

PLAYING FOR THE FUTURE

Reimagining sports retail through sustainable and accessible action

Environmental sustainability and consumer accessibility are increasingly important in the sports retail industry. Many sports items, made from plastic materials, fill our landfills and oceans with microplastics that harm marine life and the food chain. The manufacturing process for these products requires significant energy, contributing to carbon emissions and environmental damage. The common habit of discarding usable sports products and clothing, or leaving them to collect dust at home, also contributes to the lack of accessibility and affordability of youth sports for families across the country. These issues are at the forefront of DICK'S Sporting Goods' SidelineSwap equipment trade-in program that encourages a circular economy by preventing unused equipment from being disposed of in landfills.

Preserving Our Planet

Most sports manufacturers use common plastics for their low cost and durability. While they can effectively make products such as shoes, rackets, and balls, these materials do not naturally decompose and create long-lasting waste when discarded. Research from the 4Ocean environmental organization shows that humans frequently ingest microplastics through water, air and seafood, while animals experience blockages and death when they mistake plastics for food. Using materials such as bioplastics, hemp, and bamboo serves as an eco-friendly alternative to traditional manufacturing products. Promoting a circular economy model, in which products are refurbished, reused and recycled, lowers our carbon footprint and helps reduce landfill waste.

Removing Barriers to Participate

Youth sports, a \$40 billion industry, often price out low-income families due to high costs for equipment, club registration and travel. According to Jessica Grose from The New York Times, the pay-to-play model, or the shift from local, community-based sports to expensive club teams with

pressures to purchase new gear, has discouraged young people from healthy, outdoor activity and community interaction. Sports retailers that support platforms such as SidelineSwap, an online marketplace for buying and selling used sports equipment, help mitigate this disparity. The payout value for items in good condition is a convenient solution that offsets the cost of new gear while giving outgrown equipment a new purpose.

Final Thoughts

Implementing company-wide measures focused on environmental sustainability and best practices for accessible sports helps take care of the planet, our people and our animals. Finding new ways to reduce plastic waste and keep our oceans clean contributes to long-term environmental goals, such as combating climate change and lowering carbon emissions. The circular economy method reminds us that every person deserves to enjoy sports with access to clothing and gear that support and uplift them.

Strategy note

This thought-leadership piece, written from the perspective of DICK'S Sporting Goods' CEO, is meant to amplify the company's sustainability efforts. By using up-to-date research and clear argumentative points, the piece provides thoughtful insight into DICK'S trade-in strategy without bragging or being overly promotional. The title and accompanying subheads reflect DICK'S brand voice, which incorporates sports-inspired wording and the concise tone of their website's sustainability page. The two main points about reducing plastic waste and making youth sports accessible go hand-in-hand, because they are the benefits of the same initiative. The piece also aligns with DICK'S community-oriented approach by showing that giving back to others and protecting the planet can be practical and effective.