Sustainability Awards 2024 Finalist Interview: Brook + Whittle's recyclable, light-blocking shrink sleeve

24 SEPTEMBER 2024

B + W EX2020
Multi-Color v. Brook + Whittle
PGR2025-00025



Brook + Whittle is a finalist in this year's Sustainability Awards with its GreenLabel BlockOut shrink sleeve, aiming to help brands switch from coloured PET to clear PET. We asked the company about this entry, nominated in the Commercialized Recyclable Packaging category.

You're a finalist in the Sustainability Awards 2024. Congratulations! To start off, could you summarise your entry, in less than 50 words?

GreenLabel BlockOut is a recyclable light-blocking shrink sleeve that enables brands to switch from difficult-to-recycle coloured PET to clear PET while maintaining light protection to prevent spoilage, nutrient loss, and flavour change. It's fully compatible with existing recycling infrastructure and blocks up to 99% of light from 200-900nm.

Why do you think the judges were impressed with your entry? Tell us about what is innovative about your project and/or about its impact on packaging sustainability.

There are two ways brands create light-blocking packaging for their products today: with coloured PET containers or traditional light-blocking shrink sleeves printed on the back side with heavy black ink. However, these solutions both fall short at one or more integral phase of the recycling supply chain.

Listed on many problematic and unnecessary materials lists, coloured PET packaging has a very low end-market value and often ends up in landfill. Bottles labelled with traditional light-blocking shrink sleeves have a similar fate — the black back print prevents them from being correctly sorted by near-infrared equipment (NIR), and they never make it past the materials recovery facility (MRF). Even if the bottles did pass this critical step, the PET-G material the sleeves are printed on would cause clumping and be a significant contaminant in the recycling process.

This is where our GreenLabel BlockOut solution comes in. First, it enables brands to switch from coloured PET to clear PET packaging by blocking up to 99% of light (from 200-900nm) without the use of black ink. Secondly, the labels are printed on a recyclable crystallizable PET material with de-inkable and filterable inks and coatings, allowing them to be recycled alongside the bottle flake.

With improved packaging recyclability, we anticipate this solution will add hundreds of millions of pounds of clear PET PCR to the market. We did the math — as just two major brands in the ready-to-drink protein beverage market make the switch to our solution, we've estimated that they would place over 50 million pounds of fully recyclable clear PET in the market.

Our solution will also help brands reduce costs. We have noticed in Europe that eco-modulation fees are higher for coloured PET than clear PET, as is the case for using an improperly designed label on clear PET containers. From an EPR standpoint, enabling brands to switch from coloured to clear PET packaging labelled with our shrink sleeves will save them in the long run.

Finally, can you tell us about the ongoing development of your project, e.g. how your innovation/initiative has been received by the industry, or what the next steps are in commercialization/product development?

We are proud to announce that our GreenLabel BlockOut light-blocking shrink sleeve solution has received recognition from the Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) as

meeting or exceeding the voluntary requirements for APR Design for Recyclability Recognition. Additionally, How2Recycle has evaluated our solution and has pre-qualified it as widely recyclable on eligible clear PET bottles.

The recognition from these important organizations highlights our commitment to advancing circular packaging solutions and its role in driving sustainability in the labelling industry. We have commercialized this product with a few North American brands to date and are in the final stages with others making the switch to more recyclable and valuable packaging.

The winners of the Sustainability Awards 2024 will be announced at the Sustainable Packaging Summit, taking place in Amsterdam on 12-13 November. The Summit mobilizes leaders of the FMCG value chain, policymakers, NGOs, recyclers and investors to collaborate, remove barriers and identify opportunities on the road to sustainable transformation.

To learn more or register, visit: https://www.packagingsummit.earth/2024

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