

The Results are in...Over 92% of IKEA Customers Bagged the Plastic Bag!

It's a dialogue we hear everyday. Can we? Do we? Will we really change our behavior to be environmentally responsible? IKEA believed we could and would. With the introduction of its leadership 'bag the plastic bag' program in March 2007, IKEA set a goal of reducing its US stores' plastic bag consumption by 50%; from 70 million to 35 million plastic bags in the first year. The call was to go reusable with the iconic IKEA blue bag for \$.59 or use an alternative reusable bag. And IKEA also said if that was not an acceptable solution, IKEA plastic bags could be purchased for five-cents, with all proceeds going to American Forests (the nation's oldest non-profit citizens conservation organization) to plant trees to restore forests and help reduce CO2 emissions.

Now it's one year since the program began and IKEA is overwhelmed with the stunning results; more than 92% of their customers said no more plastic bags! Expectations were exceeded and IKEA learned their customers welcome the opportunity to find new ways to be environmentally responsible. This landmark program has now resulted in IKEA taking another step forward; as of October 1, 2008, IKEA will no longer offer plastic bags, and paper bags are not available in IKEA stores either. IKEA's consumer call-to-action is to use only reusable bags.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. consumes over 380 billion plastic bags, sacks and wraps each year. Each year, Americans throw away some 100 billion polyethylene plastic bags, and less than one percent of them are recycled. Single-use bags made of high-density polyethylene are the main culprit. Once brought into existence to tote purchases, they will accumulate and persist on our planet for up to a thousand years. Paper bags are also not the best alternative; stacking 10 pallets of paper bags is equivalent to one pallet of plastic, thus increasing the CO2 footprint. And it takes 14 billion trees to produce 10 billion grocery bags.

"IKEA believes home is the most important place in the world. The success of this program truly demonstrates that our customers care deeply about our global home and that we can all work together to be sustainable and environmentally responsible," said Pernille Spiers-Lopez, president, IKEA North America. "IKEA applauds its customers for being bold and courageous. Together, we have proven we can shift our behavior and make a notable environmental difference!"

"American Forests and IKEA have developed a growing environmental partnership based on Global ReLeaf tree planting over almost a decade. In that time IKEA and its co-workers and store visitors have sponsored the planting of over 725,000 trees in Global ReLeaf ecosystem restoration projects throughout the United States. In addition to CO2 sequestration, the environmental benefits of these projects in terms of clean air, pure water and improved wildlife habitat are substantial and measurable. The fact that IKEA has shown outstanding leadership in reducing plastic bag usage while providing support for Global ReLeaf environmental restoration just reinforces our pride in working with such a forward thinking company," stated Deborah Gangloff, executive director, American Forests.

Since the 'bag the plastic bag' program began in March 2007, IKEA has donated more than \$300,000 from their disposable plastic bag sales to American Forests. And since 1998, IKEA has contributed over \$728,000 for the planting of trees in the US; this is enough trees to offset approximately 100,000 tons of CO2 emissions over the next 40 years.

"The success of IKEA's 'bag the plastic bag' initiative reveals a growing public focus on the environment and a striking consumer willingness to take action on a personal level," observed Dan Esty, Director of the Center for Business and the Environment at Yale University. Dan is also co-author of the business best-seller "Green To Gold" (an IKEA advisor).

IKEA UK has also had significant success with its bag program and went plastic bag free in June 2007, while IKEA Australia stopped sales of all their plastic bags in December 2007. IKEA has also been at the forefront of a number of other environmental and social initiatives. IKEA specialists work diligently to promote healthy forestry practices. Wood used for IKEA products comes from well managed forests and not from intact, natural or old-growth forests. Other notable programs include: IWAY audits, a code of conduct for partnership with suppliers around the world where suppliers are measured on health, safety, social and environmental concerns. When developing products, IKEA abides by the strictest requirements for chemicals and substances in the world, regardless of where the products are sold.

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