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Feature Article

How Green Circle Salons is Reducing Waste in Salons Across North America

Hey Mr. Green!

Earlier this year, someone asked what the environmental impact would be if everyone stopped coloring their hair. As you said, it is a good question with no easy answer. However, there is a company trying to mitigate that impact.

In a state where plastic bags and plastic straws are being banned, it's not surprising that when I was working at one of my first salons, we had seven different waste receptacles. One for paper, one for plastic bottles and cans, one for used color and color tubes, one for used product bottles, one for hair, another for biohazardous waste like bloody tissues from accidental cuts, and finally one for garbage. That's a lot of waste cans! It was overwhelming the number of different bins we had to keep organized.

At the time, I thought it was overboard. Though since then, the salons I've worked at only differentiate between garbage and recyclables. Now, my current salon barely even does that much!

Having been raised in a time where "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle" is printed on nearly every disposable item, I feel bad throwing away my soda can next to used color. Those are harsh chemicals which makes recycling impossible!

My biggest complaint is all the cut hair that gets thrown away. Hair is a very expensive commodity which gets tossed in the garbage next to everything else all the time. It is estimated that salons in North America waste over 400,000 pounds per day. Surely there is something that can be done about this.

These same thoughts and concerns were shared with Shane Price, founder and CEO of Green Circle Salons. With the emerging green market, Price found a way to increase sustainability in salons while helping their bottom line.

When talking to a Toronto salon owner, entrepreneur Shane Price was shocked to learn how much waste is generated by the salon each day. In Canada, people pay a fee for each bag of garbage that gets taken by the waste company. This cost can really add up. The salon owner was frustrated with how few things were recyclable. Price said, "The owner told me they were unable to recycle things like hair, foils, etc." (Salon Today). So he took matters into his own hands and brought some people together to create Green Circle Salons.

Green Circle Salons is the world's first salon recycling program which recycles used salon waste that was traditionally garbage. Things like hair, foils, color waste, paper goods, plastics like empty shampoo or developer bottles, and metals like hair foils, aerosol cans, or used color tubes can all be separated and recycled. The way GCS does this is by sending salons five different recycling receptacles; metals, plastics, paper, hair, and color waste then arranging a routine pick-up or delivery schedule just like a normal waste company. With all these different recycling receptacles, it definitely makes sense that salons can reduce their waste by 95%.

When salons sign up with GCS to become a Green Salon, the company provides them with marketing kits, shelf-talkers, and bins out. A representative from the company also comes out to the salon to give an orientation on how to

be more eco-friendly. Price said, “We explain that being green means you’ll recycle hair clippings, foils, chemicals, paper, plastic, batteries, lights – that’s 85 to 95 percent of salon waste we’re able to divert.” (Salon Today)

Price realized that if salons learn how to reduce the amount of waste and energy they are using, they can be more eco-friendly AND save money! Not only does GCS show salons how to recycle using their system, the company also shows salons how to reduce their carbon footprint by switching to LED lights and using less product to reduce the amount of waste. By reducing the amount of waste, energy and products used, salons can save a lot of money becoming a Green Salon.

To recycle items that used to not be recyclable, used foils and developer bottles can now be cleaned then recycled while the used color gets sent to a chemical-waste plant. One of the most interesting ways GCS is able to recycle and reuse is what they do with the hair from haircuts. Instead of ending up in a landfill, GCS has partnered up with Alouette Correctional Centre for Women in Maple Ridge, British Columbia. Price said, “We pay a wage to the women in the penitentiary, and they make boons to absorb oil. They get stored in our warehouse and we send them out for oil spill purposes when needed.” (Salon Today)

Because of GCS’s commitment to creating a healthier environment and using business as a force for good, they recently earned their spot as a certified B Corp. For those who know what a B Corp is, this is really exciting news! For those who don’t, it will be really exciting news once you learn what it means!

A B Corporation is a new type of corporate certification started in 2006 that is driven to benefit all stakeholders, not just shareholders. “Certified B Corporations are businesses that meet the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability to balance profit and purpose.” (B Corporation) This means that not only are B Corp companies trying to earn more money, but they’re also focused on helping the environment in some way. Think Tom’s and Patagonia. With Tom’s One for One program and Patagonia’s sustainable supply chain, these major companies are on board to set the gold standard for business.

GCS has diverted nearly six million pounds of salon and spa waste from landfills and waterways. Price said, “What sets us apart is not just our drive for keeping the planet clean and healthy, but our passion to continuously make this planet a better one for everyone to live on. As a newly certified B Corp, we hope to be a beacon for positive change in our communities. We also hope that our member salons will recognize and embrace B Corp by being even a greater stand for the environment, and diversity in the workplace.” (Green Circle Salons)

What can you do to take part in helping Green Circle Salons keep both people and the planet beautiful? Find an affiliated salon on their Green Salon Directory or ask your stylist about becoming a Green Salon!

Links to Sources

<https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/what-environmental-impact-hair-dye>

<https://bcorporation.net/about-b-corps>

<https://www.salonstoday.com/369795/greening-the-industry>

<https://info.greencirclesalons.com/b-corp-certified>