

MBA Polymers: “Betting the Company” on Sustainability-Driven Innovation in the B-to-B Jungle

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What’s it like to “bet the company” on sustainable innovation as the core driver of business success? And what’s it take to do so in a hardcore business-to-business (B-to-B) environment at least 1 step removed from end-buyers seeking sustainability?

Ask Mike Biddle, Founder and President of [MBA Polymers](#). Over the last 20 years MBA has emerged as the premier company to recycle plastics from complex waste streams. MBA’s proprietary processes produce “drop-in replacement” polymer feedstocks that require less than 20% of the energy needed to produce virgin from petrochemicals.

Case in point: MBA Polymers’ feedstock has been used in several models of [Electrolux’s “Green” line of vacuum cleaners](#) (<http://group.electrolux.com/en/ultrasilencer-green-981/>). Electrolux is a global leader in home appliances and appliances for professional use, selling more than 40 million products worldwide each year. Electrolux sees sustainability as a competitive advantage and its products are increasingly subject to EU’s Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment (WEEE) take-back directives and various environmental labeling requirements.

What did it take to succeed? To become an Electrolux supplier, MBA had to demonstrate that it could deliver the quality, quantity and consistency of supply that a global leader like Electrolux demands. Historically recyclers have been small-scale local enterprises, so demonstrating those attributes at global scale is a major challenge. Accordingly MBA seeks customers willing to invest the effort (6 to 12 months or more) to test MBA’s feedstocks and work them into product development programs.

The work was highly technical. MBA had to demonstrate that it could meet all of Electrolux’s technical requirements to make MBA’s material a “drop-in replacement” for virgin polymer:

- Color
- Mechanical and electrical properties
- Processability, especially melt characteristics
- UL ratings (which required educating UL about recycled polymers)
- Conformance with Reduction of Hazard Substances (RoHS) rules (<1,000 PPM lead, <100 PPM cadmium, dye restrictions and other requirements)

What was the result? [Electrolux proudly states](#) (<http://group.electrolux.com/en/ultrasilencer-green-981/>) that, by using 55% recycled PP content for the body of the vacuum, it consumes 90% less energy during manufacturing than is used to produce the same components with virgin plastics, and saves 2 liters of crude oil and 80 liters of water per vacuum cleaner. MBA Polymers President and Founder, Mike Biddle, adds, “As a result of this initiative there have been benefits for both companies and we look forward to growing the Electrolux - MBA Polymers relationship in the future.”