

nextwave

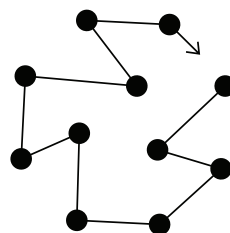
CURRENTS OF CHANGE:

NEXTWAVE PLASTICS

STORIES OF IMPACT

A Case For Collaboration

CASE STUDY 01



04.22.2022



A Case For Collaboration

Why would a group of companies—including direct competitors—openly share solutions on ocean-bound plastic? It's good for business and the planet.

Sometimes, pivotal partnerships start with a bit of serendipity. For Trek Bicycle, a founding member of the NextWave Plastics consortium, the spark was a chance conversation a few years ago.

As a product compliance manager for Trek, Stefan Berggren was traveling a lot. Berggren likes to network: He's not shy about making new connections.

"I was in between flights at the airport," Berggren recalls, "And I started up a conversation with Oliver Campbell from Dell Technologies."

They ended up having plenty to talk about. Campbell is a distinguished engineer in charge of procurement and engineering for Dell's packaging team, including the pursuit of innovative sustainable packaging alternatives. He saw a kindred spirit in Berggren, a 25-year veteran at Trek, who has long been an instigator of environmental efforts at the company.

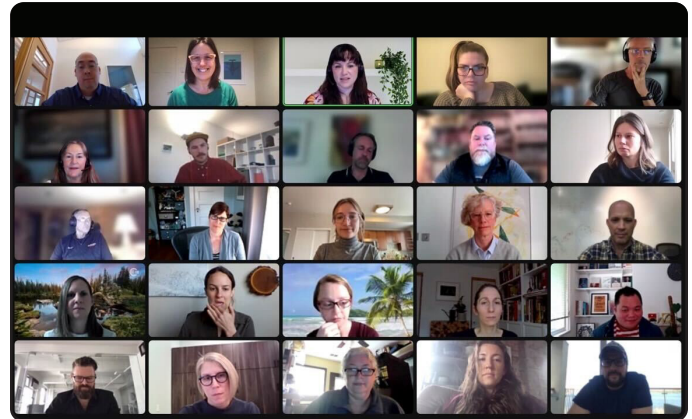
The connection stuck. As Dell prepared to launch NextWave with Lonely Whale in 2017, Campbell asked Berggren whether Trek was interested in joining. The answer: Absolutely.

BETTER TOGETHER

Since then, NextWave's members have been working together to increase the use of ocean-bound plastic—material such as fishing nets and soda bottles that are at high risk of ending up in

"THERE'S JUST SO MUCH POWER IN LEARNING FROM OTHERS' EXPERIENCES."

- ADRIAN SOLGAARD, FOUNDER OF SOLGAARD



waterways—in their products. The consortium brings together a diverse group that ranges from small makers of luxury lifestyle goods to multinational corporations with a broad customer base. Some of them, such as Dell Technologies and HP Inc as well as Humanscale and MillerKnoll, are direct competitors. Others, such as Trek and CPI Card Group, are in completely unrelated sectors.

No matter the industry, all of them find common ground on the tricky but rewarding challenge of diverting plastic waste from entering the ocean. Through regular calls and (when possible) in-person meetings or conferences, NextWave members share what's working and what isn't.

EMBRACING EACH OTHER'S STRENGTHS

"There's just so much power in learning from others' experiences," says Adrian Solgaard, founder of the sustainable, design-driven travel goods company Solgaard. He points to the opportunity to hear from leaders like HP on labor practices.

"The larger companies in NextWave have far more staff dedicated to social responsibility issues. We can learn and grow from that," he says.

On the flip side, companies like Solgaard have the ability to prototype and test out ideas more quickly than larger companies. He points to HomeBase, a wireless charging station made from ocean-bound polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles. Facing a new landscape created by the COVID pandemic with a reduced market for travel goods, Solgaard came up with the HomeBase idea. He funded the system via Kickstarter in the spring of 2020 and released it within three months.





Afterward, Solgaard shared his experience with NextWave members on a call that included the companies' engineering teams and a representative from Solgaard's supplier in China.

"We were able to basically provide a brain dump for all the other NextWave members about what working with this material was like," Solgaard says. "That knowledge-sharing is a great part about being in the consortium."

AN EMPHASIS ON PROBLEM-SOLVING

NextWave members are often trying something for the first time: an ocean-bound plastic material, a production technique, a supplier relationship. Because of this, they are likely to run into snags—and they do. For companies like Dell Technologies and HP Inc, their shared competitive space means they can tackle supplier issues at scale.

"Dell and HP have a long history of partnering with others in our industry to make advancements in social responsibility, health and safety and other areas across our very connected supply chain," said Page Motes, head of global sustainability at Dell. "That experience paved the way for a natural collaboration with NextWave members to advance social responsibility considerations while strengthening the market for ocean-bound plastic."

In another example of problem-solving, MillerKnoll, a global design leader, recently found that a batch of resin they procured turned out to be unusable for its intended application. Bob Teasley, director of new product development and supply management for the collective's Herman Miller brand, alerted NextWave. Within days, he had two companies interested in using the material for their own projects, while another company offered ideas on an additive that might salvage the supply.

Business sustainability groups can have a tendency toward self-congratulation, Teasley says. NextWave is different.

"When you're trying to accomplish something, it's not always, 'This went well,'" Teasley says. "NextWave is a very action-oriented group. It's about getting the right stuff done."

Visit nextwaveplastics.org to learn more

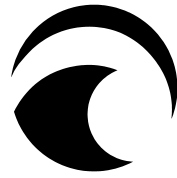
**“NEXTWAVE IS A
VERY ACTION-
ORIENTED GROUP.
IT’S ABOUT
GETTING THE
RIGHT STUFF DONE.”**

- BOB TEASLEY, DIRECTOR OF SUPPLY MANAGEMENT
AND NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AT MILLERKNOLL



FOSTER YOUR OWN COLLABORATION

- Widen the circle of potential collaborators to include diverse points of view.
- Be willing to share both successes and failures.
- Focus on knowledge or resource gaps.
- Team up on solutions.
- Don't hold back on asking for help.



nextwave

CURRENTS OF CHANGE:
NEXTWAVE PLASTICS
STORIES OF IMPACT

V I S I T
NEXTWAVEPLASTICS.ORG
TO LEARN MORE

