

## Success story 2: business ideas

**Key words:** business, plastic bottle, drinks, recycling, socks, fashion, biodegradable



The design and logos the two groups developed for their businesses

In this second 'success story' we look in detail at 2 of the business ideas that groups developed in module 4 of the 'Green Entrepreneurs Europe' (GEE) project.

### Business 1: re-bottle

The first business idea has been chosen as the students showed real entrepreneurial thinking in their idea. This was a group from Brampton Manor Academy. The product was a drinks dispenser called 're-bottle'.

The aims of their product were to:

- reduce the amount of bottle waste
- encourage re-using bottles
- allow people to spend on the substance rather than the packaging.

Their dispenser was different from traditional drinks dispensers as it dispenses the pure liquid. To use the machine, consumers need a bottle. A side-product of their business was producing 100% biodegradable plastic bottles that consumers can use. So consumers choose which liquid they want, put their money in, and the machine dispenses the liquid direct into their bottle, cutting out any packaging. The novel idea that this group had, was that consumers could put any amount of money into the machine. The machine would then dispense the appropriate amount of liquid. They had the teenage market in particular in mind with this feature, as teenagers often don't have much money and might just have loose change. Their drinks were very competitively priced with 100ml of flavoured liquid costing just 9p! The students also suggested that it would be a useful feature for other audiences too, as people often don't want the whole 500 ml when they buy a drink, so this gives consumers choice.

The group had also considered other aspects of the lifecycle of the product. The drinks dispenser itself was to be made out of biodegradable material and designed in such a way that it would pack tightly during transport as would the bottles, to reduce transport emissions. Finally, students had a detailed pricing strategy, with the cost of water/ flavoured water per 100ml and had thought about the cost of the dispenser and how much discount they would give for bulk orders.

## **Business 2: Socology**

The second business idea has been chosen for its detail on sustainability and incorporating ideas from the 'circular economy'. The students were from 'Roding Valley High School'. The business is called 'Socology' with the catchy tagline 'applying science to socks'. Their aims were:

- to sustain a circular economy whilst retaining luxury

This group was keen to develop a product that would appeal to a mainstream audience, so they ensured that their product would be available in a variety of colours and sizes and have an element of 'luxury', which is not necessarily associated with 'eco-friendly' products.

They chose bamboo as their main material as it is much more environmentally friendly than material such as conventional cotton, which uses huge amounts of water and pesticide to produce a crop. Socology incorporated the idea of 'upcycling' into their product on the toes and top of their socks. Rather than traditional recycling, which often results in the original product being turned into something of lesser value, which normally can't be recycled again; upcycling is about maintaining or increasing the value of the material. So used cotton or denim that would otherwise have ended up in landfill, is used in the design of the sock, thereby reusing material and preventing it from entering landfill. According to their research, ordinary socks take up to 5 years to break down in landfill.

The group also thought about the packaging of their product. The socks will be sent out in compostable packaging. A compostable product will break down in an average compost heap within a year. If a product is biodegradable, it will also break down, but may take longer and is also temperature and moisture dependent, so may need to be sent to an industrial composting facility to break down. Therefore, compostable is the most sustainable option.

Through having considered these concepts in their design of their product, this group demonstrated a good understanding of some of the key elements of the circular economy: reusing materials, using raw materials that have been produced sustainably, avoiding waste to landfill and promoting biological recycling (composting).

