

# Circularity for Polymers: The ICIS Recycling Conference



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**The North Face**



## **WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE BIGGEST TOPIC OF DISCUSSION AT CIRCULARITY FOR POLYMERS?**

*Identifying and exploring the ways in which the entire value chain can work more closely together is going to be critically important to overcome the challenges we have in the market today.*

*My hope is that the conference will provide an excellent forum to have meaningful dialogue and discussions on how we best enable closer collaboration.*

## **CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT SOME OF THE SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES THAT NORTH FACE IS WORKING ON?**

*The North Face's sustainability mission is to protect our outdoor playgrounds and communities through the design and development of environmentally and socially responsible products and business practices.*

*Through life cycle assessments of products in our apparel, footwear and equipment categories, we have determined that the majority of our environmental impact comes from materials processing and product manufacturing. This is where we direct our major focus. As critical component of this, we have targets in place to transition the brand to using only recycled materials.*

*We're focused on meeting our goals while at the same time working on how best to articulate the value proposition to our customers of the recycled materials in our products.*

## **HOW HAS THE GROWING DESIRE FOR RECYCLED AND RECYCLABLE PRODUCTS BY CONSUMERS IMPACTED THE INDUSTRY?**

*We are seeing a significant shift in customers attitudes and expectations. Key components of both our customer and consumer bases are actively searching for brands that are bringing more sustainable products to the market. In response, the outdoor industry as a whole is making significant strides to meet this demand.*

## **WHAT DO YOU VIEW AS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACED BY THOSE INVOLVED IN POLYMER CIRCULARITY?**

*Polymer circularity will require greater collaboration both vertically through the value chain, and also horizontally between peers where there is a pre-competitive space to do so. Creating these types of collaboration is challenging but critically important.*

## **HOW CAN COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE REST OF THE POLYMER VALUE CHAIN AND BRANDS SUCH AS THE NORTH FACE HELP SOLVE THESE CHALLENGES?**

*Throughout the history of The North Face, our brand has put an important emphasis on partnerships and collaboration to tackle critical challenges facing both our industry and the world around us.*

*Whilst we are a large brand in the context of the outdoor industry, to truly leverage our scale for good, we look to act together with others rather than alone. From the establishment of the Conservation Alliance, to the development of the Responsible Down Standard, we've been able to create exponentially more impact through collaboration and partnership.*



## MORE INFORMATION

**You can hear more from Julian at this year's ICIS Recycling Conference  
in Berlin, Germany on 5 November 2019.**

**Click the above for more information.**

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**Gary Calicdan**

*Packaging and Print Buyer*

**Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics**



## WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE BIGGEST TOPIC OF DISCUSSION AT CIRCULARITY FOR POLYMERS?

In North America, the plastics recycling rate is still very low at 9% to 10%. Increasing this recycling rate is a huge challenge that involves a lot of stakeholders: consumers must change their behaviors; the government needs to facilitate change through infrastructure, policies around plastic recycling and EPR implementation; brand owners must support circular economy initiatives and customer education; and NGO/Industry leaders much spearhead change through thought leadership.

North America needs to adopt a much stronger position that will help grow the market of plastic circularity.

## CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT SOME OF THE SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES THAT LUSH IS WORKING ON?

'Naked' Packaging at Lush is an important core value. Not just packaging free concept but less packaging in general. We have created more packaging free products to give our customers a wider selection when buying.

We reduced the thickness of plastics used in our PET bottles and black pots back in 2012. Lush is proud to say that our closed loop system for our black pots packaging is working very well in North America. We have approximately a 17% return rate from customers and are able to process these back as raw materials for new production of black pots.

Lush plastics packaging, like our clear PET bottles, black HDPE bottles, black PP pots and our PP disc caps are all 100% PCR and we've been doing this for 10 years now. We're using about 400 MT of recycled plastics every year.

We also started working on Ocean plastics back in Fall of 2016 and early 2017, where collected plastics around the shorelines of British Columbia were converted into feedstocks for our black pots packaging.

## HOW HAS THE GROWING DESIRE FOR RECYCLED AND RECYCLABLE PRODUCTS BY CONSUMERS IMPACTED THE INDUSTRY?

Various industries are working hard to include design for circularity at the early stage of product creation. They are looking for ways to incorporate recycled content, making sure they choose materials that are recyclable, biodegradable or compostable and same time move away from the 'single-use' or linear concepts. Cost has been impacted because recycled content sometimes is not the cheapest option.

## WHAT DO YOU VIEW AS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACED BY THOSE INVOLVED IN POLYMER CIRCULARITY?

Cost and quality are the biggest challenges. With virgin materials being a cheaper option than recycled plastics, some companies are trying to protect their bottom line and ensure they remain competitive in their market.

The quality of recycled plastics is an issue due to possible contaminants present in the plastics recycling process.

Product design is a challenge in itself because the presence of multi-material packaging is making it hard to recycle the whole product.

## HOW CAN COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE REST OF THE POLYMER VALUE CHAIN AND BRANDS SUCH AS LUSH HELP SOLVE THESE CHALLENGES?

Collaboration between brands, plastic recyclers and plastic converters can set the quality benchmark across the supply chain and manufacturing process.

Brand owners need to expand the use of recycled content in their products. Creating bigger demands will lead to an increase in supply and will help improve the competitiveness of recycled plastics.

Brand owners need to be open to compromise in terms of the quality of recycled plastics into their final products. For example, a product may need to use a different colour shade as a result of switching from virgin to recycled plastics.

Industry groups can assist brand owners in designing for circularity and avoid complicated and/or over-packaged products that have a challenging end of life management.



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**[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)**