



GVV Case Study: Creating Sustainable Products, Part B

James was ultimately unable to persuade the company to follow his advice on the toothpaste packaging. Although he was able to work on other socially and environmentally responsible projects with the firm, in the end, James decided he could more fully satisfy his goals and adhere to his values by starting his own brand of sustainable, luxury personal care products called Nereus. Starting a business is no easy feat, but it allowed James to create products with sustainability in mind, which also meshed well with his personal values.

Starting his own brand did not mean sustainability challenges would cease. For example, the bottles Nereus uses for its products originally came in individual plastic sleeves, a safety measure put in place by the manufacturer to prevent dust from collecting in the empty bottles. James wanted to find a solution that would help his company go plastic-free, or at least eliminate this unnecessary waste. Working with the manufacturer, James came up with a plan to have the bottles shrink wrapped in large sets instead. The plan was successful—this small change resulted in discontinuing the plastic sleeves, allowing Nereus to substitute a recyclable material in place of the plastic.

Throughout his experiences, James realized that ethical and sustainability challenges are ongoing concerns, and although it can be difficult, sometimes leaving a situation, project, or job that one is uncomfortable with is the best solution. It is not necessarily about implementing one's values completely during every challenge, but rather about consistently working to put them into practice, bit by bit, with each opportunity.

This material has been adapted for the Online Ethics Center from the Giving Voice to Values content created by Dr. Mary Gentile.