

# nextwave

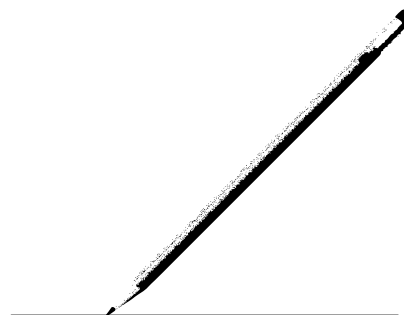
CURRENTS OF CHANGE:

NEXTWAVE PLASTICS

STORIES OF IMPACT

## The Power of Story

CASE STUDY 08



06.08.2022



# The Power of Story

Strong images and meaningful data can help audiences understand the impact of and potential for using ocean-bound plastic.

"Every company has to tell a story. That's the starting point. What do you want your story to be as a company? Do you want to be somebody that brought about positive change or not?"—Stefan Berggren, Trek

In one sense, the goal for members of the NextWave Plastics coalition is simple: Stop plastic waste from entering the ocean. But actually recovering ocean-bound plastic and using it in products while also maintaining [social responsibility](#) is complex. The effort can evoke questions within industry and across the spectrum of end consumers. What is ocean-bound plastic, exactly? Where does it come from? What does it mean if a product contains it? What is its value to the people who collect it? Answering these questions takes deft communication skills, and NextWave members have become experts.

## CREATING CONNECTION TO FARAWAY PLACES

Interface, a founding NextWave member and commercial flooring company, founded [Net-Works](#) to create a market for discarded fishing nets, initially sourcing them from the Philippines and later expanding to Cameroon.



***"EVERY COMPANY HAS TO TELL A STORY. THAT'S THE STARTING POINT. WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR STORY TO BE AS A COMPANY? DO YOU WANT TO BE SOMEBODY THAT BROUGHT ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGE OR NOT?"***

— STEFAN BERGGREN, TREK BICYCLE

"As a story, it has a really powerful ability to hit both head and heart," Interface Head of Sustainability (European, African, Asian and Australian) Jon Khoo says of Net-Works, which is now a part of the social enterprise [Coast 4C](#). "The fact that it felt like a human story as much as an environmental story...there's something quite powerful from a comms angle and powerful from a decision-making angle."

But most of us have never been to Cameroon or to the Philippines. How did Interface create a connection for their internal staff and business customers to make Net-Works a powerful impact story? In addition to [blog posts](#) and [photos](#), Interface invested in [high-quality video footage](#) shot in the Philippines. Onscreen text with facts about the program complements the footage, which also shows the aftermath of 2013's Typhoon Haiyan. Interface made sure members of the community who were featured in the video saw and approved the content.

"We really wanted to capture the essence of the project and put the community first," Khoo says. "The team worked to ensure that it wasn't just an emotional ride, that you did see some statistics and facts—and some realities of it not being the most straightforward of things to be doing."

For NextWave members that have embedded the use of ocean-bound plastic into the company mission, communicating about that mission also reinforces a commitment to what customers want.

"What keeps us going is, we want to make the world a better place. So if the consumers didn't care, that would be fine, because we'd still keep doing what we're doing," says Adrian Solgaard, founder and CEO



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- JON KHOO, HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY AT INTERFACE

of luxury lifestyle brand Solgaard. “But the consumers tell us in surveys that they do care. They’re happy that they’re buying products that are made from a different material, products that are doing something to make a difference.”

## PROVIDING CONTEXT

Statistics and facts have been key in underpinning how Humanscale communicates about the impact of using recycled plastics in products like its Path chair. The company puts sustainability front and center at the organization, and [on its website](#), including [a video](#) about Path featuring founder and CEO Bob King. And beyond that, it offers remarkably concrete information about its products.

The product page doesn’t say simply that the Path chair incorporates ocean and ocean-bound plastic, for example. It tells you precisely how much of the chair contains what Humanscale labels reclaimed ocean plastic (fishing nets out of the water by local people) and ocean-bound plastic (material collected within 50 kilometers of coastlines). The Path chair is climate-,



water-, and energy-positive, returning benefits to the environment. The company’s sourcing and numbers achieve additional credibility via a third-party audit.

“It was a priority from the beginning to make sure that everything was really checked out, so we know which components are made out of ocean plastic and which ones are not,” says Jane Abernethy, Humanscale’s chief sustainability officer. “We really try to make sure that when we’re making a claim, we can really stand behind it.”

An interactive, drag-and-drop slider on the Path chair page shows how the benefits scale in practical terms: one chair saves nearly 10 pounds of ocean plastic—or, as the website says, a penguin’s weight in plastic. This is another key storytelling point: Helping people visualize and understand what it means to use ocean plastic.

“Often, people have a hard time picturing what some of the numbers mean,” Abernethy says. “It’s easier if you can put that into context for people.”

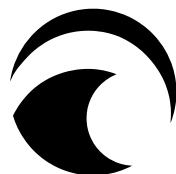
Overall, these pieces add up to a strong signal both internally and externally at Humanscale that averting plastic waste from the ocean is a long-term commitment. Abernethy likes to imagine a world where this level of commitment is so common that it isn’t really a “story” anymore.

“It’s never been just that we proved a concept or that we made a nice story, and then we’re done,” she says. “The ultimate would be when it’s no longer even interesting, because that’s what everybody does.”

## TELL YOUR STORY

- Demystify ocean-bound plastic with easy-to-understand facts
- Don’t be shy - your customers care about this issue and want to hear your story
- Use images and videos to bring your story to life
- Center the narrative of your impact on the people involved
- Put the numbers into context: What do they mean?

Visit [nextwaveplastics.org](https://nextwaveplastics.org) to learn more.



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