

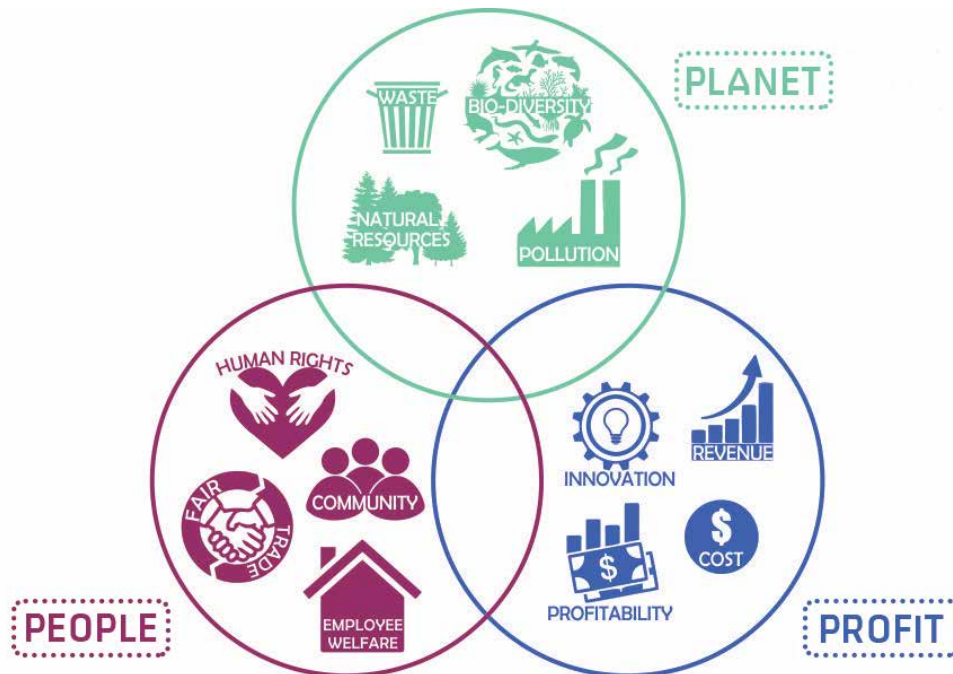
# THE ECOCHIC DESIGN AWARD BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FASHION BUSINESS



Image credit: Esther Lui (designer), Eric Wong of HAP Laboratory (photographer)

# WHAT IS IT?

A sustainable business works towards achieving a positive triple bottom line - people, planet, profit - so that it generates profit whilst minimising any negative impacts to people and our planet through its products, services and operations.



# WHY DO IT?

The fashion industry is the second most polluting industry in the world and it causes negative impacts on people and the earth's delicate ecosystems along the global supply chain. We have a responsibility to change this current system and to make a positive impact on our world.

In addition to doing the right thing, there are many ways in which being more sustainable will benefit your business. Building more efficient operations will lower your costs, increasing your profits and helping you to drive growth and innovation. You will gain a competitive advantage, improve your brand value and reputation, and most importantly, decrease your environmental footprint.

## EXPERT'S TIP

— Yvon Chouinard, Founder of Patagonia —

“Who are businesses really responsible to? Their shareholders? Their customers? Their employees? None of the above, I have finally come to believe. Fundamentally, businesses are responsible to their resource base. Without a healthy planet there are no shareholders, no customers, no employees.”

# HOW DO I DO IT?

## 1 ANALYSE YOUR OPERATIONS



Analysing your full operations is key to getting going with your sustainable business. All the way from raw materials through to your final product and beyond, you will be making decisions for your brand that will affect its footprint. So you need to take a look at the big picture first!

Before you dive in to create improvements, first stop and think. As a good practice for all businesses, first do a SWOT analysis by reviewing your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, which will help you determine your capabilities in the global marketplace.<sup>1</sup> Then analyse the environmental and social impacts of your business through your entire supply chain and operations. This will allow you to make a plan to tackle issues, with the quick wins first through to the issues that may need longer investment and research. Start with achievable targets and don't get overwhelmed. Pick the impact areas that matter most to your business. For example, look for stages in your supply chain where you can purchase sustainable materials, reduce waste, save energy, streamline production and decrease transport emissions and you will be taking the first steps to creating your sustainable fashion business!

Remember, it is unrealistic to tackle everything at once, but by beginning the journey, you will already be gaining a competitive advantage, as you will understand the true impacts of your business. Read on for ideas to help guide you in this process.

## RAW MATERIALS

As you are designing your product, you can choose to source materials that are more environmentally sustainable, for example up-cycled or reclaimed materials; organic cotton instead of conventional pesticide-laced cotton; new dyeing technologies that require less water and chemicals; or materials that have high recyclability at the end of the product's lifecycle. Try purchasing raw materials in bulk or share your bulk order with other local designers or reduce the number of different locations you source from to streamline transportation.

<sup>1</sup> You can find many examples on the Internet to help you create a SWOT analysis of your fashion brand.





Image credit: kowtow

*kowtow, a New Zealand sustainable brand, only uses 100% certified organic and fair trade cotton for their contemporary womenswear line.*



Image credit: Quiksilver

*Quiksilver, an Australian surf clothing company, launched a collection of board shorts that were made of recycled materials. Each pair of shorts contains about 11 recycled plastic bottles.*



Image credit: Ryuichiro Louis Iijima (photographer), Zlata Supermodamanagement (model), Verena Schroff (hair & make-up)

*Karen Jessen, The EcoChic Design Award 2013 winner, sources discarded leather for her brand Benu Berlin.*

## EXPERT'S TIP

— Liz Alig, Designer of Liz Alig —

“Conscious clothing for Liz Alig means we spend a little – or a lot – of extra time visiting the groups we work with, asking where they buy their fabric so that we can create collections out of 100% recycled materials. It is spending the extra time to ask the hard questions that allows us to design a collection with the ethical resources we have.”

# DESIGN

After choosing your materials, look at how to reduce your environmental impact through design. Could you use design techniques to reduce waste? Could you design clothes with multiple uses and functions? Could you prolong the product's lifecycle through design? Could you foster good consumer use, such as wash, care, repair, reuse and recycle through your design? These design options can be creative and fun!



Image credit: Stella McCartney



Image credit: Farrah Floyd

*Stella McCartney launched her eponymous fashion house in a partnership with Kering in October 2001. "I design clothes that are meant to last. I believe in creating pieces that aren't going to get burnt, that aren't going to landfills, that aren't going to damage the environment."*

*Bojana Drača, The EcoChic Design Award alumni and Berlin-based designer, takes a zero-waste design approach to create her brand, Farrah Floyd.*



Image credit: Urban Outfitters



Image credit: Wan & Wong Fashion

*US retailer, Urban Outfitters, has a line called Urban Renewal, which reuses surplus textiles and vintage clothing for a range of apparel and accessories. Each piece is hand-updated and made modern by the Urban Renewal team.*

*Wan & Wong Fashion, The EcoChic Design Award alumni and Hong Kong based brand, up-cycles textile waste using surplus and dead stock textiles.*

## EXPERT'S TIP

— Tania Reinert- Shchelkanovtseva, Co-founder of A Boy Named Sue —

"Design, design, design! Once you have chosen your factories and materials, you must focus on the design of the collection. The pieces have to be unique, coherent - less is more - and relatively affordable. After this, your lookbook, website, branding and pricing are the crucial second layers. The ethics are the ground work, the aesthetic is what will make you stand out for the buyers."

# PRODUCTION

As you move into production, you can think about how you can reduce energy and water consumption in your production process and factory operations. Could you reduce wastage of raw materials? Are you aware of the use of hazardous chemicals in your production? Could you monitor your production line to comply with regional and international environmental and safety requirements? Could you avoid over-production by producing just the right amount according to your demand?

Materials
Total Design Score **41** Section Score **40** Section Weight 30%

Capture the primary materials used in your product.  
You can create items made from mixed materials, such as blended fabrics or footwear sub-assemblies.

Item name	Weight	Material name	Material %	MSI material	Mark if proxy	%Recycled	%Organic	Other source certifications?	Coating or laminate applied?	Dyeing method?	Reduce chemical impact?
Poly Blend	6	rPET	75	Polyester fabric	23.3	100	20	0	Yes	Unknown	No
		wool	25	Wool fabric	18.8	0	0	0	No	Unknown	No

Score  
**42**

- 22
- 15
- 0
- 5
- 0

Add Material

Image credit: Sustainable Apparel Coalition

The Higg Index is a self-assessment tool available to members, which include brands, retailers and facilities of all sizes. The Higg Index measures environmental, social and labour impacts and identifies areas for improvement. It is currently mainly used at the production stage. Following input of key data, a Higg Index score is given. These scores are now the common language and standard for benchmarking and selecting production facilities that have good environmental and social governance by international brands and buyers in the apparel and footwear industry.

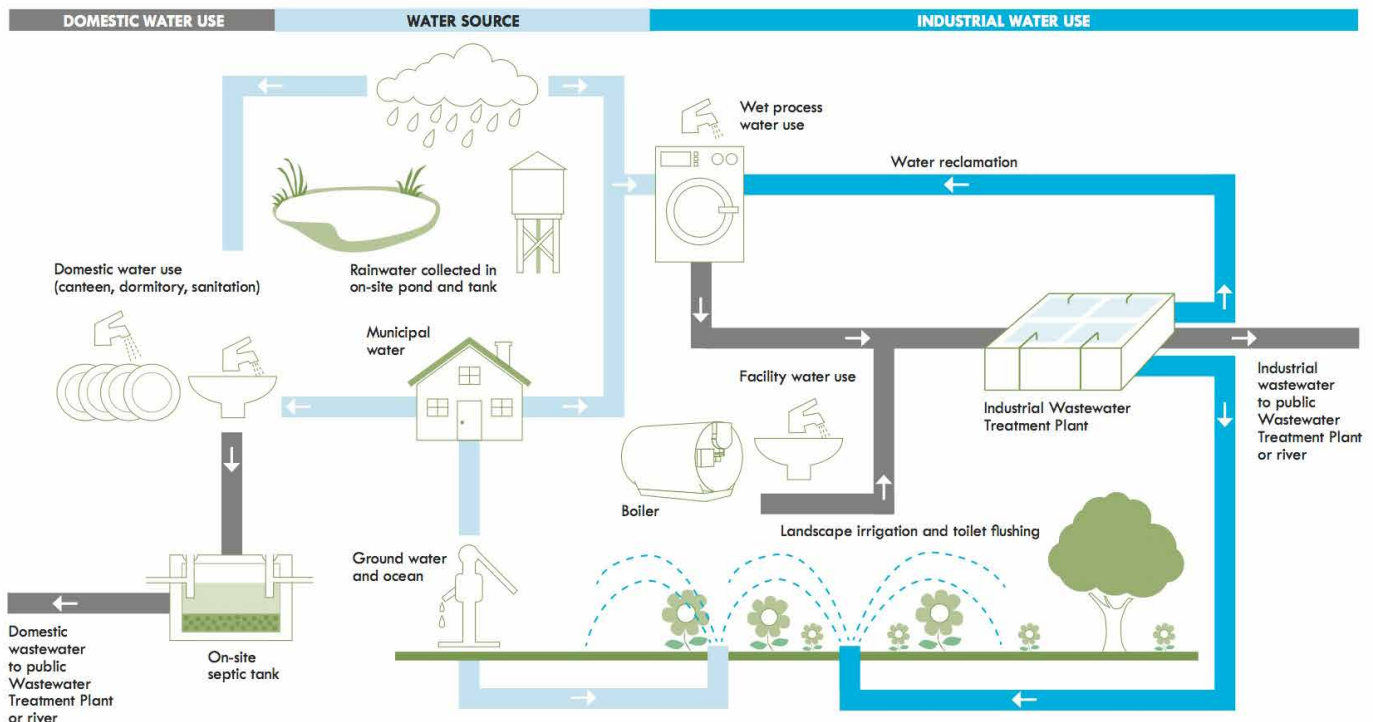


Image credit: TAL Group

TAL Group, a Hong Kong apparel company with overseas manufacturing facilities, is committed to reducing its water footprint from manufacturing by reducing water use, recycling industrial water and wastewater treatment.



# DISTRIBUTION

How you distribute your products can also be more environmentally-sustainable so that you reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions during transportation and handling. How about shipping or road or rail transportation instead of airfreight? Could you choose more energy-efficient modes of vehicle? Could you minimise your packaging to reduce weight? Could you use a more efficient packing system when stacking goods to reduce bulk? Is the space in your storage or distribution centre well used? Could you move your production closer to your operations and distribution?



Image credit: Marks & Spencer



Image credit: Reformation

UK retailer Marks & Spencer has been using aerodynamic teardrop-shaped trucks since 2007 to reduce their CO2 emissions from goods distribution as part of their Plan A campaign.

Reformation, a US women's fashion brand, sources half of their raw materials from the US and manufactures 70% of their products from their local factories in Los Angeles, rather than abroad, in order to reduce their carbon footprint from transportation.

# RETAIL STORE OR E-COMMERCE?

How you ultimately make your sale to your customer, whether through physical retail or an online platform, also affects the environment.

Physical retail spaces consume a significant amount of energy, through electricity bills and through all of the necessary visual merchandising that is needed for your products. Simple steps to alleviate this are to opt for a green energy supplier and select energy-efficient lighting and to



Image credit: taken from www.StellaMcCartney.com



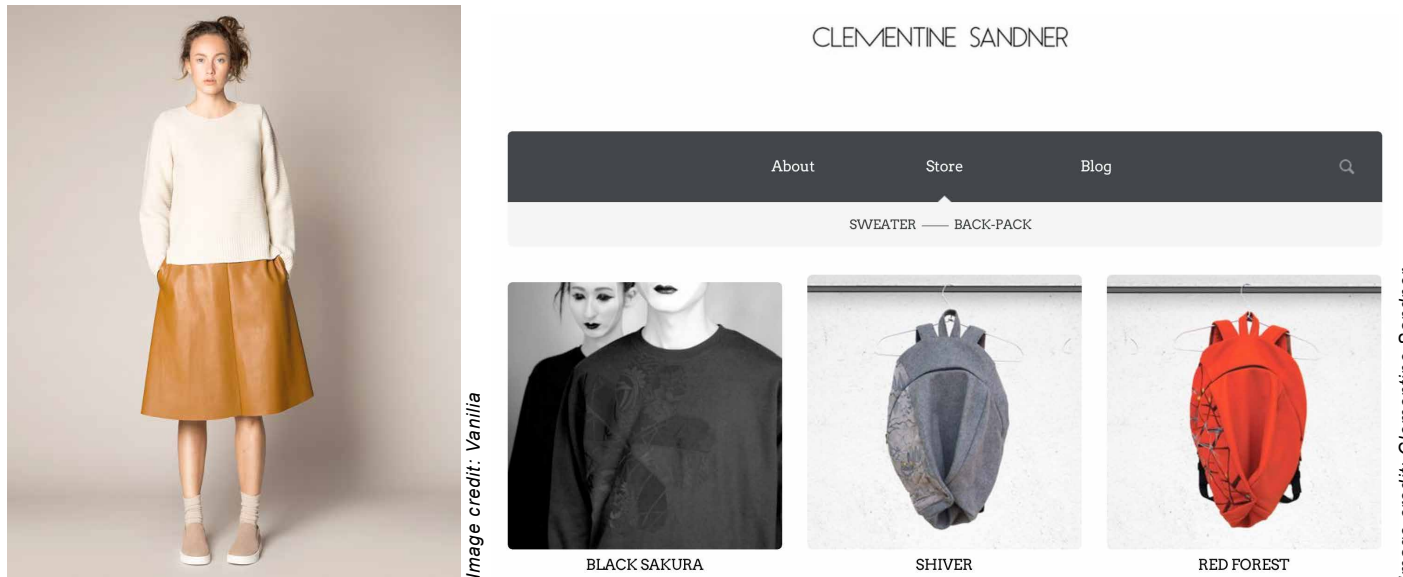
Image credit: PUMA

Stella McCartney uses LED lighting in all its new stores, plus its Paris and New York showrooms, reducing energy usage by 75%. The brand received its first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) store certification in 2013 for its Dallas store in the US, which features solar panels, FSC wood and energy efficient lighting.

German sports brand, PUMA, inaugurated their first sustainable store in India in 2012. The retail space was designed and built with optimum environmental considerations, including using recycled and locally sourced materials and energy efficiency in mind. An in-store programme, Bring me Back, also enables consumers to deposit their used clothing and footwear, whatever the brand, in dedicated recycling bins and now covers over half of stores worldwide.

seek more sustainable sources for your visual merchandising and carrier bags. Do your research for sustainable options in these areas. You may be surprised at the alternatives available.

Selling online, otherwise known as e-commerce, might shift your environmental footprint from one aspect of your business to another by negating the needs of the physical shop. For example, if you decide to be a sole e-commerce company then the majority of your impact would likely be related to packaging and customer delivery. To work towards negating this, you could partner with a more energy-efficient and low carbon logistics partner.



*Vanilia, a Dutch fashion brand that supports fair trade production in its supply chain, offsets the emissions of the shipment's transport with UPS' carbon neutral programme.*

*Clémentine Sandner, The EcoChic Design Award alumni and Japan-based up-cycling designer, recently started e-commerce on her website, which can be a cost effective and sustainable option for start-ups who want to sell directly to their customers. For example designers can produce less stock than they might need to stock the shelves of a physical store or produce on demand.*

## EXPERT'S TIP

— Daryl Tay, Director Enterprise Product Strategy, UPS Asia Pacific Region —

“Our 2013 UPS Pulse of the Online Shopper survey revealed that end-consumers globally want greater control over their online shopping experiences, including more information, more choices and more convenience across channels. They also expect perks such as free shipping and returns.

Leveraging a strong logistics partner is key to delivering a positive retail customer experience and can make the difference in driving return customers and sales. Retailers who focus on the shipping and delivery experience, especially returns, will gain an edge with customers.

While free shipping remains a key component of the online consumer experience around the world, several other factors matter, including having a variety of payment options, providing an estimated or guaranteed delivery date and total cost, including shipping charges, early in the checkout process.

If you decide to be a sole e-commerce company, a large percentage of your business environmental impacts are likely to fall under packaging and customer delivery. Hence you should look for ways to reduce this. For example, we have a UPS carbon neutral programme, where we offset your carbon footprint by investing in various projects.”



# PACKAGING & PRESENTATION

How you decide to present and package your goods can also leave a mark on the earth. How do you package your products for shipping? What material is your packaging made of? Is the packaging recyclable? Have you communicated your sustainable values on packaging to your merchandisers or the manufacturers who pack your products?

You can also think about the materials you use to present your products at the point of purchase. Could you minimise the amount of printing for visual merchandising? Could you use more environmentally sustainable options for hangers, hang tags and packaging? Could you re-use any of the materials?



Image credit: Muji



Image credit: REI



Image credit: Nike, Inc.

Japanese brand Muji has long been known for its minimalist products, which is also reflected in their packaging. As a business, waste reduction and simplicity of packaging are key focus areas.

Did you know that most hangers are not recyclable? 85% of all hangers end up in landfills.<sup>2</sup> Retailers like Levi Strauss, REI and Gap have switched from using plastic and metal hangers to specially designed recyclable hangers as part of their commitment to responsible business.

Nike, the US giant sportswear company, has been working to reduce the environmental impacts of its packaging, from using 100% recycled cardboard to reducing the weight of their shipping cartons. They report savings of the equivalent of 200,000 trees annually by using less materials<sup>3</sup>

# CUSTOMER CARE SERVICES

In recent years, responsible fashion brands and retailers have increasingly been focusing more attention on educating their customers about better consumer care by offering improved care labels and instructions and by adding new services, like take-back services, repair and garment rental, to enhance the sustainability of products. You can also offer customer service options that extend the life of your garments, divert waste from landfills and build brand loyalty.

Like many things, deciding on different customer service options starts at the design stage. You will need to know how your products are being used, cared for and disposed of in order to make more informed decisions during the design stage. Could you design your products to influence how they are being washed, cared, stored, re-used and disposed? Could you create clothes that make repairs easier? Could you design clothes with their end-of-life in mind?

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dittohangers.com/faq/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nikebiz.com/crreport/content/environment/4-7-0-case-study-rethink-the-box.php>



Image credit: Levi Strauss & Co



Image credit: Filippa K

Levi's launched a partnership with Goodwill, an American recycling charity, during the Christmas season of 2015 whereby online shoppers can return any of their unwanted clothes for recycling in the same box their jeans were delivered in. Levi's then also donates US\$5 to Goodwill for every box they receive.

Swedish brand, Filippa K, has a store in Stockholm selling their own brand's secondhand clothes and thereby offering their customers the opportunity to trade in clothes from past seasons.

Lease and switch  
after one year  
7,50 / month



Image credit: MUD Jeans



Image credit: Patagonia

MUD Jeans allows customers to lease their jeans instead of owning them. After 12 months, they offer customers the option to keep, switch to a new pair or return.

US outdoor clothing brand, Patagonia, offers extensive repair services and care guides in partnership with iFixit to help their customers prolong the life of their garments.

**How does it work?**

**"HELP!!"**

**ALTERATION**  
Discover how your garment can be altered. Even if it's not worth saving, you can exchange it for a gift voucher with a discount for your next purchase.

**BONHAM STRAND**  
EST. 2012  
Hong Kong Genuine Bespoke Tailoring

**DONATE**  
Make a positive difference! Our master tailors will re-tailor your garment for local community members in need.

**UPCYCLE**  
Be creative! We can help turn your garment into other products such as tote bags, wine bags, and clutches.

**RECYCLE**  
Go green! We can help recycle your garment and ensure it leaves the lowest carbon footprint possible.

REDRESS THE SUIZON INIT

Image credit: Bonham Strand

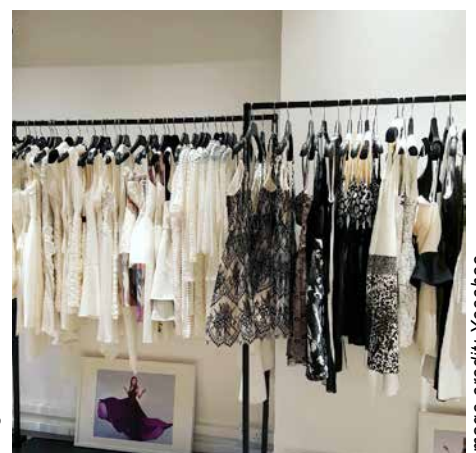


Image credit: Yeechoo

The Hong Kong made-to-measure formalwear company, Bonham Strand offers their customers the chance to bring back their used garments for alteration by their local expert tailors to give extra mileage. They also offer donation, up-cycling and recycling services if alteration is not an option.

Yeechoo, Hong Kong's first online rental company of luxury fashion and accessories, rents clothes and gives their customers affordable access to quality clothes.



# 2 SHARING YOUR VALUES

A company that has strong sustainable values holds a stronger brand identity. By building a sustainable business, you will attract employees with similar visions of positive environmental impact along with a loyal consumer base. So it is important to engage with your stakeholders. Are your suppliers and employees clear of the sustainability of your brand? Do you communicate your sustainable story to your customers and buyers? Have you thought of running activities that include and benefit the wider community?

## REPORTING TO STAKEHOLDERS

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the conventional name for the commitments by a business to behave ethically and to contribute positively to society and to the environment. A CSR team is responsible for implementing strategies and communicating them to stakeholders. Over time, the role of CSR has been evolving from a periphery department to becoming more integrated into all business aspects and CSR now often sits at the very core of businesses as CEOs switch on to the growing importance of action in this area. Along the way, the name of this function has also changed and it is more often now known simply as a sustainability team.

However large your business, reporting is a key part of CSR or sustainability. And now more than ever, as the pace of information flow is accelerated and customers demand transparency of the brands they buy, it's important to show accountability for your business' impacts to your stakeholders. Your sustainability targets come into play here as a key measurement of how you are doing on your journey.



Image credit: PUMA.com



Image credit: People Tree

Sports brand PUMA has been publishing sustainability reports since 2002. Their most recent report includes their sustainability strategy, scorecards on their products, material analysis and stakeholder inclusiveness according to 'International Standard on Assurance Engagements (ISAE) 3000'. Under a pilot run by Kering Group, PUMA were also the first-ever brand to publish an EP&L (Environmental Profit & Loss Account); a measurement of the true cost of business on nature in monetary terms.

People Tree have a section on their website called 'Our Story' featuring all aspects of the brand and what they stand for. This includes videos that communicate how and where their collections are made, along with explaining the issues their business campaigns for around environmental, ethical and social change in the fashion industry.



As a result of the changing landscape, reporting is shifting to be more fluid and is becoming a major tool for fashion brands to communicate their sustainable commitments and developments with customers, employees and the wider community. Reporting is moving away from the printed, more formal annual reporting alongside finance information. Reporting now includes more regularly updated, integrated reporting on a brand's website, or newsletters, videos and social media. There are many ways to communicate the steps you are making big and small.

Some fashion conglomerates are also now dedicating resources to measuring their brands' impacts more deeply to allocate a financial 'true cost' value in order to demonstrate to stakeholders the broader impacts of how their business affects the environment and society.

## CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

It's important to engage your customers in your sustainability initiatives as they will be your biggest advocates. Share your sustainability efforts with your customers as part of your marketing strategy and build trust by connecting with their values and motivations.

You will need to adopt a proactive and transparent strategy to let your customers know about the positive ways your business has engaged in sustainable practices. But also be honest about the challenges that you are still working to improve.

Engaging your customers can be done in many ways. You could go for more subtle informative messaging, for example on hangtags or as part of the product's information your website. Or you could go bolder with communications that are shared through advertising or on social media, which drives conversation among your consumer base. Whichever messaging route you choose, remember that unclear, misleading or false information - often described as green-washing - can result in customers losing confidence in a brand and their environmental claims and labels. So it's essential that your marketing team - even if this is you putting on a different hat! - has a clear understanding of both the issues and your brand's commitments before they start communicating externally.

Learn more about communicating effectively to your consumers in our Learn Marketing Guide. [www.ecochicdesignaward.com/learn](http://www.ecochicdesignaward.com/learn).

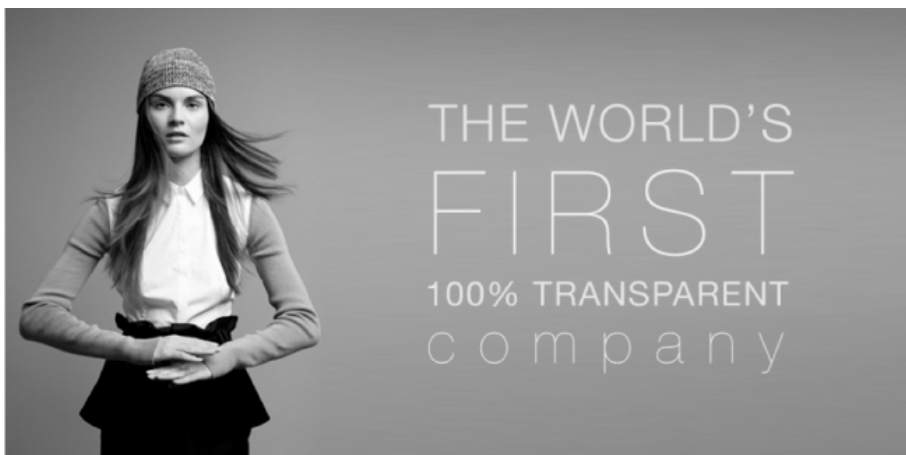


Image credit: Honest By



Image credit: Defra

*Honest By, established by Bruno Pieters in 2012, has a mission to offer customers the opportunity to shop in a completely conscious way. They are the first company to share a full cost breakdown of their products and they adhere to a 100% transparency policy.*

*UK governmental body, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)'s Green Claims Guidance report guides businesses on how to make robust environmental claims.*



Image credit: Everlane

American fashion startup, Everlane, show where their clothes are made by using strong visuals of their factories and workers, and materials used, in order to bring the customers closer to the makers of their clothes.

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

As well as communicating with your customers, holding shared values within your organisation is also very important. Your team is the backbone of your business, so engaging them on the journey to sustainable business can have multiple benefits. Communicate your core values to your whole company, even your junior employees, and ask for their ideas and inputs for improvements. Research shows that when employee and company values match, employee loyalty, creativity, quality and accuracy of communication and integrity of decision-making increase!<sup>4</sup> Allocating sustainability champions to help you address and succeed in the major challenges will further drive their engagement. Why not also incentivise your employees by adding sustainability KPIs to your staff targets?



Image credit: Eileen Fisher

As part of their sustainable strategy, American brand Eileen Fisher promotes a collaborative workplace, as well as the wellness of their employees and their personal development. They encourage their employees to take part in programmes such as mentorships, allowing employees to work across different departments and to receive external training, which helps to build a strong, committed team.

<sup>4</sup> *Leisure Services Management*, By Amy R. Hurd, Robert J. Barcelona, John T. Meldrum, 2008



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engaging with the wider community is also a useful step that can lead to long-term gains. Working with people beyond your customers and employees will help you build brand reputation and spread the message about your work. You may also discover ways in which the wider community can help you achieve your sustainability targets. You might want to engage people in the local community where your company operates, for example your suppliers, local schools, charities and NGOs or even your local authority. And don't forget the media too!



Image credit: Patagonia

*Environmental protection is a key vision for Patagonia. They have many strong programmes that engage with people outside their customer base. These include environmental campaigns, charitable work, active involvement in major global climate change events and quick, corrective responses to sustainability issues raised by the press.*



Image credit: Classics Anew

*Janko Lam, The EcoChic Design Award alumni and Hong Kong up-cycling designer, regularly hosts workshops for locals teaching them how to make qipaos, the traditional Chinese dress. These traditional techniques are an integral part of her brand, Classics Anew.*



# CASE STUDY

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# TONLÉ

*Rachel Faller established tonlé in 2008. The brand is committed to designing one-of-a-kind, zero-waste pieces where the entire production produces 0% waste.*



Image credit: tonlé

## **Why is sustainability important to your company?**

Sustainability is a core part of our fashion brand. We started as a social enterprise, but we believe that social responsibility and high environmental standards go hand in hand; you can't have one without the other. So since the company's founding, we have tried to find the most environmentally sustainable materials, which are, for the most part, remnant fabrics from garment factories.

## **How is sustainability integrated into your business?**

Sustainability is a core part of our fashion brand. We started as a social enterprise, but we believe that social responsibility and high environmental standards go hand in hand; you can't have one without the other. So since the company's founding, we have tried to find the most environmentally sustainable materials, which are, for the most part, remnant fabrics from garment factories.



**What have been your biggest challenges in implementing sustainable business practices?**

Creating a different process for production has been a challenge as people - both customers and staff - are so used to the way things have always been done in the garment manufacturing industry, but which has played a large part in the world's most severe environmental issues. We've had to spend a huge amount of time developing our processes to create new, better ways of production. We also have to spend a lot of time training each of our staff members in the production teams regarding these processes, which can at first seem pretty strange to them! For example, getting the staff not to throw away any scrap of fabric, no matter how small, has not been easy. But after they understand why we do what we do, they get pretty excited about it as well.

**What has been your most successful sustainability initiative?**

One thing that makes us unique is our zero-waste design and production process. We create each collection not only to use waste fabrics from nearby garment factories, but also to utilise every single scrap of our own waste. We do this by cutting the fabric into small strips, categorising them by colour and type, and then using them in a variety of innovative designs. After we've used these strips, even smaller pieces are woven and knitted into new pieces. And finally, with the remaining tiny shreds of fabric and thread, we mix them with used paper from our office and cutting room. This means we make zero-waste in our production process, something that most factories, which can waste up to 40% of their raw materials, would consider impossible. But it's not!

**Do you share your sustainability values with your stakeholders? If so how?**

Yes, we do so through our transparent and open marketing and social media. We want our customers, as well as our production team, to be connected through our marketing. We are an open book and we welcome any and all questions and inquiries.

**What is your top tip to starting a sustainable business?**

Stick to your principals and don't be afraid to ask for help. There are lots of people out there who want to contribute to something good and having a strong network of mentors around you is one of the most important parts of getting a good business going - and keeping it running! Starting a business is easy compared to running a successful business. Build your business to last; at the end of the day this is the true measure of its sustainability.

# CASE STUDY

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## H&M

*“I hope that in the future, up-cycling old clothes will be a standard in our industry, that workers in supplier factories can negotiate wages and working conditions in a fair dialogue with their employers, that making clothes will have minimal impacts on waters and that consumers all over the world can easily build their personal style with sustainable fashion. And that H&M has played its part on this journey.” Karl-Johan Persson, CEO H&M*



Image credit: H&M

*Julia Restoin Roitfeld as the face of the upcoming 2016 H&M Conscious Exclusive Collection, which is their line of evening wear created using a range of sustainable materials, including organic silk, leather, linen, and cotton, recycled polyester and lyocell, with strong prints and intricate embellishment using recycled sequins and beads. The 2016 edition was inspired by the archives in Paris’ Musée des Arts Décoratifs museum.*

### **Why is sustainability important to your company?**

We want every customer and each one of our colleagues to enter our store feeling safe and proud that every product they buy or sell has been produced with the respect of human rights and a minimal impact on the environment. We know that the way we choose to do our business affects millions of people’s lives. Not just the communities where our customers and colleagues live but also the families of the 1.7 million people - most of them women in Asia - that are employed by our suppliers. Our way of doing business should contribute to the prosperity and well-being of communities.

To us being sustainable means that the needs of both present and future generations must be fulfilled. The fashion industry today is very dependent on scarce natural resources such as water, land and oil. To ensure long-term profitability, we need to be less dependent on natural resources and go from a linear production model to a circular and renewable. That’s why we put a lot of focus on creating a closed loop for textiles.

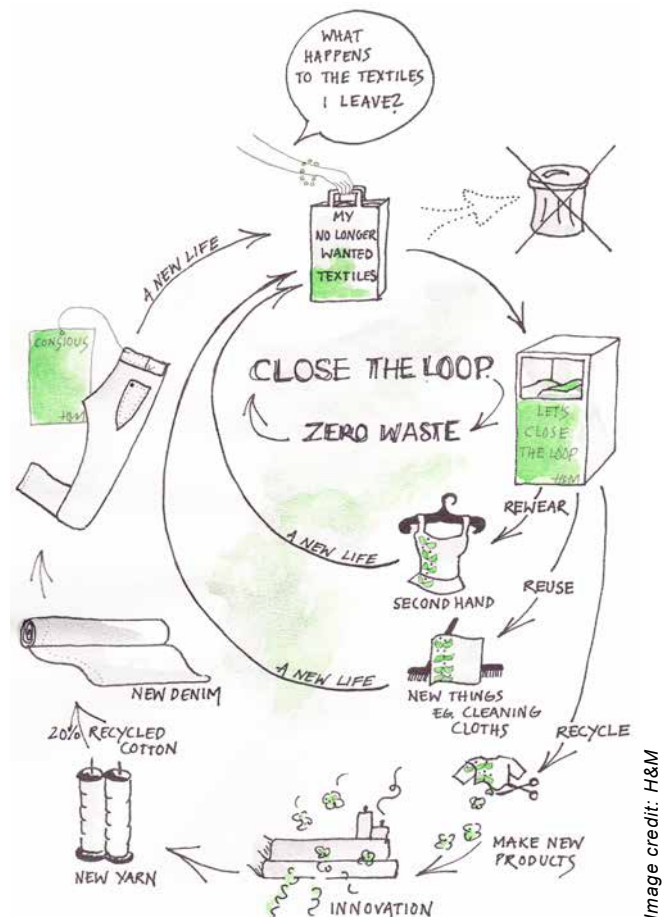


## How is sustainability integrated into your business?

Our business idea is fashion and quality at the best price in a sustainable way, so it is a natural part of everything we do and of our customer offering. This means that every business decision must be taken with people, planet and profitability equally in mind. Every department and every country in H&M set their own sustainability goals, and there is a clear expectation from our Board and our CEO that H&M should always be at the forefront of sustainability. We want to make fashion sustainable and sustainability fashionable by making sustainable fashion and a sustainable lifestyle easy and accessible to everyone, regardless of the size of your wallet.

## What have been your biggest challenges in implementing sustainable business practices?

Looking back to the mid-nineties when we sold our first organic collection, drafted our first Code of Conduct and chemical restriction lists, there has been such a long learning journey for us. The list of challenges, and also mistakes, could probably fill the full page. But let me share our challenge with cotton. It is the largest of all materials we use and requires huge amounts of water and chemicals to produce. So we decided that we want to buy more sustainable cotton. But even if we since many years now are the world's largest buyer of organic cotton across all industries, it covers less than 15% of all cotton we use. To reach our goal of 100% more sustainable cotton by 2020 we need to do more. That is why we teamed up with other brands and WWF to found the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI). BCI trains small-scale farmers to produce their cotton more sustainably and gives them access to sell their cotton to us. Today close to 800,000 farmers have been trained and our suppliers buy what they produce.



At the same time we increase the amount of recycled cotton in our products and sustainable alternatives to cotton such as Lyocell and hemp. With the size of our company we can push for lasting and long-term change, in a way that can be difficult for smaller companies that produce garments in small quantities, in a considerably higher price segment to a limited number of people.

## What has been your most successful sustainability initiative?

We were one of the first brands to introduce a global garment-collecting program 2013 and have got an enormous positive response from it. With an easy solution for our customers we want to limit the amount of textiles that end up in landfills, since 95% of these textiles can be used again. So you can bring your unwanted clothes and home textiles of any brand and any condition to every H&M store every day of the year and we will help to give it a new life through reuse or recycling. We give the customers a voucher as a reward, since we need to collect large volumes of textiles to use the fibers and turn them into new great sustainable fashion, and can only succeed to close the loop on fashion if we do it together with our customers.



Image credit: H&M

**Do you share your sustainability values/initiatives with your stakeholders? If so how?**

Yes, we have chosen to have close relations and always involve our stakeholders both locally and globally. Our responsibility goes from the designer's sketchbook, the raw material, through the fabric processing and garment production, the transport to our stores, and how the customers care for their clothes until they no longer want them. Since many of the sustainability challenges in fashion life cycle are complex, and won't be solved only by one company, it has been natural to us to seek collaboration within and outside of our industry. We work in partnership with our suppliers to drive change on the factory floor and partner with NGOs, trade unions, WWF and United Nations' organisations to reach change beyond our suppliers and transform the fashion industry.

**What is your top tip to starting a sustainable business?**

We believe that it all starts with knowledge and passion. If you have passion, then you will have the persistence that will undoubtedly be required along the way. Start where you can, don't wait until you are perfect, be transparent about your challenges and ask for help by involving others in finding the solutions. That way you will also inspire other to dare to try.

# LEARN MORE

## WATCH THIS...

**AEG: The Next Black – A film about the Future of Clothing**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCsGLWrfE4Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCsGLWrfE4Y)

**GreenBiz Forum - Yvon Chouinard: The company as activist**

[www.greenbiz.com/video/2013/03/01/patagonia-responsible-company](http://www.greenbiz.com/video/2013/03/01/patagonia-responsible-company)

**Eileen Fisher: The Hard Road to Learning What Really Matters | Inc. Magazine**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqs1MzowSw4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqs1MzowSw4)

**H&M on Sustainable Fashion** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9nDkoKplys](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9nDkoKplys)

**H&M “The Breakup” - a story about garment life-cycle**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=41htZRvz9Gg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41htZRvz9Gg)

**Hong Kong Awards for Environmental Excellence (Transport and Logistics Sector)**

[www.hkaee.org.hk/english/highlights/video/video.php?vid=97](http://www.hkaee.org.hk/english/highlights/video/video.php?vid=97)

**MUD Jeans – Towards a Circular Economy** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaX60U2\\_lbW](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaX60U2_lbW)

**Nike Sustainability Strategy** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MNLZg9R1xI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MNLZg9R1xI)

**Patagonia’s supply chain examined** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIC9DUkbic8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIC9DUkbic8)

**Patagonia’s Worn Wear® Repair Truck & Facility** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7muOgpX8vaQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7muOgpX8vaQ)

**RefRecycling by Reformation** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dncfgIEbKs8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dncfgIEbKs8)

**Safia Minney, People Tree (Inspiring Entrepreneurs - Feelgood Fashion)**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecAc6INEzM4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecAc6INEzM4)

**Stella McCartney: “Being an Eco Warrior is the Equivalent of Trying to Save the Planet”**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWptBJ0yRHg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWptBJ0yRHg)

**The True Cost** [www.truecostmovie.com](http://www.truecostmovie.com)

**UPS: A Tailored Fit (J Hilburn)** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tWCBUQZa04](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tWCBUQZa04)

**UPS: A Winning Combination (Gilt Groupe)** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubL\\_hw04IV0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubL_hw04IV0)

**UPS: Marketing Your Brand with Customised Envelopes** <http://youtu.be/kniMvQAF2Wk>

**UPS: Tap Expert Resources for Your Small Business** <http://youtu.be/2zrE2nm62wk>

**When Sustainability Means More Than Green**

[www.mckinsey.com/insights/strategy/when\\_sustainability\\_means\\_more\\_than\\_green](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/strategy/when_sustainability_means_more_than_green)

## READ THIS...

**A Practical Guide to Sustainable Fashion** by Alison Gwilt

**Clothing Business SWOT Analysis**

[www.wikiwealth.com/swot-analysis:clothing-business](http://www.wikiwealth.com/swot-analysis:clothing-business)

**Environmental Profit and Loss Account (EP&L)** by Kering

[www.kering.com/en/sustainability/epl](http://www.kering.com/en/sustainability/epl)

**Ethical Fashion Forum – New Entrepreneur**

[newentrepreneurs.ethicalfashionforum.com/home](http://newentrepreneurs.ethicalfashionforum.com/home)

**Green Claim Guidance** by Defra [www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-claims-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-claims-guidance)

**Guardian Sustainable Business** [www.theguardian.com/uk/sustainable-business](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/sustainable-business)

**Huffington Post Sustainable Fashion** [www.huffingtonpost.com/news/sustainable-fashion](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/sustainable-fashion)



**Longitudes: Delivered by UPS** [www.longitudes.ups.com/category/ecommerce](http://www.longitudes.ups.com/category/ecommerce)  
**Sustainable Fashion And Textiles: Design Journeys** by Kate Fletcher  
**Strategy for Sustainability** by Adam Werbach  
**Streamlined Life Cycle Assessment of Two Marks & Spencer plc Apparel Products** by Marks & Spencer plc  
[www.researchingsustainability.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/streamlined-lca-of-2-marks-spencer-pls-apparel-products.pdf](http://www.researchingsustainability.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/streamlined-lca-of-2-marks-spencer-pls-apparel-products.pdf)

## BE INSPIRED BY...

**Benu Berlin** [www.benu-berlin.com](http://www.benu-berlin.com)  
**Better Cotton Initiatives** [www.bettercotton.org](http://www.bettercotton.org)  
**Bonham Strand** [www.bonhamstrand.hk](http://www.bonhamstrand.hk)  
**Classics Anew** [www.facebook.com/ClassicsAnew](http://www.facebook.com/ClassicsAnew)  
**Cléme ntine Sandner** [www.clementinesandner.com](http://www.clementinesandner.com)  
**Eileen Fisher** [www.eileenfisher.com](http://www.eileenfisher.com)  
**Everlane** [www.everlane.com](http://www.everlane.com)  
**Farrah Floyd** [www.farahfloyd.com](http://www.farahfloyd.com)  
**Filippa K - Secondhand** [www.filippaksecondhand.se](http://www.filippaksecondhand.se)  
**H&M Sustainability** [www.about.hm.com/en/About/sustainability.html](http://www.about.hm.com/en/About/sustainability.html)  
**Higg Index** [www.apparelcoalition.org/the-higg-index](http://www.apparelcoalition.org/the-higg-index)  
**Honest By** [www.honestby.com](http://www.honestby.com)  
**kowtow** [www.kowtowclothing.com](http://www.kowtowclothing.com)  
**Levi's** [global.levi.com](http://global.levi.com)  
**Marks and Spencer - Plan A** [corporate.marksandspencer.com/plan-a](http://corporate.marksandspencer.com/plan-a)  
**MUD Jeans** [www.mudjeans.eu](http://www.mudjeans.eu)  
**Muji** [www.muji.com](http://www.muji.com)  
**Nike** [www.nike.com](http://www.nike.com)  
**Patagonia** [www.patagonia.com/us/home](http://www.patagonia.com/us/home)  
**PUMA** [www.puma.com](http://www.puma.com)  
**Quiksilver** [www.quiksilver.com](http://www.quiksilver.com)  
**Reformation** [www.thereformation.com](http://www.thereformation.com)  
**REI** [www.rei.com/stewardship/sustainable-operations.html](http://www.rei.com/stewardship/sustainable-operations.html)  
**Stella McCartney - Sustainability** [www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability](http://www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability)  
**TAL** [www.talgroup.com](http://www.talgroup.com)  
**tonlé** [www.tonledesign.com](http://www.tonledesign.com)  
**UPS Sustainability** [www.sustainability.ups.com](http://www.sustainability.ups.com)  
**Urban Outfitters – Urban Renewal** [www.urbanoutfitters.com](http://www.urbanoutfitters.com)  
**Vanilia** [www.vanilia.com](http://www.vanilia.com)  
**Wan & Wong Fashion** [www.facebook.com/WanandWongFashion](http://www.facebook.com/WanandWongFashion)  
**Yeechoo** [www.yeechoo.com](http://www.yeechoo.com)

## LEARN THE LANGUAGE...

**Carbon footprint** is a measure in units of the total amount of greenhouse gases that are emitted due to human activity.

**Closed loop design** is when a product is designed to be easily deconstructed to enable it to have another function after its use, thereby eliminating all waste. In this way, a used product's output becomes the input for a new product or function.

**CO2 emissions** are the amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) primarily released from the use of fossil fuels by human activities, such as petrol in vehicles, into the atmosphere.

**Code of Conduct** is a set of rules outlining an organisation's compliance in relation to human rights, labour law, environmental regulations, ethical issues and anti-corruption.

**Corporate Social Responsibility** is the conventional name for commitment by a business to behave ethically and to contribute positively to society and to the environment.

**E-commerce** is the buying and selling of goods and/or services through the Internet.

**Eco** is a prefix for ecology and usually refers to ecological concerns or benefits.

**Ecosystem** is a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.

**Greenhouse gas** is a type of gas in the atmosphere that absorbs infrared radiation and traps heat inside the atmosphere, thereby contributing to the greenhouse effect. They exist naturally but are added to through human activity with emissions such as CO<sub>2</sub> and methane.

**Green-washing** is a term given to misleading, exaggerated or untrue claims about a product's environmental benefits in a company's communications.

**Lifecycle** covers the resource extraction, manufacture, distribution, use, disposal and recycling of a product.

**Lifecycle assessment** is a technique that assesses the energy and material inputs and outputs, and the associated environmental impacts of a product or service system throughout its lifecycle.

**Recyclable** describes a material that can be reused by turning it into a new usable material or product.

**Supply chain** refers to the steps and resources involved in moving a product from raw materials to the consumer.

**Sustainable fashion** is clothing that is produced with respect to the environment and social impacts throughout its lifespan.

**Sustainability** is a lasting system and process that meets the current population's needs while preserving for the future.

**SWOT analysis** is a method to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a business or project.

**Take-back** is a term used by companies collecting unwanted or used items from their customers.

**Transparent business** is being completely open and honest about your business practices.

**Triple bottom line** is a term that refers to a system that some companies use where 'people, planet, profit' are considered beyond their financial outcomes.

**Up-cycling** is the recycling of a material into a product of higher quality.