

Q&A with Tom Szaky, Founder and CEO of TerraCycle focused on Eliminating Waste by making things that are Non-recyclable into Recyclable Materials and developing Platforms that turn Disposable Products into Durable Products



Tom Szaky
Founder and Chief Executive Officer

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“There is no other company like us out there in the world and we have a very unique philosophy to a very boring industry that is waste.” - Tom Szaky

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: *Mr. Szaky, what was the vision when you created TerraCycle?*

Mr. Szaky: The goal of TerraCycle has always been to eliminate the concept of waste. We do that in three ways. First, we make things that are non-recyclable, recyclable from cigarette butts to dirty diapers. Second, we integrate unique recycled materials into products, like ocean plastic into shampoo bottles, and third, we create platforms that move disposable products into durable products.

CEOCFO: *Why must everything be recycled?*

Mr. Szaky: Waste does not exist in nature and the reason it does not is because if it did, even in a small way, that would accumulate because that is what waste is, something that does not have a solution, and we would not be around today because the planet would be overtaken, even if the amount were small, because it accumulates over a long period of time. Humans have created the concept of waste because our outputs are not something nature knows what to do with. Because of that, we have to emulate nature so that our outputs have solutions even if we have to make those solutions ourselves so that many generations from now do not wake up in an environment that is just waste absolutely everywhere.

CEOCFO: *How is TerraCycle reusing waste in a variety of areas?*

Mr. Szaky: There are two main ways that we do it. The first is we look at those waste streams that you cannot today locally recycle, which is frankly the vast majority of stuff, everything from a toothbrush, to a pen, to a plastic glove, to many other things. We think about how we collect that material, because the collection may be different in all these cases, how we process it, either through reuse, upcycling or recycling, and then how we construct scalable and profitable business models that allow these platforms to grow and scale over time. The other category is we work with many major manufacturers to integrate materials back into their primary products. One example, on this past Thursday in Malta with our partners at Procter & Gamble Co., we launched a dish soap bottle made 10% from ocean plastic and 90% from recycled plastic and we have done many other examples like that with not just ocean plastic but exotic waste streams.

CEOCFO: *What goes into developing a solution?*

Mr. Szaky: In every case, it is always a three stage process, collect, solve and a business model. Let us take something like cigarette butts. The first question we ask is collection. Cigarettes could be collected through one of our platforms, our