

TERRACYCLE.

Established: 2001
Location: Sydney, Australia
Activity: Upcycling and Recycling



THINKING IN SYSTEMS



BUILD RESILIENCE THROUGH DIVERSITY



DESIGN OUT WASTE

TERRACYCLE IS A COMPANY THAT AIMS TO “RECYCLE THE NON-RECYCLABLE. THEY ARE THE WORLD’S LEADER IN UPCYCLING AND RECYCLING DIFFICULT-TO-RECYCLE MATERIALS, INTO NEW, INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS.

DISCOVER

TerraCycle is a company that aims to “recycle the non-recyclable.” The company was founded in 2001 by Tom Szaky, a Princeton graduate, as a company which produced organic fertiliser. Since then, the company has become a world leader in upcycling and recycling difficult-to-recycle materials, into new, innovative products.

TerraCycle has been internationally awarded and is considered the “world’s leader in the collection and reuse of non-recyclable, post-consumer waste.” TerraCycle works with more than 100 brands globally with offices in 21 countries. TerraCycle collects waste that would otherwise end up in landfill and repurposes it into new products which are available online and through major retailers.

All consumer products are made from raw materials - all of which can technically be recycled. Consumers generally only think of a few types of products such as glass bottles, aluminium cans and paper as recyclable. However, these are the waste streams that are considered to be economical to recycle. TerraCycle aims to develop new systems to make traditionally non-recyclable items recyclable.

TerraCycle has adopted a business model that aims to create new resources from waste streams in order to provide economic and environmental benefits.

ACTION

In Australia and around the world TerraCycle works with companies with waste streams typically considered non-recyclable and has established a network for repurposing those products. Typically, this is done by creating collection points for these waste streams to be sent to TerraCycle, then to provide innovative solutions for reuse, upcycling and recycling.

Collection points include public drop off, home and workplace collections. TerraCycle has over 11,000 public distribution points worldwide. Items collected can be mailed to TerraCycle for free by downloading a postage label from the TerraCycle website (www.terracycle.com.au). For every piece of waste sent in, the collector will receive two cents which can be donated to a school or charity of their choice

So far TerraCycle has developed new, profitable ways of upcycling and recycling a number of previously non-recyclable products. These include:

- **Cigarette butts:** British American Tobacco Australia, Phillip Morris Ltd and Imperial Tobacco Australia have partnered with TerraCycle to recycle cigarette butts into useful products such as park benches and waste bins.
- **Coffee capsules:** Nespresso and NESCAFÉ® Dolce Gusto capsules can be given a second life. TerraCycle is also introducing **Zero Waste Boxes**, where consumers can purchase a box from Australia Post or Office Works which includes shipping and the cost of sorting and recycling all types of coffee capsules.
- **Cleaner packaging:** TerraCycle has partnered with Natures Organics to recycle beauty, cleaning and laundry triggers, pumps, dishwasher tabs into new, unique products.
- **Oral care:** Colgate has partnered with TerraCycle in order to recycle/upcycle toothpaste tubes, toothbrushes, toothpaste caps, floss containers into a range of innovative products.

And this is only the beginning. As industrial quantities of new waste streams are collected and as technology adapts, there is no limit to how post-consumer products can be repurposed.

VISION

The aspiration for TerraCycle as put by Anna Minns during the interview was, “for us [TerraCycle] not to exist.” The point being that TerraCycle aims to “create positive economics by building up a demand and markets for waste streams... so that they’re not seen as waste, they’re seen as a resource.”

TerraCycle represents a paradigm shift in how business models are created, which can apply to a number of business, where costs and waste can be redesigned and reengineered to provide economic benefit. It’s this kind of revolutionary thinking that will take Australia and the world towards a circular economy.



“TERRACYCLE AIMS TO DEVELOP NEW SYSTEMS TO MAKE TRADITIONALLY NON-RECYCLABLE ITEMS RECYCLABLE.”

