

With an established history spanning more than 50 years, Mathias was founded as a family run business that delivers a unique blend of expert knowledge with high levels of dedication and personal service in the industry along with traditional and contemporary business values. In an ever-changing world, Mathias continues to share the concern of environmental issues, as do shareholders, customers, staff and the general public alike. Therefore, we are always assessing our existing policies to ensure they are moving with the times, they are in line with current legislations and that all possible efforts and measures can be continued and improved.

Staff Communication

We will ensure that this environmental policy and our annual environmental report are available to everyone in Mathias, and actively encourage people to participate and contribute to the development of environmental initiatives as they affect our business.

Senior Management Approval

The Directors Jason and Sarah Mathias have specific responsibility for policy development, coordination and evaluation of performance. Mathias is committed to minimising the impact of its operation on the environment by means of a programme of continuous improvement.

Legislative and Regulatory Compliance:

The following policy guidelines show the principal commitments Mathias has set:

- Meet and where appropriate exceed the requirements of all relevant legislations;
- Promote recycling and the use of recycled materials, while reducing consumption of materials wherever possible;
- Minimise waste in all operations and product enhancement;
- We take account of environmental issues when placing contracts / orders with suppliers of goods and services.
- Employee involvement in environmental matters is encouraged and will be promoted through training, communications and reappraisal of working methods and techniques;
- Monitor progress and regularly review the company environmental policies to keep them up-to-date and relevant.

Environmental initiatives

Garment Reuse:

An initiative we have in place to send any obsolete stock to an organisation called 'His Church.' Rather than destroying unwanted garments and clogging up our landfill sites, 'His Church' will take the garments and over-brand using an Appliqué embroidery and then issue them to some 250 homeless centers and women's shelters around the country. Not only is this a great way for clothing to have a longer happier life, but it also eradicates the need for landfill for such garments, as well as helping those less fortunate.

BBC - His Church article

We have looked at trying to recycle garments but have come up against many hurdles. Any garment made with man-made fibres are impossible to recycle (not re-use). 100% cotton garments can be made into mops, although if a garment had embroidery on, the embroidery is made of Rayon.

However Jason is a very keen environmentalist and following a seminar in 2007, in which he met up a senior manager from Salvation Army, he came away enthused and wanting to make a difference. Following discussions about how to increase the lifecycle of workwear and corporate clothing, funding was sought and gained. A piece of research then followed in collaboration with Leeds University, Marks & Spencer, Mathias and Salvation Army looking into the removal of transferred and embroidered logo's to allow the garments to be re-used...possibly back out to customers or for charitable purposes, rather than be sliced or incinerated. See document on next page.

Following the success of this piece of research, further funding was gained for a much larger piece of research which involved Mathias, Leeds University, Oxfam, Royal Mail, Asda, Madeira Threads and C Tech Innovations. Following this 3 year piece of research, WEAR2 was created please see – www.wear-2.com.

Rapid Emblem Removal to Enable Reuse of Corporate Clothing (RECO)

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Overview

The visual identity of corporate clothing is partly determined by embroidered emblems or logos durably attached to the fabric surface. Currently at the end of life, such motifs cannot be economically removed from the garments without damaging the underlying fabric. Consequently, corporate clothing, which may be highly specified, is frequently discarded at the end of its first life, which usually occurs well before the performance of the garment or constituent fabric has deteriorated to a point that is not serviceable. This creates a significant waste of valuable raw materials.

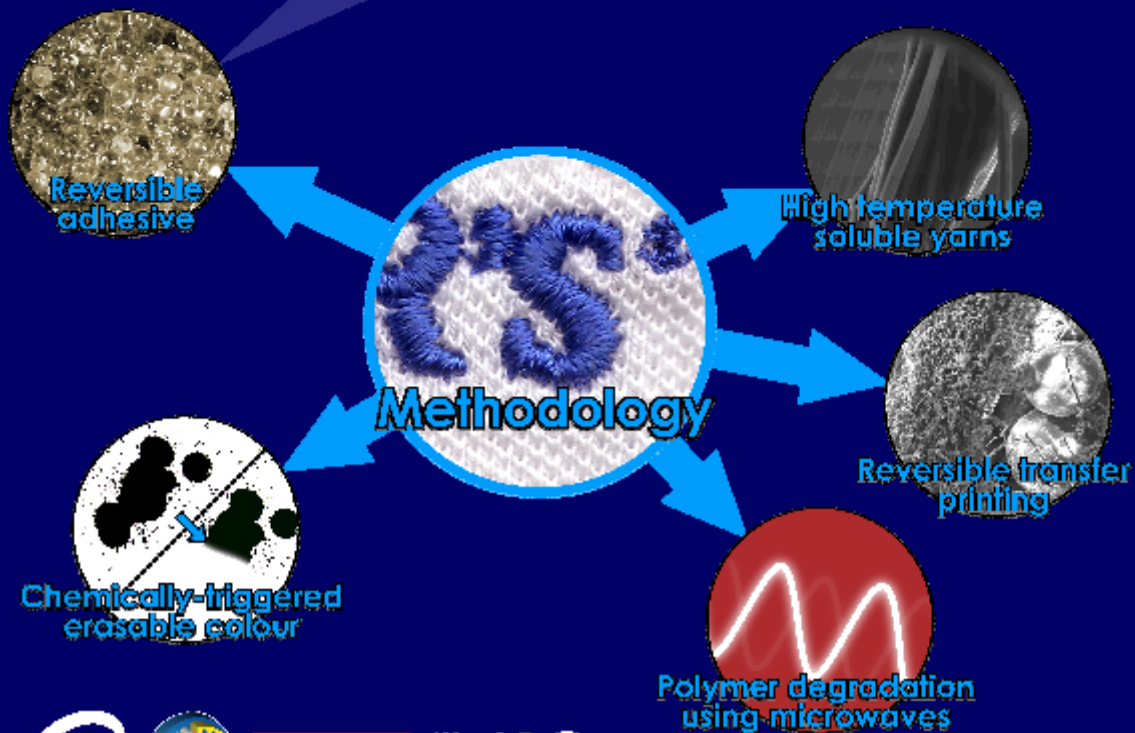
Thermally expandable microspheres (TEMs)
The adhesive contains microspheres - thermoplastic shells encapsulating a volatile liquid. When the microspheres are heated to a specified temperature they expand rapidly to over 100x their original volume, acting as a pressure activator to cleanly break the bond at the interface.*

Why RECO ?

The UK corporate clothing market is worth ca. £432 million per annum which equates to 32 million items. Approximately £6 million of rejects and returns go straight to landfill. A technical and cost-effective solution of emblem removal would enable the re-use of at least half of the UK's corporate clothing items, i.e. 16 million items.

Objectives

At present there is no cost-effective means of facilitating the reuse of corporate garments by the effective removal of corporate logos. The main objective is therefore to develop a cost-effective method of emblem removal, with the potential to become an automated process. Corporate garments could then be reused either without an emblem or with the addition of a newly embroidered emblem.



Packaging:

We have recently moved across to 100% recycled boxes for all our man-packed orders and for bulk shipments we re-use our manufacturers' / suppliers' boxes to reduce the amount of packaging needed and ultimately our impact on the Environment.

Any boxes that come to us and are unfit for re-use we recycle, hence 100% of the boxes that come into the company are either re-used or recycled.

In order to try and discourage small order hence more packaging, we charge a small order fee. This is integrated into our MUMS system whereby if a customer chooses the Gas Guzzler option they have to pay a charge for each delivery made.

Unfortunately as the majority of our garments are held in a warehouse you cannot escape the dirt and dust that is such a feature of warehouses. Therefore currently we have found we have to pack all individual garments in plastic bags in order to keep them clean. We have however just overhauled our operation which resulted in a new bespoke bin being introduced. We are hoping this will reduce the amount of dust that can get to the garments and therefore could in the near future think about minimising the amount of packaging we use for garments. As we are all too aware of the impact of this procedure on the environment we do try and make up for it in other areas.....any small orders are sent in strong plastic bags as opposed to big boxes and any garment that needs to be removed from its original packaging to be logoed we re-pack in the same packaging as long as it is not damaged.

As much as we want to reduce packaging levels due to their impact on the environment, we cannot afford to let goods get damaged in transit to our customers at this expense.

We are carrying out a cost benefit analysis of whether we can collect boxes from our customers further a field using our courier...both financial and environmental cost / benefit analysis.

We took part in a design stretch workshop in collaboration with Business West, in which we looked at our packaging requirement with a number of designers from all different backgrounds. We obviously gave the brief of trying to tie in our caring ethos...which includes the environment (as well as our customers, staff, suppliers and community). Some great ideas came out of the workshop and we are working on all of our packaging currently, looking at where we can use recycled materials.

Paper:

We use 100% recycled paper for all our stationery – delivery notes, invoices, letterheads etc, and following research with our customers we have found out that the majority of customers are happy to receive electronic invoices, hence we are looking at amending our invoicing procedure.

We have increased the amount of integration with Sage – our financial accounting software package, which has allowed us to reduce the volume of paper requiring printing....as well as increasing efficiency for ourselves allowing us to despatch parcels quicker and more accurately.

Where possible any paper no longer needed we encourage to re-use. E.g. for internal documentation such as stock take paperwork and reports or kept for scrap noting. If this is not possible we fully encourage recycling. Our office and warehouse each have their own designated recycling bin which we get collected on a regular basis. Any confidential material is shredded and added to these bins for collection at the same time.

We have a separate paper recycling policy disrupted to all staff to increase their knowledge therefore maximise the use of recycling.

Recycling Toners & Cartridges:

Mathias has joined the RNIB recycling appeal and is committed to continuing to recycle toners and cartridges. We post small cartridges directly to the RNIB appeal via the freepost envelopes enclosed with the cartridges on purchase and the larger toner items are collected in a special bin in the office which is collected by a member of the RNIB on a regular basis.

Couriers:

Mathias only has one vehicle in its own personal fleet which is used for local deliveries.

The rest of the parcels are delivered using a major courier (DPD). DPD is a leading provider of parcel delivery services with a nationwide network of depots. As a responsible company they are committed to ensuring environmental management is a key priority. They establish environmental policies and practices – taking environmental considerations and integrating these policies into the management of the business. The company's environmental policy was a major factor we considered when selecting our courier.

In order to minimise CO₂ emissions from the number of order deliveries, Mathias offer incentives to customers to bulk order and therefore reduce the frequency of delivery. For any order under £50 we charge a small order fee to encourage this.

MUMS (Mathias Uniform Management System, our bespoke online ordering portal) has an added function that gives the customer the option on when their order should be sent; either Gas Guzzler where the customer opts for the items to be delivered as and when they are available or Eco-Friendly where the customer waits until the order is complete before sending. In order to encourage our customers to select the eco-friendly option our gas guzzler feature results in the customer being charged for every delivery made.

When ordering from our supplier we order in bulk where possible to cut down the amount of deliveries. We also have agreements with our suppliers which enables us to store up any returns and send them back once a month as opposed to as and when we receive them. This again cuts down on the number of deliveries having to be made and therefore CO₂ emissions.

Self Sufficiency:

If 10% of the population installed turbines, a saving of 0.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide is possible, generating 1.5 TWh of green electricity. Therefore we are looking at becoming self sufficient for energy via the use of a wind turbine or look at putting in Solar Panels. We have had initial conversations with an energy consultant about this and hope to implement this at some point in the near future.

Lighting:

Since moving to our new premises in 2006, we have installed vacancy sensor lights in several rooms; the sensor will detect that no one is in the room and automatically switch off after a preset period of time. This results in huge energy savings and avoids the likelihood of lights accidentally being left on over nights and weekends. We also use energy efficient light bulbs throughout our office and warehouse unit.

We have an office equipment, lighting and water guide that gets distributed to staff so they are aware of policies we wish them to follow for sustainability.

Water Cooler / Boiling Water

Since moving to our new premises we have moved away from a bottled water cooler machine to one that is plumbed in to the water system. This has minimised the waste of bottles and CO₂ emissions during transportation. We also use mugs and glasses which can be washed up instead of plastic and paper cups which get thrown out after use. We are looking at having boiling water plumbed into the mains gas, to minimise keeping boiling water hot as we do currently with our existing urn.

Bottles & Cans:

Residential homes can now recycle glass bottles, plastic bottles and cans. The office is no different. Please wash out the items and place them in the green recycling box in the kitchen.

Compost Heap:

As a small friendly, family run business we also operate a compost heap in our new garden area so kitchen scraps and waste can be recycled back into the earth. We have a guide we distribute to our employees so they know what can be put in the compost and therefore maximise its use. Bins in the kitchen are separated into normal waste and food waste to maximise the amount we can put into compost.

The Future of Energy at Mathias

Mathias is committed to saving energy, reducing emissions and helping the environment, local and wider communities. To continue this heart-felt pledge, Mathias are currently reviewing materials from sustainable sources; in talks with charities and government about more extensive garment recycling for poorer communities and through working with an energy consultant, the exciting prospect of making the office unit energy self-sufficient.