

Using recycling makes cents

The Organisation

ACA Threads (Pty) Ltd



The Challenge

In response to price pressures from their clothing and footwear customers, sewing thread manufacturer ACA Threads wanted to generate financial savings and job creation, for customers, for the company, and for their suppliers.

Previously, spools made from virgin polypropylene were used once and then discarded. However, in conjunction with their supplier of injection moulded polypropylene, trials showed that spools and cones could successfully be made from a mixture of virgin and reground polypropylene.

The Solution

Phase 1: ACA Threads offered to buy back the empty spools from customers and collect them when a new order is delivered, thus generating additional revenue for their clients and reducing their waste disposal costs, as well as minimise pressure on scarce landfill sites

Phase 2: The empty spools and cones were sent to various organisations for handicapped people - the Association for Physically Disabled in PE, and the Worcester School for the Blind (who are customers of ACA Threads). ACA Threads pays a set price per unit to have the cones cleaned and the labels removed, generating revenue for these organisations.

Phase 3: The spools and cones returned to ACA Threads are put back into production, saving the cost of purchasing new items. Those that are damaged are sold to the injection moulder and reground.

Phase 4: Funds raised from recycling initiatives at ACA Threads is used to support the local community. The Employment Equity Forum - elected by and from their staff - chose to sponsor a local school, Cavalleria Primary. ACA Threads has provided R238,000 over 8 years, primarily used for equipment, educational trips and to set up a recycling centre - an initiative to allow learners to raise their own recycling funds for their school. The other beneficiary is a football club in Wallacedene, where >R10,000 has been provided for kit, equipment and transport for their youth development programme.



Above: Shireen Joseph of ACA Threads with Denzil Appolis and Avin Klaasen

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The project has reduced the volume of waste sent to landfill, saved ACA and our customers money, reduced the company's energy costs, assisted disabled people find meaningful employment, sponsored development soccer, and given a boost to the desperately underfunded school.

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A true win-win situation!

Andy Sandison,
Managing Director, ACA Threads

WISP

The Results (over 5 years):

ACA Threads is currently recycling 21% of units (with an aim of reaching 50% by 2014).

The savings associated with recycling these units are reported below:

- ACA Threads saved more than R460,000 by recovering and reusing units.
- The company is more competitive as a result of savings, both for the company and for their customers.
- ACA Threads has attracted new sales from customers who are interested in a holistic and sustainable approach to manufacturing
- Their customers have saved more than R55,000 by landfill diversion
- ACA Threads paid more than R41,500 back to their customers

Environmental benefits: 7 tons of non-biodegradable polypropylene and a total volume of 295 m³ diverted from landfill

Community engagement and support: Income of R120,900 generated for the Association for Physically Disabled and the Worcester School for the Blind

About WISP

Connecting Industry, Creating Opportunity

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. This strategy has several benefits, as demonstrated by ACA Threads.

Driven by Business

The programme uses actual business opportunities as the mechanism for encouraging resource efficiency and 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** initiated by the Western Cape Government 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 Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCOC), National Cleaner Production Centre (NCPC), Economic Development Partnership (EDP) and the City of Cape Town.

**Contact us to become a member
and get involved!**

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