



GVV Case Study: Plastics and Sustainability - Part A

A couple of years after completing graduate school, Olivia was hired by a product design firm. One of the firm's clients, a large animal services company, wanted to develop a product for pet owners to clean their pets without traditional bathing. The initial idea the animal services company brought to the design team was a disposable glove with cleaning product applied to the surface. With this glove, pet owners could clean their animals by petting them. The glove would then be thrown away, requiring each cleaning session to use a new glove.

Olivia worked with the design team assigned to this project to develop several prototypes of the glove, which were created out of plastic (non-woven materials). Although the design process was enjoyable and engaging, Olivia began to ask herself a few important questions. She wondered if they should be designing something out of plastic that would only be used once and then thrown away. She also had doubts about whether the product would successfully clean pets. Being a young engineer on one of her first projects, Olivia also felt that she lacked the influence necessary to make changes to the project.

Putting yourself in Olivia's situation, what do you think she could say or do to successfully act on her values?

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