



# The Green

Your Guide to Sustainable &  
Thriving Retail Practices

# Retail Handbook

**Interreg  
North Sea**



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**

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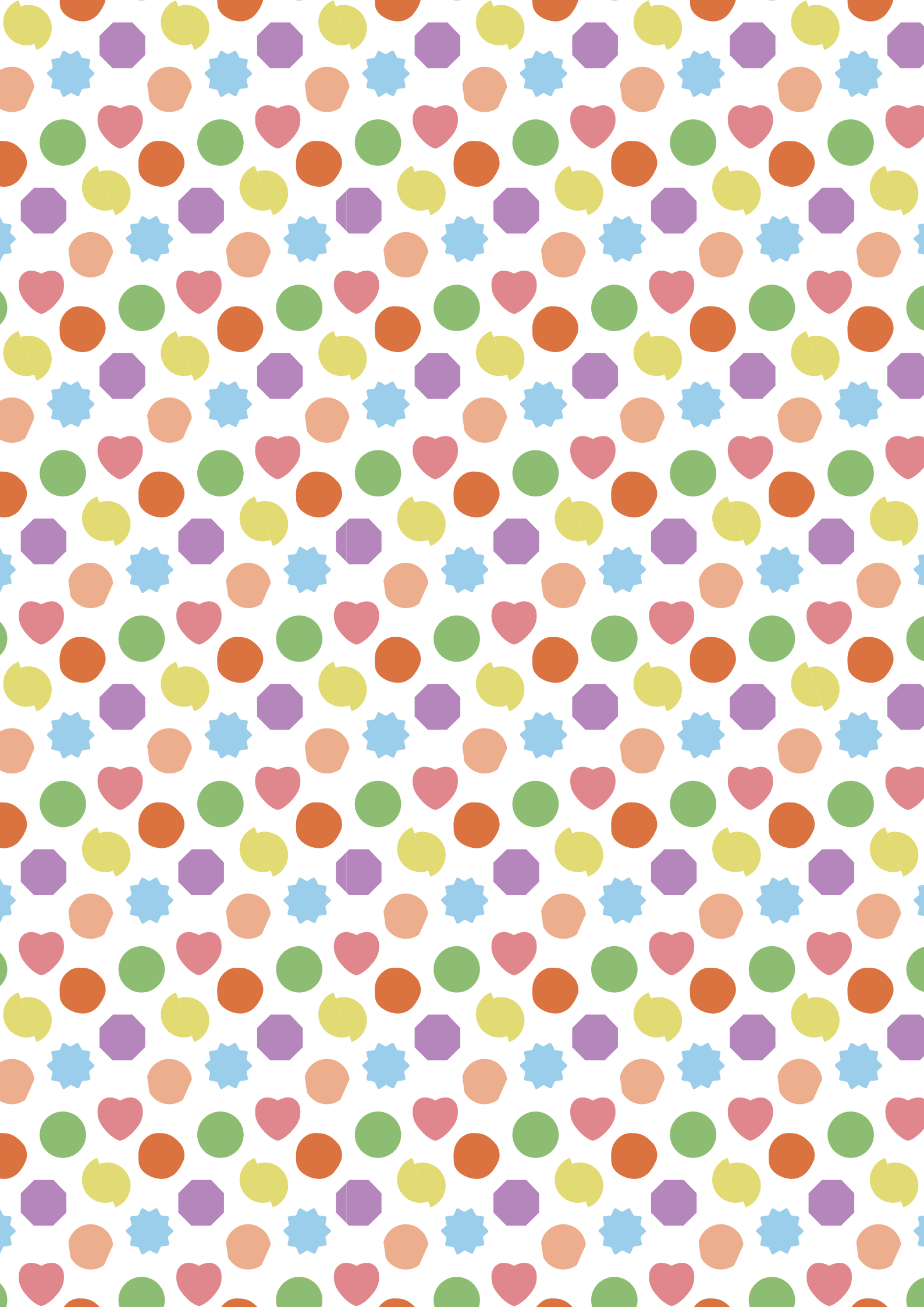
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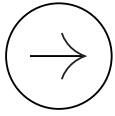


**DRIVHUSET**

Dansk Design Center



# Introduction to Green Retail Handbook



This handbook is for you — whether you own a retail store, are part of a sustainability team in a retail chain, or see yourself as a changemaker within city organizations, retail associations, or municipalities.

At its heart, sustainable retail is about finding the sweet spot—the balance where business success, positive social and local impact, and environmental responsibility meet. It’s about creating win-win solutions that not only benefit your store but also strengthen your community and contribute to a healthier planet.

*“The green transition ultimately benefits the bottom line – and leaves you with a good feeling.”*

Participant in Green Retail

When embarking on the journey towards sustainability, it’s crucial to start with what we call the low-hanging fruits—the simple, practical actions that create quick wins and build momentum for further change. These small steps can generate motivation and enthusiasm within your team while showing visible progress to your customers and community. For instance, you could begin by reviewing your energy supplier to ensure greener sourcing,

switching to energy-efficient light bulbs in your store displays, or improving your waste sorting practices. These straightforward changes not only reduce your environmental footprint but also demonstrate your commitment to sustainability in an accessible and relatable way.

Take a moment to reflect: When was the last time you bought something green and sustainable—and why?

Was it the inviting atmosphere in the store or the connection you felt with the local shop owner? Perhaps it was because choosing the sustainable option was made simple, with clear guidance from knowledgeable staff?

In this handbook, you’ll find inspiring case studies, practical tips, and even a tailored toolkit designed to empower you as a local changemaker. Our goal is to support your invaluable work in driving cities toward a more sustainable future.

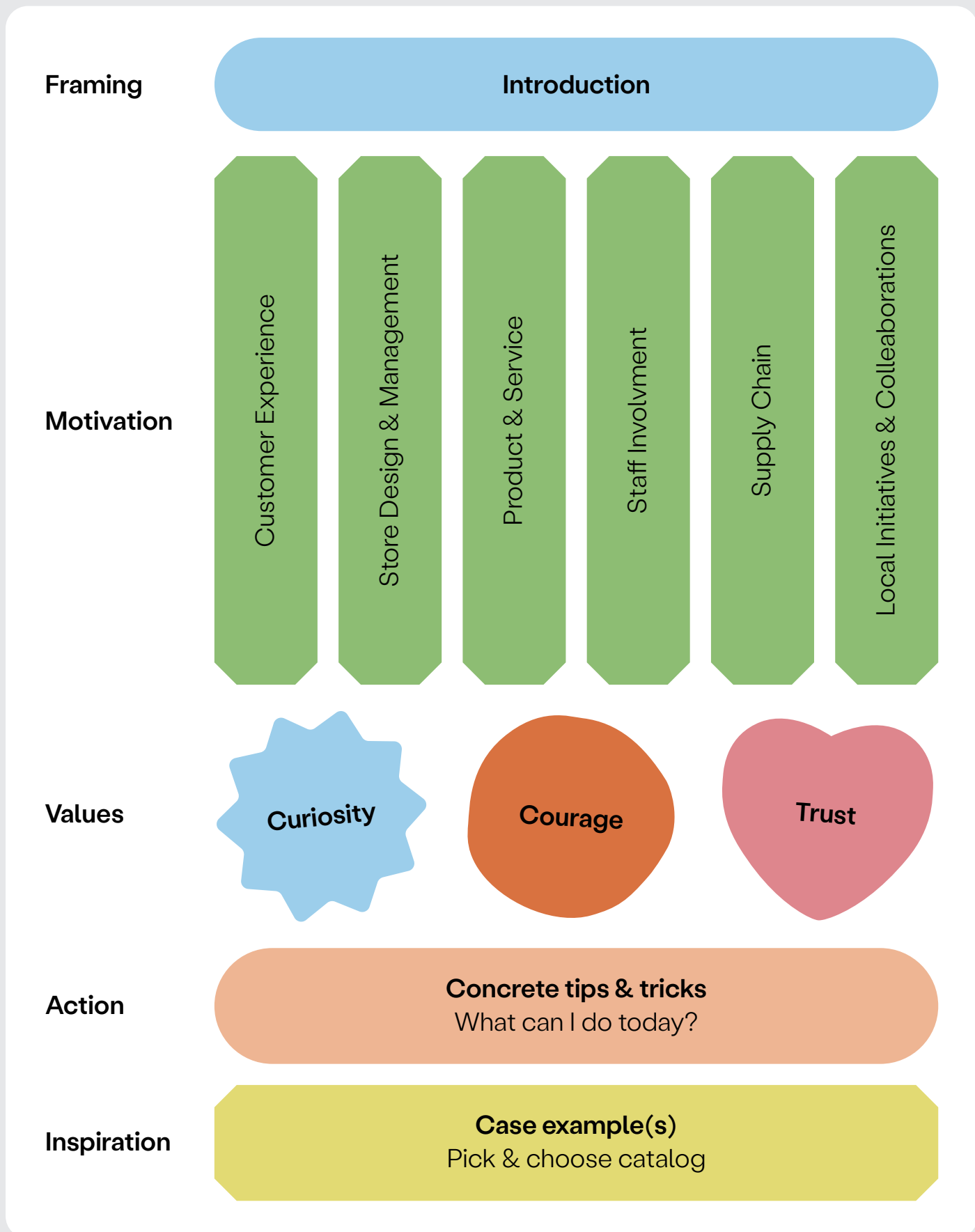
# **Green Retail Handbook is for retailers that want to**

Future-proof the business so it's ready for greener customer demand, new opportunities with suppliers, and stricter environmental requirements.

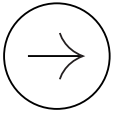
Find the sweet spot where revenue and greener choices overlap: Where can savings be made? What can be reused? What new activities and revenue streams can be created?

Get inspired to set clear, concrete goals and gain momentum to act on them.

# Structure of the handbook



# Structure of the handbook



The handbook is structured around six key themes that we've identified as essential for creating thriving, green retail businesses:

## **Customer Experience**

How to engage and delight customers while promoting sustainability and circular solutions.

## **Store Design & Management**

Creating spaces that reflect your values and enhance the shopping experience.  
[Both the front - and back stage of the store]

## **Products & Services**

Offering sustainable choices that resonate with your customers.

## **Staff Involvement**

Empowering your team to become ambassadors for change.

## **Supply Chain**

Building transparent, responsible, and circular processes.

## **Local Initiatives & Collaborations**

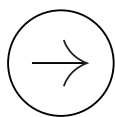
Strengthening community ties through meaningful collaborations.  
[Create meaningful collaborations]

Each theme is rooted in three core values we've found vital for fostering lasting change: Courage, Trust, and Curiosity. These values form the foundation for creating a positive, sustainable impact that endures.

This handbook is the culmination of the Interreg North Sea project Green Retail, conducted across three pilot cities — Bruges (Belgium), Gothenburg (Sweden), and Vejle (Denmark). In partnership with De Republiek, Drivhuset, Spinderihallerne (Vejle Municipality), and DDC – Danish Design Center, the project engaged 36 local retail stores during 2024, helping them transition toward more sustainable, circular, and resilient business models and store management.

Together, let's transform retail into a driving force for sustainability.

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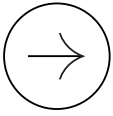
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# Customer Experience



# Customer Experience Description






Create a shopping experience that inspires and empowers customers to embrace sustainable choices. Focus on “product-as-a-service” by offering guidance, storytelling, and clear communication that simplify sustainable decision-making. With Courage, challenge traditional customer engagement methods. Build Trust through transparent and consistent communication. Spark Curiosity by sharing the unique stories and values behind your products and services.

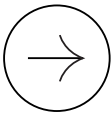
*“Listen carefully to your customers and the questions they ask. A question often reveals a certain need they feel or something that is not clear to the customer. Capitalise on it!”*

Freya Demeyere  
Retail Coach KERNpunt

## Reflection questions

-  What is one way you could use your store’s communication (e.g., signs or social media) to highlight your most sustainable product?
-  How can you involve staff to confidently answer customer questions about your green products or practices?
-  What simple story about one of your products could you share to show its local or sustainable impact?

# Customer Experience Tips & Tricks



1

## **From Green Knowledge to Connection**

Use green knowledge to create win-win outcomes.

### **How to Get Started**

Encourage staff to learn and share greener aspects of your products with customers. Set a goal to introduce a “green feature” of a product at least once a day. Test and tweak your communication style to find what works best for customers and staff alike.

### **Quick Action**

Pick one product with a strong green story. Practice how to explain its benefits in a way that resonates with customers.

2

## **Use Your Customer as a GPS**

Let customer feedback guide your decisions.

### **How to Get Started**

Talk to customers regularly and ask what they think of your store, products, or sustainable initiatives. Even short, casual conversations can reveal valuable insights. For deeper feedback, consider setting up a small test panel or survey.

### **Quick Action**

Ask three customers today for their thoughts on a new product or store feature.

3

## **Dare to Ask Your Customers**

Customers are a great source of feedback and inspiration.

### **How to Get Started**

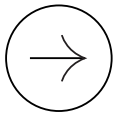
Invite customer feedback directly—through casual conversations, comment cards, or social media polls. Ask what they think of your store, how they view your sustainable products, or what they’d like to see more of.

### **Quick Action**

Set up a simple way for customers to leave feedback, like a suggestion box or quick online survey.

# Customer Experience – Case

## Dare to ask your customer



*Your customer can provide you with valuable information, it just takes the courage to ask.*

### **Who?**

Otto Waffle Atelier – Take away waffles – Bruges

### **Description**

Otto Waffle Atelier offers a gluten-, lactose- and sugar-free waffle to their customers, but wanted to go one step further by making them vegan as well. Not an easy process that affects taste, texture and baking properties. To get to know the customer's opinion better, they organized a test panel of customers to taste and compare blind the vegan waffle to the normal waffle. They could write down their findings on a fill-in sheet and give the two waffles scores. It gave Otto Waffle useful information and the confidence to continue their research process.

### **What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?**

- Customers are very willing to invest in a test moment: they are happy that their opinion is being heard and they get a free consumption in return
- Working with an easy-to-quote fill-in sheet allows you to gather valuable information in a short timeframe
- You create a valuable bond with your customer who will tell others about this special experience

### **Who was involved in the process/experiment**

Store manager, staff, and customers

- The store manager set up the questionnaire and processed the results
- The staff was involved in the practical organisation of the evening
- The customers tasted and completed the questionnaire, but also gave valuable feedback verbally

### **Concrete outcome**

The test panel of customers gave Otto Waffle useful feedback. With renewed energy and extra professional help they adjusted the waffle dough composition and their production process.

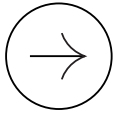


⊕ Photo: Dare to ask your customer



# Customer Experience – Case

## Wiser use of resources



*Reselling the same dresses – a win for customers, shop and planet*

### Who?

Panayotis, Vejle – selling high end bridal- confirmation and party dresses.

An increasing amount of the revenue comes from re-selling the same dresses. The concept is called 'pre-loved' dresses and comes with a financial incentive for both the bride that sells and the bride that is buying. The selling bride is the owner of the dress until the sale.

### Description

The shop set itself the task to find many ways finding ways of working wiser with resources:

- Increased attention to spreading awareness of the possibility of 'pre-loved' dresses
- Increased attention to avoid dead stock of dresses and of materials in the tailoring workshop
- Increased attention to better use of the premises (through collaborations with colleagues in the bridal business)

### What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?

The shop owner and his leadership team set themselves the target to spot possibilities for wiser use of existing resources. They identified initiatives, set themselves short- and long term targets, made project plans and deadlines for follow-ups.

- The head of marketing and shop staff increased story-telling of the 'pre-loved' initiative
- The head of purchase and the tailors work with decrease of deadstock (trimming purchase and increasing redesign of unsold dresses)
- Across the team they made plans for better use of the premises through collaborations

### Who was involved in the process/experiment?

- The store owner is the dynamo in the process
- He involves his leadership team in the process of idea development and in tracking results
- The leadership team involves the wider staff group in the communication with the customers

### Concrete outcome

- Increasing the reselling of the dresses saves production of new dresses
- The decrease in dead stock of new dresses and a better overview over materials save money
- The increased marketing focus on the 'pre-loved dresses' is expected to generate more costumers and add to the resilience of the shop in a future with greater attention to greener alternatives



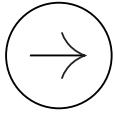
⊙ Photo: Wiser use of resources

# Store Design & Management





# Store Design & Management Description



Transform your physical store into a flexible and innovative space that reflects your commitment to sustainability. Optimize energy use with green suppliers and energy-efficient solutions. Use the store as a testing ground for new ideas and initiatives. With Courage, experiment with design that aligns with your values. Build Trust by showcasing your sustainable efforts visibly. Encourage Curiosity with creative layouts and engaging displays.

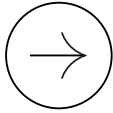
*“Think of a shop as a dynamic thing! Customers like it when they can discover something new every time, but it is also a great way to make small changes and test out new things.”*

Margot Billiet  
Sashuis, Brugge

## Reflection questions

- What is one small change you could make to reduce energy use in your store, such as switching to LED bulbs or adjusting heating?
- Could you partner with a local supplier to test a new sustainable product or service in your store?
- How can you use part of your store space to showcase a green initiative, like a recycling station or a “sustainable corner”?

# Store Design & Management Tips & Tricks



1

## **Guide the Customer Walk**

Build your store layout to encourage natural flow and highlight key areas.

### **How to Get Started**

Outline your store layout and identify “hot spots” where customers naturally pause or engage. Refresh these areas each season and test new products or messages weekly to see what grabs attention.

### **Quick Action**

Sketch your store layout and mark three hot spots. Try moving a key product or message to one of these areas today.

2

## **Be Your Own Customer**

Learn by observing and experiencing your store as a customer.

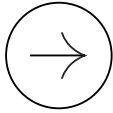
### **How to Get Started**

Draw your shop’s layout and map out the typical customer journey. Observe how customers interact with your store and listen to their questions. Use this insight to improve layout, messaging, or product placement.

### **Quick Action**

Spend 30 minutes walking through your store as if you were a customer. Make notes on areas that feel unclear or could be improved.

# Store Design & Management Tips & Tricks



3

## **Improve Waste Management**

Start small to achieve big waste reductions.

### **How to Get Started**

Reorganize your waste area to make sorting easy and efficient. Contact your waste collector to reduce residual waste bins and increase recycling capacity. Set a deadline to complete this and stick with it.

### **Quick Action**

Spend two hours this week rearranging your waste area to prioritize sorting.

4

## **Cherish Small Experiments**

Big changes start with small trials.

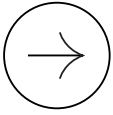
### **How to Get Started**

Spot opportunities for new practices or ideas, then test them on a small scale. Set clear timeframes for trying and evaluating your experiments. Be open to adjusting or rolling back changes if they don't work.

### **Quick Action**

Choose one small experiment to start this week—such as rearranging a display or introducing a sustainable product—and plan to evaluate it in one month.

# Store Design & Management – Case Think for your customer



*Visualize opportunities the customer did not yet see*

## **Who?**

Purpose. , Bag designer, Bruges

## **Description**

Purpose is a designer of leather handbags and accessories who wants to encourage the customer to use their handbags longer. To extend the life of the handbags, she offers various accessories to pimp their bag and give it a new look and a second life. Simple interventions that don't have to cost much, but with great effect. Purpose. created a separate "Pimp your bag" corner in her shop where she shows customers the variety of possibilities.

*"Provide conversation starters in your shop. A brilliant way to get customers on the road to a more sustainable way of shopping and to provide them with valuable information."*

Marlies Parmentier, Purpose. – Brugge

## **What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?**

- Create a physical space/corner in your shop, visualize your message and give the customer concrete tips & tricks.
- Think for your customer, visualise opportunities the customer did not yet see and help the customer along the way.
- Make behavioural change feasible and attractive by using storytelling.

## **Who was involved in the process/experiment**

Store manager, staff, and customers

- The store manager/staff initiate the spatial intervention and create the extra products and services
- Customers are invited to start a conversation and take concrete steps to consume more sustainably

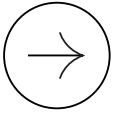
## **Concrete outcome**

By creating a corner in your shop with concrete tips to consume more sustainably, you will give customers new ideas and make it easier to sell your sustainable message and products. You make it concrete and tangible for the customer and it is often a good conversation starter.



⊙ Photo: Marlies Parmentier

# Store Design & Management –Case 4 x wins



*The shop, the costumer, the supplier and the planet*

## **Who?**

Kvickly

A large store in Vejle selling daily goods, part of a big chain across Denmark

## **Write a short case description about case, the challenge, and the process**

### **Kvickly is working actively with double or triple wins**

- Customers having a double win: Saving money & helping decreasing food waste
- The shop having a double win: making money & helping decreasing food waste

### **They work with many initiatives around reducing food waste**

'To-good-to-go', 'stop food waste – box', 'take the one in front' signs, improved stock checks, arranging the produce they want to sell first in hot spots for sales

### **In this case there is 4 x wins**

The shop, the costumer, the supplier and the planet

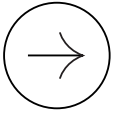
It is not only their own 'close to deadline' food products they find ways to sell rather than throw out. They have increased their role as the link between the suppliers 'close-to-date' products and the customers. They hype these special offers through their facebook site where customers can sign up and come to collect in the store. The shop gets the offers at a good price from the suppliers and makes a profit from the sale. For the customers there is an element of feeling lucky to get the good offer.

### **What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?**

It is a strategic choice by the store manager to actively spot and highlight possibilities for double or triple wins: Initiatives where either the shop and/or the customer as well as the planet benefits. Often they spot initiatives where all three win.

In this case, not only the shop, the customer and the planet wins, but also the supplier.

# Store Design & Management –Case 4 x wins (continued)



## **Who was involved in the process/experiment ?**

*Store manager, staff, value chain or customers*

- The store manager is the dynamo in the process
- He involves his leadership team in the process of idea development and in tracking results
- They create incentives for the customers to make choices that decrease food waste
- They operate as the link between the suppliers 'close-to-date' products and the customers
- The store manager has shared his approach with the board, who supports the initiatives

## **Concrete outcome**

- A measurable decrease of food being thrown out (halved over the past two years)
- A financial increase from selling rather than throwing food
- The special deals shared on facebook are hooks attracting customers





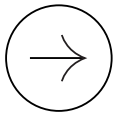
⊞ Photo: 4 x wins



# Products & Services



# Products & Services Description






Offer sustainable products and services that resonate with your customers and reflect your values. Highlight the impact of “service as a product” by providing expert advice and support. With Courage, prioritize suppliers that align with your sustainability goals. Build Trust through transparency and consistent quality. Ignite Curiosity by presenting unique, innovative solutions.

*“The pieces of ceramics that I restored using the Japanese Kintsugi technique and showcase in my shop, are so popular that they are sold immediately. People love the story it tells.”*

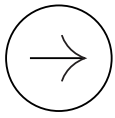
Marianne Vandebussche  
Ceramic designer, Brugge

## Reflection questions

-  What is one product in your store that could be swapped for a more sustainable alternative?
-  How could you explain to your customers why a sustainable product might cost a little more but offers greater value?
-  Could you add a service, like product repair or rental, to make your store more circular?

# Products & Services

## Tips & Tricks



1

### **Give Old a New Life**

Social sustainability starts with small actions.

#### **How to Get Started**

Clear out inventory that's no longer selling and find creative ways to reuse it. Could it be sold at a discount, donated to a good cause, or repurposed? Explore how giving items a second life can benefit your store, your community, and the planet.

#### **Quick Action**

Identify one item in your inventory to repurpose or donate this week. Use green knowledge to create win-win outcomes.

2

### **Turn Service into a Product**

Enhance customer experience and sustainability by offering service-oriented solutions.

#### **How to Get Started**

Consider how your store can meet customer needs through services rather than just products. For example, offer repair services for items you sell, provide rentals for products customers may only need temporarily, or introduce workshops that teach customers how to extend the life of your goods. Start small by choosing one area where a service could complement your existing offerings, and test it over a set period. Promote this service as a way to add value, reduce waste, and build a deeper relationship with your customers.

#### **Quick Action**

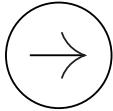
Pick one product in your store and brainstorm how you could offer a service around it. Could you teach customers how to repair it, offer an upgrade program, or rent it instead of selling it?

#### **Why It Matters**

Focusing on services creates a win-win by deepening customer loyalty and reducing waste. It also highlights your store's commitment to sustainability, giving customers a reason to return. Small shifts like this can spark big changes in how your business operates and the impact it has.

# Products & Services – Case

## Sarah’s Creative Use of Dead Stock



### *Sustainability and Profitability in Green Retail*

#### **Who?**

Tyget., Varbergshudden

#### **Description**

Sarah exemplifies how creativity and sustainability can go hand in hand by transforming leftover materials (primarily fabric dead stock) into sellable interior décor items like seasonal pumpkins for Halloween and handmade Santa-figures for Christmas. Additionally, she offers sewing workshops, teaching others to maximize the use of otherwise discarded materials. By participating in the Green Retail project, Sarah implemented tools like the Vejle Green Retail Wheel and Customer Journey to enhance her processes, creating better customer experiences and embedding sustainability into her business model.

#### **What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?**

Sarah’s approach to sustainability and profitability involved these key actions:

- Leveraging dead stock to create unique, sellable products, minimizing waste.
- Introducing sewing workshops to share skills and promote sustainable practices.
- Using the Vejle Green Retail Wheel to identify opportunities for improving sustainability.
- Applying the Customer Journey tool to enhance the customer experience and satisfaction.

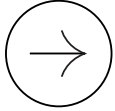
#### **Results**

- Reduced waste by transforming nearly all leftover materials into sellable products.
- Increased profitability through innovative use of resources and new product lines.
- Improved customer engagement and experience with tailored sustainability-focused workshops and products.

#### **Who was involved in the process/experiment ?**

- Sarah (business owner and creator)
- Workshop participants and customers
- Retail experts and sustainability coaches from the Green Retail project

# Products & Services – Case Sarah’s Creative Use of Dead Stock (continued)



## Concrete outcome

- Creation of highly marketable and sustainable products like the Varberg Cushion, tomte figures, and seasonal pumpkins.
- Enhanced business model with a strong focus on waste reduction and customer satisfaction.

## Next Steps

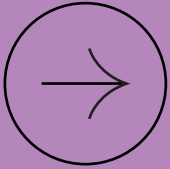
- Continue integrating sustainability into new product designs.
- Expand workshop offerings to reach a broader audience.
- Periodically revisit tools like the Vejle Green Retail Wheel and Customer Journey to track progress and identify further improvements.





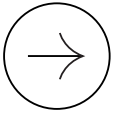
⊕ Photo: Sarah's Creative Use of Dead Stock

# Staff Involvement



4

# Staff Involvement Description



Empower your team to act as sustainability ambassadors and make it easy for them to embrace greener practices. Activate new competencies by offering training and resources that connect sustainability to their daily work. With **Courage**, rethink staff roles to include sustainability goals. Build **Trust** by involving them in decision-making processes. Foster **Curiosity** through ongoing learning and collaboration.

*“(To create motivation and progress, it requires) someone to hold you accountable and check in on how it’s going.”*

Kenni Tolstrup Jørgensen, Kvickly Vejle

## Reflection questions



What is one simple green task (e.g., turning off lights or separating waste) that you could assign to your staff?



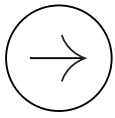
How can you involve your team in suggesting ideas for greener practices in the store?



Could you provide your staff with a quick guide or training session to help them explain your sustainability efforts to customers?



# Staff Involvement Tips & Tricks



1

## Reap the Potential of Existing Resources

Maximize what you already have.

### How to Get Started

Set aside time during a staff meeting to brainstorm ways to better use existing resources—leftover stock, materials, or even ideas. Share suggestions as a team, prioritize the most promising ones, and assign follow-up tasks. Repeat this process monthly or annually to uncover new opportunities.

### Quick Action

Sketch a list of resources you currently have but underutilize. Pick one to try maximizing this week.

2

## Gain New (Green) Knowledge

Build a transparent supply chain through learning and sharing.

### How to Get Started

Focus on learning more about your products and certifications, then share this knowledge with your staff. Host quick, regular meetings to keep everyone informed and aligned. Use what you learn to confidently communicate green benefits to customers.

### Quick Action

Pick one product or certification to research this week. Share your findings at your next staff meeting.

3

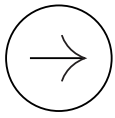
## Engage Employees in Vision Building with Creative Visualization

Use physical metaphors to spark your team's imagination and align their efforts toward sustainability goals.

### How to Get Started

In a team meeting, provide a variety of objects—such as toy cars, colorful fabrics, or tools—and ask employees to choose one that symbolizes the store's identity or aspi-

# Staff Involvement Tips & Tricks



rations. For instance, a solar-powered gadget might represent innovation, or a sturdy ladder might signify growth. Discuss the qualities of the chosen objects and how they align with your store's sustainability journey. Work together to translate these ideas into actionable steps that employees can take.

## Why It Works

This activity encourages staff to feel ownership of the store's vision and provides a creative way to align individual contributions with broader goals.

## Quick Action

At your next staff meeting, ask, "If our store were represented by one of these objects, which would it be, and how can we bring that vision to life?" Use their answers to inspire concrete actions and shared commitment.



## Spark Employee Engagement with a Green Ideas Wall

Inspire your team to contribute sustainable ideas by creating a simple and interactive space for brainstorming.

## How to Get Started

Hang a large blank sheet of paper or a whiteboard in the staff area with the heading "Green Ideas for Our Store." Divide the space into categories such as Store Design, Products & Services, and Resource Use. Provide colorful markers or sticky notes and invite employees to write down their ideas at any time. Regularly review and discuss the suggestions during team meetings to prioritize and implement the most impactful ideas.

## Why It Works

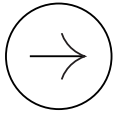
A Green Ideas Wall empowers employees to share their thoughts and feel part of the store's sustainability journey. It also fosters creativity and teamwork while uncovering practical, actionable solutions.

## Quick Action

Set up your Green Ideas Wall today and encourage your team with the question, "What's one small idea we could try to make our store more sustainable?" Keep the process informal and fun to spark engagement.

# Staff Involvement – Case

## Introducing greener choice of products to the customers



### Who?

Wunderwear, Vejle

The shop is part of a chain of 36 shops in Denmark selling underwear

### What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?

- The store manager decided to learn about the products in the shop: knowing which are the greener alternatives of every range. Especially knowing what the 'small print' on the labels about certifications helped.
- The store manager spread the knowledge to all staff. It is now part of the onboarding of new staff. All staff now include the sustainability dimension as part of their conversations with customers – everyone does it their own way, and find it easy to drop in.

### Measuring effect

- Focus on two specific product groups and tracking the development of sales over time, by comparing sold items during two 9 month periods ( the period of the enhanced focus on sustainability and the same period the year before).
- The number of sold items in the two 'greener choice' categories were up 32% and 67%.

### Who was involved in the process/experiment?

*Store manager, staff, value chain or customers*

- The store manager has been the dynamo in the process
- She involved all staff in the process - awareness and attention to the sustainability of products
- All staff now include the mentioning of sustainability in their conversations with the costumers
- The store manager made contact to the main brands too. One brand provided a 'bin for handing in old garments, planting a tree pr. 5 kg'. The bin is now in the shop.
- The store manager shared her findings in the newsletter for all other 35 shop managers, tips and advice is shared in their internal facebook group of the chain and Green business development became for the first time a separate point of focus at the annual meeting for all shops in the chain.

### Concrete outcome

This clear effect will affect future choices of products in the shop. Knowing that it is possible to influence the purchasing patterns of the costumers gives the confidence to make a change towards a wider range of more sustainably produced products.



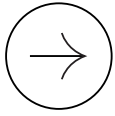


➔ Photo: Introducing greener choice of products to the customers

# Supply Chain



# Supply Chain Description






Build a transparent, circular supply chain that reduces your environmental impact and creates shared value. With Courage, form partnerships that align with your sustainability mission. Don't be afraid to ask our suppliers. Build Trust by documenting and sharing your supply chain journey. Spark Curiosity by involving customers and stakeholders in your transition to circular solutions.

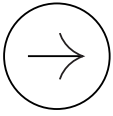
*"That there are multiple ways to approach it (sustainability). There are several possibilities and many factors to consider, such as the durability of materials vs. certifications, how to involve the employees and your supply chain, ect."*

Panayotis

## Reflection questions

-  Can you ask your suppliers about their sustainability practices or certifications?
-  Is there a local supplier you could work with to reduce transport emissions and strengthen your community ties?
-  Could you start by replacing just one item in your store with a product that has a lower environmental impact?

# Supply Chain Tips & Tricks



1

## Start the Conversation

Unlock sustainability insights from your suppliers.

### How to Get Started

Begin by selecting one supplier to focus on. Think about the key areas where you'd like to improve sustainability in your supply chain, such as eco-certifications, packaging, or recycling initiatives. Reach out to your supplier via email or phone, and ask specific questions like whether they offer products with a lower environmental impact or if they have options for reducing packaging waste. As you receive their responses, document the insights and consider how they align with your store's sustainability goals. From there, identify practical steps to implement these changes.

### Quick Action

Identify one supplier today and ask: "What steps are you taking to become more sustainable, and how can we collaborate on this?"

### Why It Matters

Starting a dialogue builds Courage to engage with sustainability, fosters Trust in your partnerships, and sparks Curiosity about new, greener opportunities in your supply chain. Small questions can lead to big changes.

2

## Find the Sweet Spot

Combine high ambitions with low-hanging fruits.

### How to Get Started

Contact suppliers to identify products nearing their expiration date or surplus stock. Purchase these at a reduced price and highlight them as both great deals and sustainable choices. Start small and evaluate the impact on sales and waste reduction.

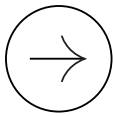
### Quick Action

Call one supplier today to ask about potential surplus stock or close-to-expiration items.



# Supply Chain – Case

## Search for win-wins



*Making your supply chain more sustainable can also have a positive impact in other areas*

### **Who?**

Dees Koffiebranders, Coffee roaster, Bruges

### **What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?**

Dees Koffiebranders roasts sustainable 'Specialty' coffee beans which he not only sells B2C, but also delivers B2B to hotels, restaurants and cafes. Normally the coffee beans are delivered in jute bags, but he recently switched to reusable coffee barrels. These are washed between deliveries in the professional dishwashers of a social economy company that employs people with disabilities. These barrels are not only circular in use, they have the advantage that they are easier to stack, taking up less storage/transport space, easier to handle and more hygienic. So a win-win for both supplier and customer!

### **What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?**

- Dare to question and rethink your supply chain and logistics.
- Invest in sufficient storage space and seek partnerships with (social) players in the neighbourhood who can contribute to the logistic process
- Demonstrate the win-win and your customers will be easily convinced of the more sustainable option

### **Who was involved in the process/experiment?**

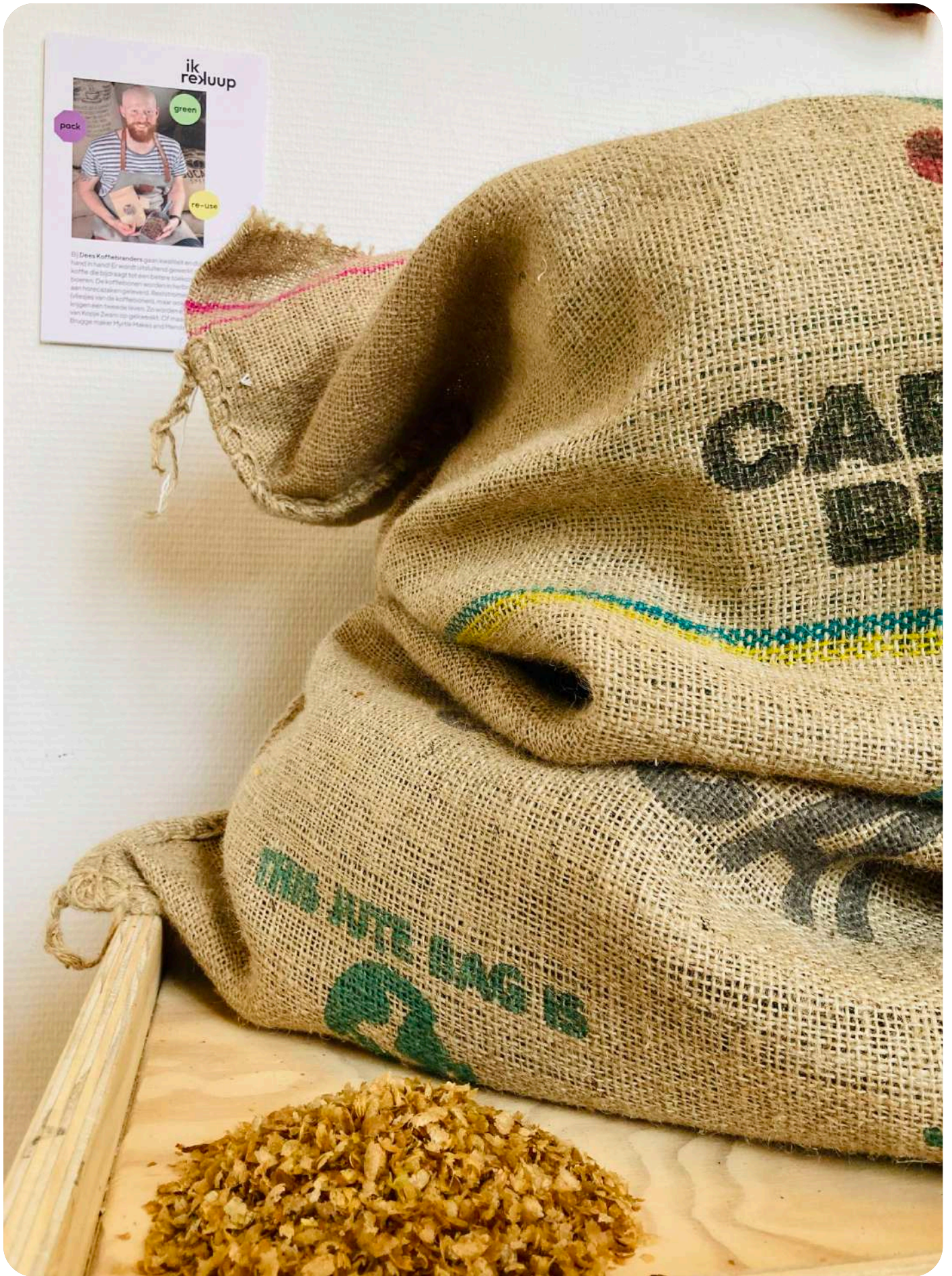
*Store manager/staff, and customers*

- Store manager/staff designing and setting up a new supply chain and logistic flow
- The new system requires a small adjustment from the customer, but they are quickly convinced of the positive effects

### **Concrete outcome**

It requires an initial investment in reusable packaging, stock space, and setting up a partnership with a social economy company, but it creates several long-term win-wins and a positive and social story that you can communicate.

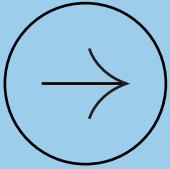




⊕ Photo: Search for win-wins

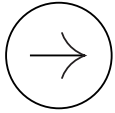


# Local Initiatives & Collaborations



6

# Local Initiatives & Collaborations Description






Strengthen community ties through meaningful collaborations based on the principles of "Ask your neighbor" and "Use your local network." With Courage, take the lead on initiatives that create shared value. Build Trust by showing consistent commitment to your local area. Spark Curiosity by involving the community in creative, sustainable projects.

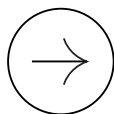
*"It is important to lower barriers for customers who want to shop more sustainably. During the Green Retail project in Bruges, we developed a sticker for the shop windows of retailers in Bruges. It indicates in a visual way that reusable packaging is welcome in this shop."*

Elke Renders, Circular Hub Brugge

## Reflection questions

-  Is there a local organization or event you could collaborate with to promote sustainability in your community?
-  How can you encourage your neighbors or nearby businesses to join a shared green initiative, like a recycling program?
-  Could you display a map or flyer in your store to show customers other sustainable options in your area?

# Local Initiatives & Collaborations Tips & Tricks



1

## **Dare to Ask Your Network**

Tap into the resources and ideas in your community.

### **How to Get Started**

If you need materials, advice, or a solution to a problem, ask your network—colleagues, friends, or other store owners. People are often willing to help and may have what you're looking for.

### **Quick Action**

Think of one challenge you're facing. Reach out to someone in your network for advice or resources today.

2

## **Strengthen Local Partnerships with Creative Visualization**

Foster collaboration and shared goals among local partners by using physical objects as metaphors.

### **How to Get Started**

Bring together local partners and provide a selection of objects—such as toy cars, plants, or tools—that symbolize different qualities or approaches. For example, a robust toolbox might represent shared resources, or a network of vines might signify interconnected growth. Ask each partner to choose an object that represents their vision for collaboration and explain why. Use this shared metaphor to spark a conversation about collective goals and actionable next steps for sustainability initiatives.

### **Why It Works**

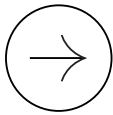
This activity creates a neutral and imaginative space for dialogue, allowing partners to align their visions and establish trust while identifying opportunities for collaboration.

### **Quick Action**

Invite one or two local businesses to a casual brainstorming session. Ask, "Which of these objects best represents how we could collaborate, and what can we do to make it a reality?"

# Local Initiatives & Collaborations – Case

## One man's trash is another man's treasure



*Waste for person x is a great resource for person y*

### **Who?**

Dees Koffiebranders, Coffee roaster, Bruges

### **What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?**

Dees Koffiebranders roasts sustainable 'Specialty' coffee beans which are delivered to him in jute bags. These bags are actually very beautiful and can definitely get a second life. For instance, he offers the bags to a local food producer who can use them to grow vegetables, but also to local artisan makers who use the bags to make new products. For example, one maker gave the bags a new life by sewing them into a beautiful jacket, but they could just as easily be turned into poufs. Thus, material that is waste to one person is valuable material to another.

### **What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?**

- Look at your residual flows with different eyes, there may still be potential in them for other entrepreneurs
- Spread the word & look out for other designer/makers/companies who can use your waste material. If there is a lot of demand, you can certainly ask for money in return.
- Be sure to show off your collaborations, the public is excited to hear such stories

### **Who was involved in the process/experiment?**

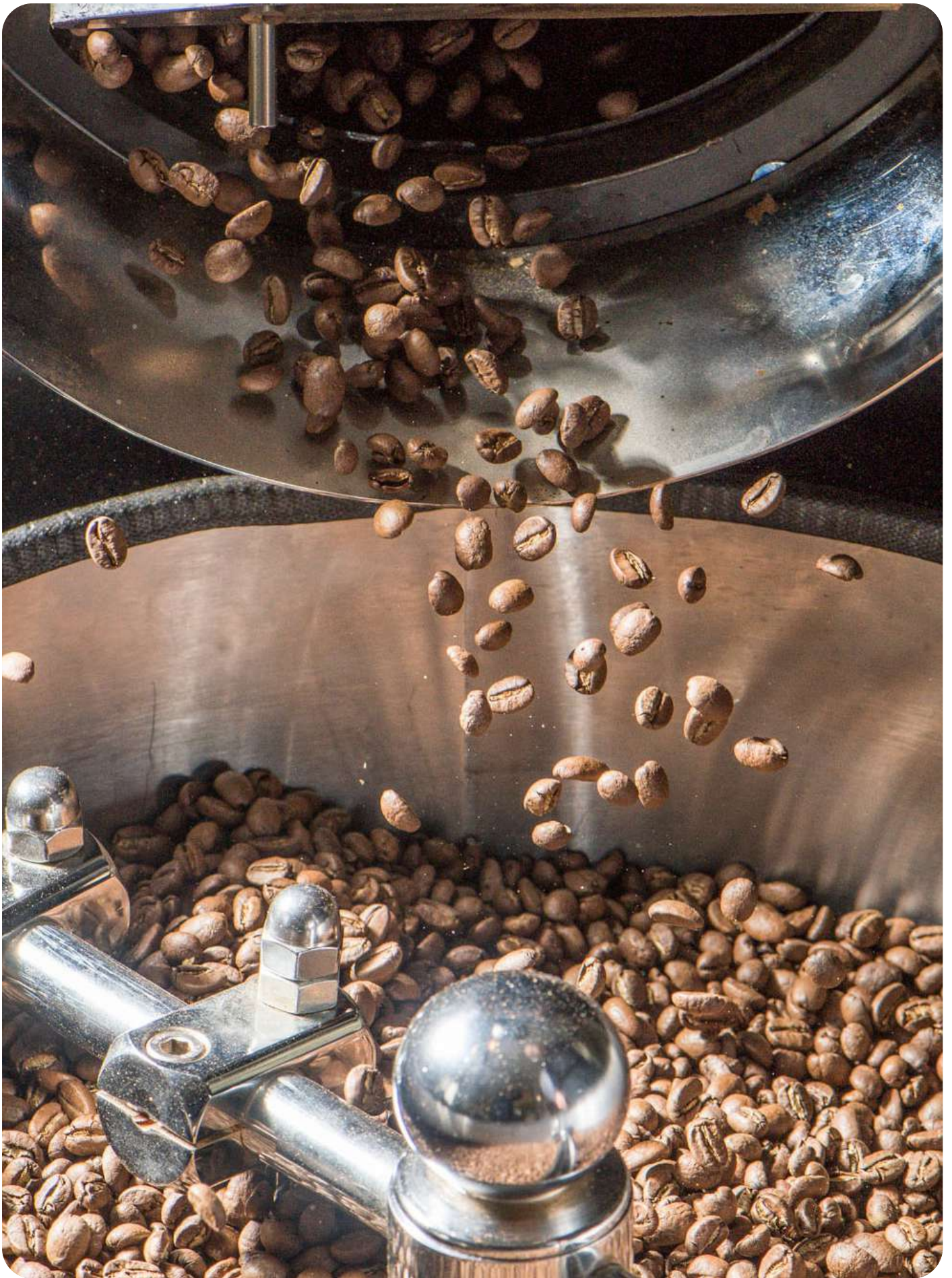
*Store manager/staff, and customers*

- Store manager, staff, and network
- The storemanager/staff sends the cal

### **Concrete outcome**

Dees Koffies can easily find an outlet for its jute coffee bags and make others happy who can put them to good use and process them into new products. This is an easy way to add value to something that would otherwise become waste.

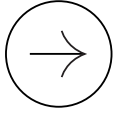




⊙ Photo: Alain Meessen



# Local Initiatives & Collaborations – Case Building Bridges



Uniting Businesses for Sustainable Retail Success – *Five different wills combined into a shared vision.*

## **Who?**

Alla Tidars Johanssons Gård  
Väster

## **Description:**

Five independent businesses shared a retail space under the assumption of a common vision for sustainability. However, differing perspectives and communication gaps led to tension and inefficiencies. Through workshops, including a creative visualization exercise using cars as metaphors, the group established a unified vision centered on sustainability, uniqueness, and transparency. They also developed collaborative strategies like a seasonal market area and began offering workshops and lectures, creating additional revenue streams and enhancing the customer experience.

## **What concrete actions did the store take to achieve the result and how?**

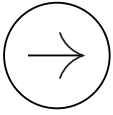
The process to align the businesses and achieve results included:

- Conducting a workshop to establish a shared vision using metaphors and visual aids (e.g., car models to represent the business).
- Developing a vision: a sustainable, upcycled "Volkswagen bus" symbolizing ethical practices and transparency.
- Defining measurable goals: at least 80% of inventory to consist of unique, upcycled, or deadstock items.
- Breaking down the vision into actionable steps affecting store design, individual business practices, and shared resources.
- Introducing a seasonal market area showcasing products from all businesses to foster collaboration and attract customers.

## **Who was involved in the process/experiment?**

- Five independent business owners sharing the retail space.
- Sustainability facilitator and retail expert
- Customers engaging with the improved store concept and new offerings.

# Local Initiatives & Collaborations – Case Building Bridges (continued)



## Concrete outcome

- A unified store identity and improved customer experience.
- Expanded revenue streams through workshops, lectures, and seasonal market areas.
- Increased financial stability and sustainability for all five businesses.
- Improved relationships and collaboration among the five businesses.
- A clearly defined shared vision, enhancing both internal alignment and external communication.
- Increased sales and customer satisfaction due to a more cohesive store concept and collaborative efforts.
- New business opportunities, including paid workshops and lectures held in-store.

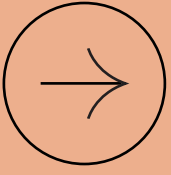
## Next steps

- Regularly revisit the shared vision and refine strategies based on feedback and results.
- Continue leveraging tools like The Retail Coach for ongoing improvements in visual merchandising and customer engagement.
- Monitor sales and customer responses to further enhance collaboration and offerings.

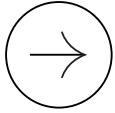


⌚ Photo: Building Bridges: Uniting Businesses for Sustainable Retail Success

# Epilogue



# Epilogue



As we bring the Green Retail Handbook to a close, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated retail stores that have participated in this journey. Your commitment to exploring sustainable practices, testing new ideas, and engaging your communities has been nothing short of inspiring. It is your courage to embrace change, your trust in the process, and your curiosity to discover new possibilities that have brought this handbook to life.

Retail stores play a vital role in shaping the future of our cities, communities, and planet. By taking steps toward sustainability, you have shown how businesses can be both drivers of local prosperity and stewards of a healthier environment. The journey doesn't stop here—together, we have laid the foundation for a movement that we hope will continue to grow, evolve, and inspire.

To further support this shared mission, we have developed a Toolkit for Changemakers as a complement to the Green Retail Handbook. This toolkit is designed to empower those working alongside retail stores—whether you are part of a city organization, a retail association, or a local sustainability initiative. It offers practical facilitation tools, methodologies, and frameworks to help you collaborate effectively with stores, foster innovative solutions, and co-create lasting impact.

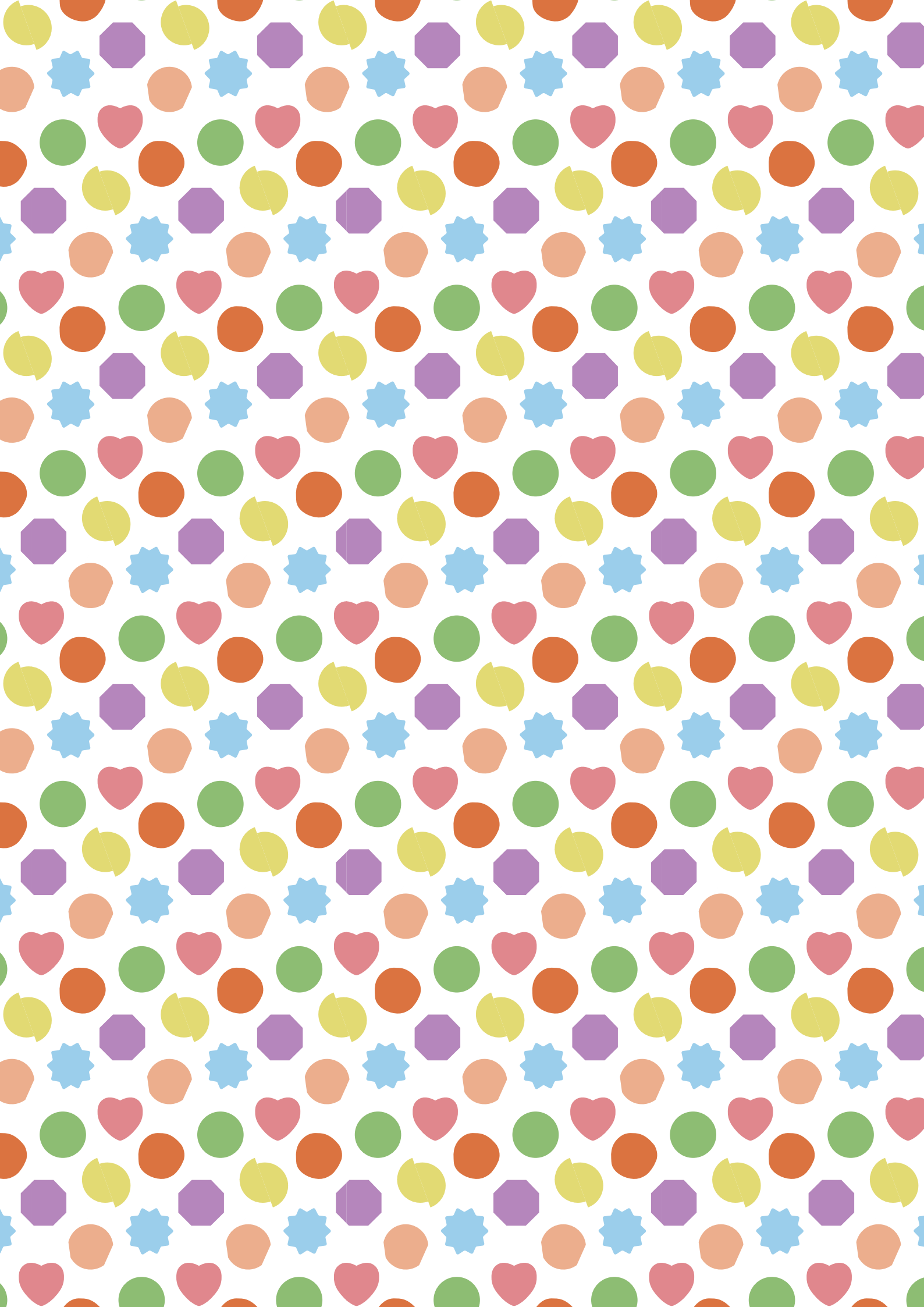
We envision this toolkit as a bridge between strategy and action—a resource to translate the aspirations and ideas in this handbook into tangible, transformative steps. Through workshops, dialogues, and shared projects, changemakers can use the tools to support retail businesses in navigating their unique sustainability journeys.

Let's continue to work together to create thriving, sustainable businesses and communities.

Together, we can transform retail into a force for positive change.  
With gratitude,

The Green Retail Team  
De Republiek, Drivhuset, Spinderihallerne & DDC – Danish Design Center







**Interreg**  
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