee: Gerardo de Veer Jr.

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Mr. de Veer believes that waste management in Aruba still has a long way to go. Europe and US are already managing waste well and for Aruba as a small island it makes it even more important to take waste management more seriously. We have limited space and a lot of our waste goes to the dump and the waste can end up in the ocean, this is really bad for the marine life. All the bad smells and burning of the waste can also be bad for humans. So not only is Aruba behind in managing waste, Aruba is also missing a lot on awareness of the importance of waste management. The awareness in Aruba right now is very little, raising awareness anywhere is important and elementary school is a great place to start.

However, besides raising awareness, it should be more of a cultural thing that people need to get used to in Aruba. Mr. de Veer says that people here are not used to waste management, how it works and where everything goes. Everybody knows it goes to the dump, but people are not aware that there are so many other alternatives. He explained that people just keep throwing things in the trash, then it goes to the dump and that we’re not really helping ourselves. He believes awareness is one of the biggest challenges we have on Aruba. So not only should we start in elementary school, we should start in many other places and think more of the problems that waste management comes with.

Mr. de Veer explained that the desired future is for everyone to be more conscious and participate. Therefore, it should not be just one company or the government institution only, but it should be a team effort. Awareness is a key factor for everyone to see how the environment is being taken care of. It is a big step in recycling and taking care of the trash and waste.

As mentioned before, he emphasized that awareness should start in school, government and private entities via advertisement and all aligning towards the same goals for five or ten years down the road. The two goals he mentioned were, where do we want to be and what do you want to do, then create a plan and implement it in the school, businesses and the government.

Renaissance Resort & Casino itself is an example of how hotels should try to work for better waste management. Renaissance is contributing to waste management with the help of Ecotech Aruba N.V. They have already been working with Ecotech for a long time and it has been going well. Ecotech does not send anything to the dump, everything goes to their facility, Eco gas, and they have different procedures and processes in place to either recycle or to ship it abroad for recycling. Another procedure is that they burn some of the waste or store them. Furthermore, Renaissance also has some procedures in their kitchen; they save the cooking oils in big bins and Ecotech will come and pick them up for recycling. Regarding all the leftover food on the property, this will go in separate bins in the kitchen and every morning Santa Rosa picks them up and feeds the pigs with the leftover food.

A few other standard procedures that Renaissance has are in the kitchen for example, Renaissance has grease traps, to collect and recapture the grease for it not to end up in the sewers and there’s also housekeeping they place in each room a card with instructions on replacing the towels in the bathroom or leaving them. They also use a card for the sheets of the bed with the same instructions. This will reduce the use of energy thus making the hotel eco-friendly.

Mr. de Veer commented that the biggest obstacle that can disrupt this desired future scenario is changing behavior; he stated that it is a difficult task, but it is not impossible. Therefore, changing the mindset and behavior of people to take ownership and be part of this change could be the biggest obstacle of all.

It starts from this generation to create the awareness, create the facilities. He thinks with awareness, and the right tools and the right businesses and government it will work well, but goals need to be set and adhere to.

According to Mr. de Veer, businesses are already doing this with Ecotech and they are doing a very good job with waste management. He also recommends that Serlimar and Ecotech should provide the service of different garbage bins to separate the waste, but first the people should be educated on how to do that, but at the end of the day it is up to the people if they want to separate their waste. He said this could be one of our long-term goals. Mr. de Veer said the government has a big role in it. They can do a lot to implement these actions. But at the end of the day the host community needs to get involved.