

The Joys & Savings: The Other Side of Recycling

Dr. Sri Raghavan

This is personal share with no intent to project myself in any manner, but to trigger thoughts and ideas in/from others on ways to increasing recycling momentum.

Recycling is not just a responsible throwing away, but is also about taking full advantage of what gets thrown away. This is where we IEEE Engineers & Technically Oriented folks and IEEE as a whole can lead the way. I believe Recycling has to be a grassroots movement, rather than be left as the responsibility of few specialized commercial players.

Just as a preamble, I find it unbelievable seeing what people throw away. Many times new items in unopened packages!! I can sure postulate rational reasons for these, yet I remain totally baffled.

Here are things that I managed to pick up in the recent months:

- A fully working iPad 2017 model (free)
- A Nikon and a Canon 10 Mega Pixels Cameras including pristine rechargeable batteries and chargers (2016, 2018). (free)
- Two Smart Bluetooth Keyboards for my iPad-s/tablets (2020) \$2.
- Two heavy duty stage speaker stands almost brand new (\$7)
- Sony Surround 5 Speaker Sets (2018) Free.
- A 10" Rugged Table Saw (\$15)
- A 1-year old rugged Drill Press (\$20).
- Solid Shelves which you cannot even get in the stores – 30+ years old, an era of durability seems to have vanished (Max Spend \$3).
- An amazing industrial strength roller stand with holder for my iPad and Surface (\$8) that can be oriented in any spherical axis!!
- Lot more..

You can understand why/how these have significantly changed/inspired my purchasing behavior in the past year. Progressively I have developed and settled on an interesting staple routine that is adventurous, enjoyable and also extremely productive.

So here it is..

Savers every Tuesday -- Save additional 30% off on high quality "donated" stuff at low prices. Furniture Fixtures and Electronics. I support their mission to promote recycling. I spend less than \$5 but I have bought amazing things. I bought an iPad Smart Keyboard for \$2 (regular price \$100) and gave it to my 3 year old grand-daughter who loves iPad and is learning to type.

Nashua Dump. I spend ~30 minutes there every Saturday Morning. I have picked up so much Glass Sheets, Fridge Panels, Roller Wheels, Mouse, Keyboards, Wall Mounts for

TV/Monitors etc, All Free. Two months ago, I picked up a set of Sony Surround Speakers including a Big Woofer – good as new but discarded. I am still hoping/waiting for someone to dump a Vizio 4K M43-C1 TV/Monitor that contains a board which I need. My Monitor (luckily my secondary one) flickers at the bottom 10% of the screen.

Craig List: I set notifications. I have got so much under \$20 or free, Office Chairs, Carpentry and Workshop tools. I have added three precision workshop tools in the last few months alone.

Ebay: Set notifications and visit the site few times a week. You can find so much used, refurbished and reconditioned there. Usually if things do not work, merchants just refund the full money instead of going through refunds, return shipping etc. I bought a replacement for my High-End Lenovo Gaming 4K laptop for under \$200 (whose Bios got corrupted. I am hoping to get that corrected soon). Ebay is my staple for small things like audio video cables, adapters, KVM switches, diamond class cutters etc.. all at a small fraction of price with free shipping. Including recycled laptops. Iphones/iPads/cases, LED headlights for autos etc.

Home Depot: I always pick Scrap wood for all my projects for Free or for less than \$1 (in some cases). Over the past year I have accumulated so much wood from there that I am fully stocked for my foreseeable projects. The free 4 foot 4x4 rugged posts they discard from packing crates come handy for lots of uses.

All in all I have been buying very little of new Items, and that too from Brand Name Stores. Not because I do not want to support the local Merchants, just that they sell mostly high priced, fancy things and not the items I am looking for and prefer.

Others: Just beginning to cautiously explore Temu, Alibaba et al. To avoid unknowingly supporting business models that are not in my Ethical spheres.

Incidentally I learn so much from the YouTube Communities of handy DIY folks. Their video uploads are great, especially on how to repurpose normal household things which are thrown away. For example, the tip about using Sewing Stencils/Templates as the ant- glare layer for my Tablets and 55 inch Monitors saved me hundreds of dollars. I have also made so many storage containers and funnels from Amazon Cartons, Milk Bottles, Soda/Juice Cans etc. saving time and money. A Reuse of Knowledge?

It is amazing how much joy these are while also saving, supporting and contributing directly to the recycling vision/mission.