

Key Takeaways from SPC Impact on Taking Sustainable Packaging from Concept to Commercialization



Kwik Lok sponsored a session on "Sustainable Packaging from Concept to Commercialization at SPC Impact 2023."

Earlier this month, members of the [Kwik Lok](#) team joined more than 700 members of the sustainable packaging ecosystem including converters, brands, suppliers and more at SPC Impact, the flagship event of the [Sustainable Packaging Coalition](#) in Austin, Texas. During the event, Kwik Lok sponsored a panel discussion on "Sustainable Packaging from Concept to Commercialization" where a group of packaging manufacturers discussed the best practices for implementing sustainable packaging solutions from earning support to making the project a reality.

Here are some key takeaways from the conversation between [Megan Robison](#), Senior Product Stewardship Engineer, and [Madison Keller](#), Product Development Engineer, at [Printpack](#); [Sal Pellingra](#), Vice President of Global Package Design at [ProAmpac](#); and [Bruce Mackimmie](#), Vice President of Packaging Material Supply at [Tetra Pak](#).

Top-Down Engagement is Essential

Sustainable innovation impacts every part of a business in different ways, and the case you make for sustainability will vary depending on where in the organization you are seeking buy-in. Starting at the top and securing the backing of senior-level executives is the best first step. Before you approach leadership, consider the factors that are most important to them. For example, changing legislation and customer and consumer demand are two influential motivators for the C-suite.

Once you have the C-suite on board, support then needs to flow through the entire organization so everyone is aligned on the commitment and working toward the same goal. That means every department from marketing and procurement to operations and manufacturing needs to understand why the move to sustainable packaging is necessary. Once you are aligned on the why, it's important to make sure that every team has a seat at the table during the research and implementation process, so all groups feel seen and heard. Feedback from the team on the Manufacturing floor, for instance, will be very different to that of leadership, but just as important.

The panelists also agreed that sustainability needs to be about more than just product innovation, it needs to become a core part of the company's culture and values. Not just because customers are demanding it, but because it's better for the planet and future generations. Igniting that passion and common vision internally will give everyone a common vision.

At Kwik Lok, our owners have made sustainability a priority and leadership recognize that it goes hand-in-hand with our family-forward approach to caring for our employees and customers. We know that our products have a global impact and that anything we can do to reduce our carbon footprint has a ripple effect. So, in 2015, we made a fresh start to take sustainability front and center and incorporate it into our company vision, "To lead the way in innovating reliable, sustainable packaging, and new product solutions that improve the lives of our employees, customers, and community."

There's No One Solution

There is no one solution when it comes to sustainable packaging material. While legislation often drives product development, it can be increasingly challenging to keep up with changing laws that vary widely.

Without global standards and policies in place, what works in one region might not be viable in another. What's compostable in one country may not be compostable in another, and regulations on recyclable materials and waste systems can vary even more broadly.

Together with our customers, Kwik Lok is leading the conversation around sustainability, recyclability, carbon reduction, plastic reduction and compostability, sharing our stories and successes to drive the packaging industry forward. We're committed to developing customer centric packaging that meets our customers' sustainability goals. Having a holistic understanding of the international marketplace, as well as the science and manufacturing processes behind these solutions can be challenging, that's why we work with our customers to explore the options and find the best solutions to meet their needs.



Innovation Needs Collaboration

It's important to the success of the packaging industry that we all work together and keep the big picture in mind when it comes to sustainability. We need to collaborate not only with customers, but also partners including universities, startups, consultants, and industry thought leaders to continue to bring innovative and eco-friendly packaging ideas to market. Working together might also mean collaborating with the competition and sharing our collective experiences.

And as we innovate, testing and iteration are essential to successful projects. Approach a project by starting at a regional level with one customer before scaling up and broadening it to other markets.

Kwik Lok has put an emphasis on the research and development of sustainable packaging solutions over the last several years. We know our customers rely on us to be the experts, that's why we've hired scientists and PhD's to help us understand the material science behind sustainable packaging and cut through the hype to deliver solutions that work.

Education is Key

Brand owners are under pressure from consumers to bring sustainable packaging to market because more consumers are demanding sustainable packaging.

According to a [2020 survey from McKinsey](#), more than 60 percent of consumer respondents indicated their willingness to pay more for a product with sustainable packaging.

But while consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable packaging, they are not always sure how to dispose of it. Educating consumers about the end-of-life for packaging should be a top priority for the industry. Compostable packaging does not work if it's not composted. Recyclable packaging doesn't become another product if it's not recycled. Reusing and recycling are important, but as an industry we must also look for ways to use less material.

We want to hear from you. How is your company implementing sustainable packaging? What are some of the challenges and successes you have seen along your sustainability journey?