



Every day, thousands of people order a cup of coffee or pick up fast food on their way home from work, and the materials to produce and package all those goods almost always end up in the garbage. Based on the staggering consumption statistics of American citizens, it is reasonable to conclude that people aren't aware of the significance of their individual impact on the environment. I believe that the latest "green" movement by Hollywood and much of corporate America has ignited a movement to reduce our environmental impact on the planet. With the addition of an interactive application to help monitor an individual's consumption rates, I believe more people would join the green movement and ultimately become more aware of their individual impact on the environment.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Americans produce almost 30 pounds of waste every week. Whether they're running a few dozen copies for a meeting or disposing of some obsolete electronics, the numbers add up. I believe that people only think about one piece of garbage at a time, and that they don't comprehend the cumulative effect of this methodology. Fortunately there is a significant movement to reduce our global environmental impact – it has never been a better time to "go green." Companies such as Apple have begun rolling out advertisements dedicated to their efforts to leave a smaller environmental footprint in their product manufacturing. This environmental movement has boosted our awareness of the imminent global problems we will have if we don't change our ways. Increasing people's interaction with and awareness of their consumption habits will help contribute to the movement by making people aware of their personal impact on the situation, and hopefully will result in more sustainability of our planet.

My proposal is an application called Consumester, personal interactive consumption tracker. The main goal of Consumester is to boost awareness of individuals' consumption habits. This process is driven by voluntary user participation, recording the items they consume each day. Right now the only way a user could track their consumption habits would be to store all their trash in a single receptacle, but this isn't really possible unless they carry a trash bag with them everywhere they go. Consumester would then present the information graphically with week-to-week comparisons. With this application, users would be able to visualize their progress towards reducing their environmental footprint, and directly combats the reality that people only think of one piece of trash at a time. With periodic comprehensive digests of consumption activity, users would be able to remember exactly what materials they used and disposed of that day, week, month, or year. Ideally this would convince users of the significance of their impact on the environment and encourage them to start or continue practicing environmentally-safe consumption habits. With this information, users would be able to set obtainable goals for consumption reduction.

In addition to consumption tracking, Consumester would also present the user with local waste management solutions. Because Consumester is a mobile application, it will utilize GPS positioning to show users the nearest recycling centers, junk-removal services, and landfills. With this information, users would know exactly where they can take their trash or recycling should their trash cans at their residence become full up before collection dates. Additionally, if refund information was available,

Consumester would tell the user how much the recycling rate is for certain items at each recycling center (such as 5¢ per aluminum can). It would also increase awareness of the disposal specialty centers out there, such as computer recycling services or metal salvage centers. Ideally, users would never have to settle for throwing away a can in the trash because there was no recycling center available.

In addition to the graphical consumption tracking and location-based recycling services of Consumester, the user would also be able to report recycling or waste miss use in their community. With image capture and image upload, users can take pictures of garbage spills or even suggest a location to implement a recycling solution. This will spread awareness for the need to practice safe waste disposal and put pressure on businesses or houses that have significant waste overflow.

Imagine the typical day of a college freshman living in a dormitory. For breakfast, the user is served on a paper plate is plastic (or compostable) utensils. The student would enter the plate and utensils used into Consumester. As the student went throughout his, he would record every material he used and disposed of. By the end of the day, the user would tell Consumester to produce a daily digest of the materials he consumed and disposed of. On this particular day, the user used 2 plastic spoons, 3 paper plates, 3 aluminum cans, and 2 plastic bottles. By the end of the week, the user would have an aggregation of all consumption. With this information, the user would be aware of his consumption rates and decide if he needs to adjust it. He would no longer be going through life one piece of trash at a time.

Say that student's recycling receptacle is overflowing in his dormitory. The user can use Consumester to find the closest recycling center. This way, instead of settling for throwing away recyclable items, the user can follow through with his intent to recycle and continue his efforts to reducing his environmental footprint. Additionally if the user wanted to dispose an old computer but didn't know where an electronics recycling center was, he would likely settle with throwing the computer into the garbage. There is a significant environmental consequence of disposing electronics this way, and Consumester would ideally combat this cycle.

Consumester is an all-in-one mobile application to assist users in their quest to improve the planet by reducing their environmental impact. The critical aspect Consumester depends on is voluntary input by users so that their progress can be tracked. Fortunately the latest green movement has inspired many people to live life more environmentally friendly, and Consumester would be the perfect companion in this process.