E-Waste Companies Making Headway in Ohio
(Across the State, Ohio)

Dealing with the rapidly growing number of discarded electronics and pieces of electrical equipment, known commonly as “e-waste,” is a growing state and global problem. Developed countries like the U.S. are just beginning to develop the infrastructure to properly recycle electronics domestically. Domestic processing keeps the highly toxic waste from being exported to developing countries and contributing to a wide-range of environmental and health problems where environmental regulations are typically less stringent.

E-waste is estimated to be a $5 billion industry and continues to grow. Nearly 1.2 billion pounds of e-waste were recycled by member companies of the Coalition for American Electronics Recycling (CAER) in 2012, but an additional 3.6 billion pounds were still sent to landfills or exported. CAER determined that a restriction on e-waste exports could create 42,000 direct and indirect jobs with a total payroll of $1 billion.

To address this problem, CAER is fighting for the passage of the Responsible Electronics Recycling Act (RERA), which would ban certain types of unprocessed and nonworking electronics from being exported to developing countries. Currently, there is no federal legislation regulating e-waste, although 25 states, covering 65% of the U.S. population, have mandated statewide e-waste recycling. Ohio is not yet one of those states.
However, major cities in Ohio are home to several e-waste companies that recognized the mounting e-waste problem years ago and saw an opportunity to establish a presence in a growing market while also addressing a serious environmental issue.

**e-Cycle**, based in Columbus, has been a leader in the field and currently partners with 16 Fortune 20 companies and 356 Fortune 500 companies to divert their e-waste streams. e-Cycle’s CEO, Christopher Irion, was named Entrepreneur of the Year from Ernst and Young in 2011, and the company was listed as the fourth-fastest growing environmental services company by *Inc.* Magazine after seeing 959% business growth between 2008 and 2011. e-Cycle is both R2 certified and a certified e-Steward, both e-waste industry standards for certification. (See below for more information about the standards.)

**2trg**, headquartered in Cincinnati with an additional location in New York, was listed as the sixth-fastest growing company in the environmental services industry in the same *Inc.* rankings and saw a 316% growth in revenue from 2008 to 2010. 2trg is also R2 and e-Steward certified and works with customers, manufacturers and local governments to host approximately 30 e-waste collection events per year. The company has 70 employees and is experiencing steady growth, although competition in the industry is increasing.

Another company, **E-Scrap Solutions**, operates out of Cleveland and saw 30% growth between 2011 and 2012. The company, which is R2 certified, is expanding its 43,000 square-foot facility to 55,000 square feet.

Efforts by E-Scrap Solutions, 2trg, and e-Cycle and others are supplemented by initiatives like the **Ohio By-Product Synergy Network**, a non-profit organization that helps businesses turn waste into profit to benefit both the economy and the environment. Without current state policy on e-waste recycling in Ohio, the work done by these companies and organizations is crucial. In addition to being certified and holding themselves to high standards, these companies are creating green jobs in Ohio and benefiting the local communities in which they operate.

**More on the standards**
The Responsible Recycling Practices certification, known as R2, is a voluntary program from R2 Solutions, a non-profit organization that was created to educate businesses about the importance of e-waste recycling certification. R2 Solutions also provides administrative support to a Technical Advisory Committee, which includes internal and external stakeholders such as entities covered by the standard, customers and users, regulatory agencies, public interest groups, downstream vendors and international trade experts.
The e-Stewards certification is an effort of the Basel Action Network (BAN) and was coordinated after the non-profit organization exposed the costs of exporting and landfilling toxic e-waste. BAN launched the e-Stewards program in 2003, which is designed to give market incentives to drive the certification of the global electronics recycling infrastructure. BAN is also trying to develop a program for companies that transport electronics to give the certification a broader reach.

Both standards are accredited by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and advance best management practices which “maximize reuse and recycling, minimize exposure to human health and the environment, ensure safe management of materials by downstream handlers, and require destruction of all data on used electronics.”

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-Austin Stahl, Voinovich School Scholar, Ohio University Voinovich School (April 2013)