

SHORT SUMMARY

Organisation: Interface, www.interface.com

Contact person: Nico de Wijk (Purchasing Manager), [LinkedIn](#)

Product & Sector: carpet tiles (Office furnishing) | **Country:** global



Circular carpet tiles from Interface



Discarded fishing nets are recycled into new threads.

Interface had produced carpet tiles for many years without considering the environmental impact. Until founder, Ray Anderson, read 'The Ecology of Commerce' by Paul Hawken in 1994. He realised that the *take-make-waste* model was no longer sustainable and made rigorous changes to the company's operations.

Description

Interface started to make the shift in 1994 from a petroleum-intensive company to a sustainable organisation. Its biggest impact was with raw materials. That is why Interface uses recycled materials and has, for example, developed an alternative environmentally-friendly backing for carpet tiles. Furthermore, its own production in Scherpenzeel is entirely sustainable. Interface no longer takes waste to the tip, and the company uses green electricity and green gas for the production.

Approach

The Interface ambition is to eliminate all negative environmental impact by 2020 (Mission Zero®). Transport results in yet more environmental impact,

which is partly why Interface's production is relatively close to its sales markets. The company is making significant investments in a sustainable production process, such as a recycling machine for carpet tiles.

Interface is also searching for alternative raw materials (see Results). The objective is to start delivering 100% sustainable products. Interface reuses all products that are already in circulation in the best way possible. It does this particularly using defibration, but sometimes also through cleaning and reselling (the Re-entry programme).

Interface also offers a training programme and organises regular meetings to share developments regarding the circular approach.



FACTS & FIGURES

Number of FTE:

> 3,500

Tender volume:

> over \$ 500 million (American dollars)

Production volume:

> 50 million m² carpet tiles per year

Turnover:

> \$ 1 billion per year (American dollars)

Results

Interface has experienced various successes in the transformation towards 100% sustainable products. A *biobased* backing for carpet tiles has been developed, as alternative for the less sustainable bitumen. However, this is not without extra costs and not everyone is prepared to pay for this.

“We far exceed the requirements set by clients.”

Nico de Wijk, Purchasing Manager Interface

Another example is the use of PVB (polyvinyl butyral). This laminate layer in car windscreens was always treated as waste and has now been given a second life in Interface carpet tiles. The material replaces synthetic latex, which has high environmental impact and is used in the carpet industry to anchor threads.

With the Net-Works® programme, Interface collects discarded fishing nets, which are recycled into new threads. Interface has also developed a sustainable fitting method. The tiles are no longer glued together, but are held together by stickers on the corners.

Lessons learned

- Anchor the circular philosophy in your business operations.
- Keep challenging suppliers. Set clear questions and objectives and monitor the agreed quality.
- Some investments do not immediately generate money but do contribute to your objective and can therefore be justified.

About REBus and the Green Deal on Circular Procurement

The Green Deal on Circular Procurement (GDCP) is an initiative of MVO Nederland (CSR Netherlands), NEVI, Central government, Duurzame Leverancier, PIANOo, Kirkman Company and Circle Economy. Various pilots originating from GDCP are partly financed by the European REBus project, implemented in the Netherlands by Rijkswaterstaat (Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management). They are working together to support businesses and government organisations in their circular procurement ambitions.

Contact information

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Relevant links & documents: Video [Mission Zero](#) | Video [Ray Anderson's Spear in the chest](#) | Report [The New Industrial model](#)

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