

nextwave

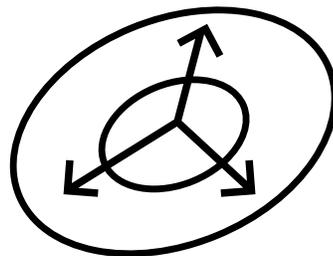
CURRENTS OF CHANGE:

NEXTWAVE PLASTICS

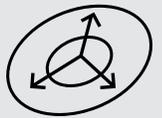
STORIES OF IMPACT

Reaching Scale & Impact

CASE STUDY 07



06.01.2022



Reaching Scale & Impact

NextWave Plastics members started with what they could control—their own supply chains—but they’ve never lost sight of the goal to create scalable impact and transform how everyone thinks about plastic waste.

Companies that join the NextWave Plastics consortium commit to “turn off the tap” on plastic entering the ocean. Collectively, by the end of 2025 they aim to keep at least 25,000 metric tons of plastic—the equivalent of more than 2.7 billion single-use plastic water bottles—from reaching the ocean.



Every member has found its own, unique path toward fulfilling their commitment. Whether using material from fishing nets once bound to be discarded in the ocean or replacing an existing material for a new ocean-bound plastic, all companies have one thing in common: build for scale and impact. They also recognize that sometimes you have to start with something safe yet meaningful in order to go big.

For HP, it was convincing a key supply chain partner to run a small trial of ocean-bound plastic for ink cartridges that were already using recycled PET. Today, HP has launched more than 300 new products around the world made with ocean-bound plastic. For Trek, it was rethinking something in their full control—the Bontrager water bottle cage—and then expanding to other products. And for MillerKnoll, a collective of design brands including Herman Miller

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and Knoll, it was trying out the plastic in an item that was largely behind the scenes, the reusable containers for its operations.

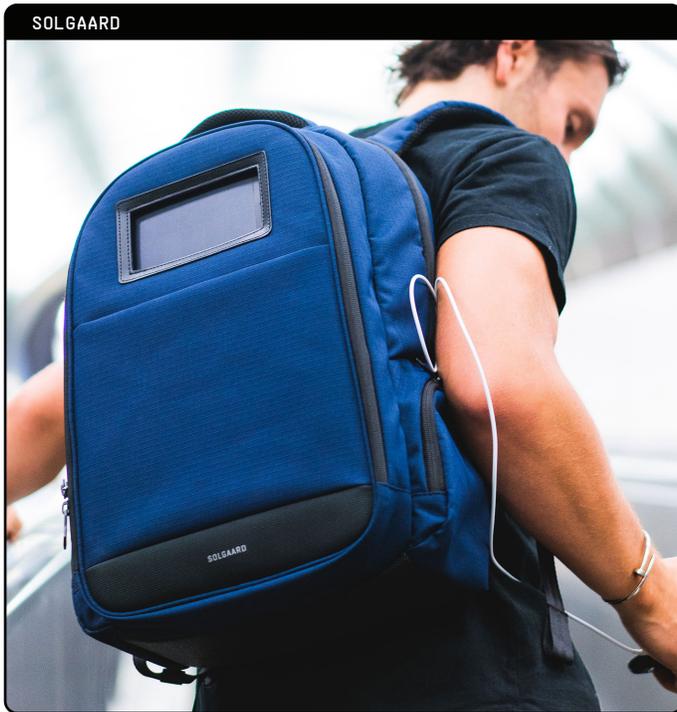
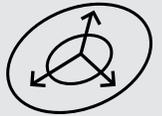
MillerKnoll’s containers were a shrewd pilot use case for ocean-bound plastic. Suppliers use them to ship components to the company and then take them back—the customer never sees them. They’re black, and they don’t need to look fancy, so the design didn’t have to achieve cosmetic perfection. But they did need to withstand the shipping process, making them a good test of durability. Thankfully, the test was successful, and this application has the potential to achieve scale across multiple industries that use similar shipping containers.

A FIRST FORAY INTO OCEAN-BOUND PLASTIC

Ocean-bound plastic, composed of resins that have been used for decades, is not exactly a novel material. But from a manufacturing perspective, it might as well be. Because of its exposure to nature, without the proper controls, there can be

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- GABE WING, DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY AT MILLERKNOLL



Technologies. Dell has expanded its use of ocean-bound plastic from its initial test case with packaging to components in products such as laptops.

“Scale not only brings flow-through, but that flow-through brings stability,” Lessig says. “And—particularly in recycled markets—stability is valuable.”

After its initial commitment in 2016 to use ocean-bound plastics from Haiti, HP has reinvented its supply chain, used more than 110 million ocean-bound plastic bottles to make new HP products—including ink cartridges, printers, and the world’s first displays, notebooks, mobile workstations, enterprise Chromebooks, consumer notebooks and conference room systems containing ocean-bound plastic—and created more than 1,100 new income opportunities for the people of Haiti. During the pandemic, HP increased its order with its Haitian supplier to convey its unwavering commitment to the community.

inconsistencies in texture, color, strength, and sheen. Through its experiment with reusable packaging containers, MillerKnoll established that the material could perform physically. From there, the company began to evaluate how it could be used in customer-facing products—including Herman Miller’s iconic Aeron Chair.

“It wasn’t just, ‘Oh, we’ll put the recycled material in and everything will be the same,’” said Gabe Wing, MillerKnoll’s director of sustainability. “It was working through all of those variations to deliver a product that’s going to satisfy our customers.”

MillerKnoll purchased about 6 metric tons of ocean-bound plastic as a starting point when it began using the material for containers in 2018. Today, the company diverts an estimated 234 metric tons of ocean-bound plastic annually.

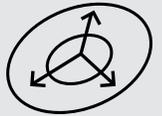
Unwavering commitment

Companies that buy ocean-bound plastic—and help build the supply chains to do it—are creating a market that didn’t exist before. This helps both the planet and the people who collect the material, in locations ranging from Haiti to Chile to Indonesia.

“A steady, substantial volume of ocean-bound plastic use ensures regular income for raw material suppliers, who can then invest in improvements,” says Romi Lessig, program consultant for sustainability with Dell

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- ADRIAN SOLGAARD, FOUNDER OF SOLGAARD



Even though HP has invested in ocean-bound plastic and created impressive momentum, the company recognizes there is more to do—not only in continuing to expand its efforts but in helping others do the same, described Ellen Jackowski, chief impact officer and head of sustainable impact at HP.

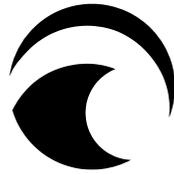
“NextWave has created this community of people who can learn from each other,” Jackowski says. “It helps all of us scale faster and then collectively bring more awareness to the issue—as well as to the solutions that we’re all innovating together.”

This sentiment is shared by emerging companies as well. Sustainable, design-driven travel goods company Solgaard has already integrated ocean-bound plastic into multiple products, and it plans to keep going. “The next goal for us is to be able to scale our operations as much as possible, says founder Adrian Solgaard.”

The idea is to expand the impact that results from growth. Solgaard explains that the company is hoping to open up their supply chain to NextWave members and beyond, “allowing what we’ve learned, the hard way, to be more accessible to others that are wanting to use ocean-bound plastic.”

ACHIEVE IMPACT THROUGH SCALE

- Choose a low-risk initial use case
- Define desirable product attributes and work toward them
- Commit to a price and volume of material to support market stability
- Set realistic benchmarks and steps for achieving them
- Take a long view



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