

Fabric offcuts to boutique bags



WISP worked with Tradewinds and Mors Design to find a sustainable solution for textile offcuts destined for landfill.

The Challenge

One of the key by-products from the textile industry is fabric offcuts. The offcuts vary in textile type and size and therefore have very few direct off-takers or end markets. These off-cuts are commonly disposed of at landfill or in some instances, down-cycled into under carpets and insulation. The recycling of textile offcuts is limited as the true composition of the fabric is rarely known. All three solutions of landfilling, down-cycling or recycling are quite costly. They also all result in the reduction or loss in value of the resource.

The Organisations

Tradewinds Parasol & Leisure and Mors Design

Tradewinds is an internationally renowned parasol manufacturing company. The head office, based in Cape Town, is a full service facility, incorporating a processing plant (wood, aluminium and stainless steel frames), a CMT (cut, make and trim) that produces canvas tops as well as a print workshop where branded images are screen-printed onto the canvas. The company's key waste streams consist of wood and sawdust waste, which is utilised as fuel in the kilns and sent to local farmers, and textile offcuts, which are currently disposed of, at the nearest landfill. Tradewinds has been looking for a sustainable solution for the textile waste.

Mors Design is an up-cycle initiative that aims at cleaning the environment by collecting non-toxic waste and creating beautiful, usable and practical products. The company's main product line upcycles tyre tubes into handbags. Each bag is designed to be durable and is characterised by bright, exuberant colours, showing the spirit of Africa. The bags are hand crafted by local artisans, who are either refugees or from local communities. The company embraces the slower traditional methods of bag creation and each Mors design is hand stitched, handwoven, braided or patched. As part of their continued commitment towards cleaning the environment and sustainable skills development, Mors Design is always open to exploring other "waste" materials for upcycling.

The Solution

WISP facilitated a synergy between Tradewinds and Mors Design. Mors Design collected the offcuts from Tradewinds, and combined them with the tyre tubes to create a new range of handbags (the Brollie bag). The textile offcuts, which are sent for laundry cleaning, are much easier to work with and do not need to be individually cleaned like the tyre tubing; resulting in a reduction in Mors Designs' production time. The offcuts afforded Mors Design with the opportunity of expanding their work in local communities, as well as providing increased revenue through the sale of the Brollie bags. Tradewinds is happy with the synergy as it has reduced their waste disposal costs (both logistics and landfill gate fees), and is a sustainable solution to the waste stream.

The success of this synergy has seen Tradewinds diverting textile offcuts to three other reuse initiatives viz. hand bags, dog beds and a community upliftment sewing program.

The Benefits

Economic Benefits



- Tradewinds reduced waste disposal costs due to savings in logistics and landfill gate fees.
- Mors Design expanded their network of artisans within the local communities and increased revenue through the production and sale of the Brollie bags.

Environmental Benefits



- The synergy resulted in textile offcuts being diverted from landfill.
- The use of textiles offcuts as a raw material for the bag industry ensures that the full value of the resource is extracted.

About WISP

The Western Cape Industrial Symbiosis Programme (WISP) develops mutually profitable links between companies from all industrial sectors, so that under-utilised resources such as energy and water, and/or materials from one company can be recovered, reprocessed and re-used by others.

The program was initiated in 2013, and to date has facilitated over 220 synergies, resulting in more than R147 million worth of economic benefits, 392 economy wide jobs through the diversion of 132 566 tonnes of waste from landfill.

Connecting Industry Creating Opportunity

Driven by Business

The programme uses actual business opportunities as the mechanism for encouraging resource efficiency. Its holistic approach sees it actively dealing with ALL resources including water, energy, materials, logistics, assets and expertise. The programme is based on the highly successful national programme in the UK (NISP), which demonstrated that industrial symbiosis has the potential to significantly reduce industrial and commercial waste and comprehensively lessen the adverse environmental impacts of business.

Free Membership

WISP is a free facilitation service funded by the City of Cape Town and delivered by the sector development agency GreenCape. WISP enables synergies to happen by filling the gaps that its members, especially SMEs, could experience due to the lack of time or dedicated expertise needed to identify and implement resource, waste and energy efficient practices. The diversity of the industries in which WISP operates, and the variety and size of its business members, means that WISP has the potential to generate significant economic, environmental and social benefits from the synergies and projects that it brings about.

Partnership with Purpose

WISP works hand in hand with leading trade associations, manufacturers and other organisations to add real value to business. We are working in collaboration with the City of Cape Town, International Synergies and the National Cleaner Production Centre (NCPC) and the Western Cape Government.

Contact us to become a member and get involved!

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GreenCape is a non-profit organisation that drives the widespread adoption of economically viable green economy solutions from South Africa. We assist viable green businesses and potential investors in the green economy to remove barriers to their establishment and growth. Our aim is to help unlock the investment and employment

potential of green business, technologies and manufacturing and put the province on course to become the green economy hub for Sub-Saharan Africa. This work, in turn, contributes to improving the resource efficiency, carbon intensity and resilience of the regional economy.

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