



Environmental News

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EPA RECOGNIZES TWO WINNERS OF CRADLE TO CRADLE DESIGN CHALLENGE FOR THEIR INNOVATIVE PACKAGING DESIGN

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EPA, in partnership with McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry (MBDC), today announced the two winners of the Cradle to Cradle Design Challenge for E-Commerce Shipping Packaging and Logistics at the PackExpo in Las Vegas. Both winners identified innovative packaging and design solutions to reducing the environmental impacts associated with shipping books purchased online. They created packaging that can be reused, recycled, or composted, viewing all materials as nutrients for technical or biological systems.

“The Design Challenge has shown us that the door is wide open for exploring, identifying and developing innovative and environmentally sound packaging solutions,” said Robert Springer, EPA’s Director of the Office of Solid Waste. “What’s more is that these are tangible solutions that we hope the packaging industry can soon implement.” Springer and William McDonough, architect and co-founder of MBDC, presented the winners with awards at the Pack Expo conference.

One of the direct results of the Design Challenge is that the cradle-to-cradle approach is being explored by members of the packaging industry. They have begun to meet to discuss forming a working around these concepts. “This is the type of follow through that EPA is looking for - taking an innovative idea, which makes sense both financially and environmentally, and moving collaboratively between members of the packaging supply chain - to develop environmentally beneficial systems for the delivery of goods and services,” said Springer.

The winning professional entry represents a collaborative effort between Microsoft (WA), Allen Schluger Company (NYC), and Shorewood Packaging (NYC). The designers created a “Bevelope” with 100 percent post-consumer content paperboard. The unique design of the product allows it to expand or contract. This unique packaging can accommodate the slimmest paperback book or the thickest manual and collapses quickly after use. It can be stored for reuse or recycled with mixed paper. Companies can print labels directly onto the Bevelope, eliminating stickers that contaminate the recycling stream.

A team of students from the Art Center College of Design (Pasadena, Calif.) also produced a winning entry in the student category called “Keep it Nature Friendly”. The students detailed how to couple Kenaf, a relatively new material, with the traditional concept of the Japanese Furoshiki, a traditional method of wrapping that dates back to the 8th century. The design placed adjustable, protective corners around books of all sizes and wrapped them in paper. The paper and corners are made from an herbaceous annual plant called kenaf, with several environmental advantages over trees as a source of material of paper. After the customer receives the package, the wrapping materials are given a second life. Consumers can compost the kenaf corners and wrapping paper. Alternatively, a bookmark is included in the package that contains kenaf seeds with instructions on how to assemble the corner protectors into a pot for sprouting the seeds.

Each design challenge winner will receive an award from EPA. Student entry winners will also receive cash awards donated by FedEx.

The E-Commerce Design Challenge is one of EPA's Innovation Pilots. The goal of the Innovation Pilots is to test creative ideas and approaches to recycling, waste minimization, energy recovery, land revitalization, and chemical emergency prevention, preparedness and response. To date, EPA has selected 31 innovation pilots, ranging from testing a market-based approach for reducing chemical use and waste at universities to exploring an innovative approach to processing food waste and its potential renewable energy applications.

EPA launched the Cradle to Cradle Design Challenge in April 2003. More than a thousand people visited the Web site and entries were submitted by students, packaging and industrial designers, and manufacturers from North America and Europe. The E-Commerce Design Challenge was selected because of the critical role product design can play in addressing environmental issues. The goal of the design challenge was to encourage the development of more sustainable packaging services through the design of environmentally preferable packaging and the complementary systems needed for value recovery using cradle-to-cradle principles. The challenge asked participants to rethink and redesign e-commerce shipping packaging and logistics based on cradle-to-cradle life cycles. Participants challenged traditional manufacturing systems that are based on a one-way, cradle-to-grave stream of materials. Winning entries include fresh concepts and are a positive step in seeking environmentally preferable solutions to packaging.

EPA also presented four "Recognition of Innovation" awards to designers from Clean Agency, (CA) GrowDesign (PA), Guilford Technical Community College (NC), and Montreal University, (Canada). Teams from these companies and institutions produced innovative packaging that captured the spirit of the design challenge.

Pack Expo is considered the largest packaging tradeshow in the U.S., with over 17,000 attendees. For the first time, Pack Expo featured a *Showcase of Packaging Innovations* - a special exhibit of top packaging awards from different companies and trade associations. The Cradle To Cradle Design Challenge was part of the *Showcase* and was the only award focused on reducing the environmental impact of packaging

MBDC located in Charlottesville, VA is a product and process design consultancy established by McDonough and chemist Dr. Michael Braungart in 1995. It provides environmentally intelligent product research and development, and design and business tools to companies of all sizes.

For more information on the Cradle to Cradle Design Challenge for E-Commerce Shipping Packaging and Logistics, visit <http://www.epa.gov/oswer/docs/iwg/cradle.pdf> or <http://www.mbdc.com/challenge>