The Classic Messenger

A Cradle to Cradle Bag

Why Is This Bag Different from All Other Bags?

— Mark Dwight, Timbuk2

When I joined the Timbuk2 in 2002, I inherited a corporate ethos that included providing a living wage and an excellent working environment for our San Francisco factory employees, as well as supporting programs for at-risk youth in our local community. I've built upon these beliefs significantly and we consider ourselves good corporate citizens. But when I think about the environment, I am concerned that our efforts, frankly, are little more than conventional recycling of everyday waste materials.

In 2005, Timbuk2 was the official TED "bag sponsor," and I had the opportunity to attend my first TED conference. Among the many amazing presenters, I heard Bill McDonough present the principles from his book, *Cradle to Cradle*. Probably like many of you, I was totally inspired by his presentation. I quickly read the book, and began thinking about how I could incorporate these ideas at Timbuk2, as a way to take a more meaningful stance on environmental issues.

So, much to my team's chagrin, without thinking through how hard or easy it might be, last summer I committed to TED to design a Cradle-to-Cradle (C2C) version of our Classic Messenger Bag, and to debut that product at TED 2006. I was struck by the idea that the only way to know if this was more than just talk was to actually try it ourselves—and to do so without delay.

I purchased copies of the book for my colleagues, and we got to work: we discussed the C2C principles, the ways in which we could embrace them, and, in doing so, how we could transform our company. Immediately, the team was energized around this common—and exciting—mission.

Then the hard work began! Having stated our intent to transform the product, our designers began researching materials, calling our vendors, learning about where the materials were sourced, and what processes were used to dye and weave the components of our bags. Not surprisingly, these answers weren't always easy to get. We talked to Bill's team at McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry (Bill's product and process design firm with Michael Braungart), and with Bill himself about these obstacles. And we learned that what we were attempting to do was going to take more than six months. In fact, to get it totally right might take several years. It would require that we comprehend all of the upstream impacts of every component of our product—and there are more than a dozen different individual materials in our Classic Messenger Bag—each with its own production process that needed to be understood.

We learned that the journey would be both exciting and frustrating, and would affect just about every aspect of our business.

Fortunately, Bill knew this already. His organization had accounted for it and now designates four different stages of becoming a C2C product-from intent to Platinum-level certification. We have adopted this process, and are in the first of four steps to take our flagship product from "intent" to full compliance.

What you see here is Phase 1, a physical manifestation of our intent to move in the right direction. We've succeeded in a few areas: the external "ballistic" nylon material has been rewoven with a special grade of nylon fibers (Zeftron® Nylon Six) that can be recycled into carpet. The buckles and webbing are also made of Nylon 6, and can be ground-up and recycled into carpet. Additionally, we have replaced what was a PVC (vinyl) liner with a significantly more environmentally friendly material called TPU. Though four

times more expensive, TPU has superior performance characteristics to PVC: It wears much better and has a nicer feel.

But we still have work to do. Next year we will present version 2.0—the next iteration of our C2C bag—which will be one step closer to full C2C compliance.

We invite you to engage with us in a conversation about how companies big and small can get started-and how together we can rethink the way we manufacture our products, making the world a better, safer, and cleaner place for generations to come.

A Special Cradle-to-Cradle Icon from Timbuk2

It's in the bag. It is the bag. Bag, carpet, bag, carpet, bag, carpet, bag … the medium is the message ad infinitum.
— William McDonough, McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry

So. Icons are like great songs: They outlive the singers. But they also stand for something. Imagine my delight when, as a result of a talk about our Cradle-to-Cradle ideas at TED, the people who had made the cool green-and-blue take-away messenger bag decided to go for it and to try to execute on the promise of Cradle-to-Cradle within a year. Here we are now with what I hope will become an icon of ecological, social, and economic intelligence-high technology (technical nutrition), entertainment, and design.

Imagine a world full of safe, healthy materials and products that either return to soil or return to industry forever—what Michael Braungart and I call biological nutrients and technical nutrients, described in our book *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. Imagine, too, clean air, soil, water, and power, and delightfully diverse enjoyments of the natural world—all in the context of social fairness and open access to the human potential. Can this be realized?

Timbuk2's team speaks of the future in the present tense. We envision the absurdly perfect to break past the perfectly impossible: the task of high-speed new product delivery through myriad supply chains. All this takes are coherent transitions, and the new bag is our first push. Many of the materials in this bag are now made from easily recyclable Nylon 6. And the new TPU liner replaces PVC. The message here is that this product is truly a technical nutrient and can become a carpet fiber, a new bag, or whatever else society might want from the caprolactam resin to which it will return.

Timbuk2 is giving you a message in a bag and a messenger's bag that is a messenger. It is not perfect, yet; just a strong start in the race to the destination, which is a pure sustaining design.

As a song I suppose this bag is like a bicycle messenger's whistle: an alert—*I am here … I'm coming at you*—with an attitude. The sound can be urgent and sometimes shrill but sometimes it is simply a gentle reminder there is someone else here, too. Now. Right now.

Timbuk2 took their messenger bag, remade it, and filled it with hope for a better world.

The DuraBook™ Story

— Charles Melcher, Melcher Media

These pages in your hands hold a promise for the future.

A traditional book is made of wood pulp or cotton fiber. When its useful life is over, it can be recycled only a few times before the fibers break down and its remains become unusable waste.

This booklet is different—it's called a DuraBook.™ Made with synthetic paper constructed of plastic resins and inorganic fillers, DuraBooks™ are designed to be infinitely upcyclable—that is, made of basic materials intended to be disassembled and reutilized again and again, becoming a "technical nutrient" for ongoing industrial cycles. While we have not yet resolved all the issues to make DuraBooks™ worthy of the Cradle-to-Cradle Platinum standard, we're committed to working through the obstacles and to participate in what Bill McDonough has termed the "Next Industrial Revolution."

The Cradle-to-Cradle model is a whole new way to think about designing products for a sustainable world. For us, it began as a creative challenge. As a book publisher dedicated to innovative concepts and formats, we were looking to produce a book that could withstand real-life elements like water, dirt, grease, ultra-violet light, and extremes in temperature. By experimenting with synthetic papers, water resistant inks, glues, and threads, the DuraBook™ was born. Today, there are over 500,000 DuraBooks™ in print, enjoyed everywhere from the great outdoors to the privacy of a relaxing bath.

I have to confess that creating a whole new model for industrial production wasn't part of our original agenda. It was only when, through a chance meeting, we were introduced to Bill McDonough and Michael Braungart—

who then selected the DuraBook™ format for their book, *Cradle to Cradle*—that we came to fully appreciate the possibilities of this project. Now we are striving to improve on the DuraBook™ format, so that someday it will be possible for all printed material to be upcyclable.

I have been attending TED for many years, and each time I return home inspired to incorporate what I have learned into my company—and into my life. So it's especially gratifying for me to be able to contribute something back to the TED community. Last year, we included *The Beach Book*, our waterproof anthology of short stories, into the TED gift bag. This year, we have included our most recent DuraBook™, *Green Clean*, a guide to environmentally conscious cleaning.

I hope you enjoy these books and become inspired to join us on the path to a more sustainable future.

What Is Cradle-to-Cradle?

Cradle-to-Cradle Design is a new strategy for business growth and prosperity that generates ecological, social, and economic value. It represents a fundamental conceptual shift away from the flawed system design of the Industrial Revolution, not just a damage management strategy.

BACKGROUND

In response to widespread environmental degradation, many industries have adopted a strategy known as "eco-efficiency"—minimizing waste, pollution, and natural resource depletion. But eco-efficiency is not a strategy for long-term success. It seeks to make the current, destructive system sustainable.

WASTE EQUALS FOOD

Minimizing toxic pollution and the waste of natural resources are not strategies for real change. Designing industrial processes so they do not generate toxic pollution and "waste" in the first place is true change. Long-term prosperity depends not on the efficiency of a fundamentally destructive system, but on the effectiveness of processes designed to be healthy and renewable in the first place.

Cradle-to-Cradle Design's strategy of eco-effectiveness is rooted in the systems of the natural world, which are not efficient at all, but effective. Consider the cherry tree. Each spring it makes thousands of blossoms, which then fall in piles to the ground-not very efficient. But the fallen blossoms become food for other living things. The tree's abundance of blossoms is

both safe and useful, contributing to the health of a thriving, interdependent system. And the tree spreads multiple positive effects—making oxygen, transpiring water, creating habitat, and more. And it is beautiful!

Eco-effectiveness seeks to design industrial systems that emulate the healthy abundance of nature. The central design principle of eco-effectiveness is waste equals food.

When waste equals food, the "be less bad" imperatives of efficiency fade. When a product returns to industry at the end of its useful life and its materials are used to make equally valuable new products, the minerals or plastics of which it is made do not need to be minimized-because they will not become waste in a landfill. Industry saves billions of dollars annually by recovering valuable materials from used products. Similarly, products designed to be made of natural, safely biodegradable materials can be returned to the soil to feed ecosystems instead of depleting them.

TRANSFORMING THE MAKING OF THINGS

This fundamental conceptual shift leads to design strategies that some might find surprising. For example, instead of minimizing the consumption of energy generated from coal, oil, and nuclear plants, why not maximize energy availability using solar and wind sources? Instead of using only natural, biodegradable fibers like cotton for textile production (a pesticide-intensive agricultural process), why not use non-toxic synthetic fibers designed for perpetual recycling into new textile products? Instead of directing intelligence toward regulation compliance and liability reduction, why not design industrial processes and products so safe they do not need regulation, and direct creativity toward maximizing economic, social, and ecological benefits?

Eco-effectiveness has profound implications for industries everywhere. Rather than lamenting a world of hazardous waste, scarce resources, and limited opportunities, it celebrates an abundance of continuously valuable industrial and natural materials, of rich and diverse living systems, of economic and environmental wealth.

The eco-effective future of industry is a "world of abundance" that celebrates the use and "consumption" (by people, nature, and intelligent industrial systems) of products and materials that are, in effect, nutritious—as safe, effective, and delightful as a cherry tree.

MAKING YOUR PRODUCT CRADLE-TO-CRADLE

Cradle-to-Cradle Certification provides a company with a means to differentiate its product within the marketplace, defining tangible achievement and providing credibility.

Within the certification process, McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry (MBDC) evaluates a material or a product's ingredients and the complete formulation for human and environmental health impacts throughout its life-cycle and its potential for being truly recycled or safely composted. Certification of a finished product also requires the evaluation of energy-use quantity and quality (i.e., relative proportion of renewable energy), water-use quantity, water-effluent quality, and workplace ethics associated with manufacturing. Criteria fall into the following five categories:

Materials
Material Reutilization/Design for Environment
Energy
Water
Social Responsibility

If a candidate material or product is found to achieve the necessary criteria, it is certified as a Silver, Gold, or Platinum product or as a Technical/Biological Nutrient (a classification available for homogeneous materials or less complex products). MBDC is developing a system and guidelines by which companies have been certified.

About Timbuk2

CITY-BORN AND STREET-TOUGH

San Francisco, California, 1989. One smart bicycle messenger got together with one tough sewing machine and created the first Timbuk2 bag. Tested on the backs of the city's hard-working messengers, Timbuk2 bags quickly acquired their reputation for indestructibility.

Timbuk2 is more than a bag. It's more than a brand. Timbuk2 is a bond. To its owner, a Timbuk2 bag is a dependable, everyday companion. We see fierce, emotional attachments form between Timbuk2 customers and their bags all the time. A well-worn Timbuk2 bag has a certain patina—the stains and scars of everyday urban adventures. Many Timbuk2 bags are worn daily for a decade or more, accompanying the owner through all sorts of defining life events. True to our legend of "indestructibility," it's not uncommon for a Timbuk2 bag to outlive jobs, personal relationships, even pets.

Today, our Classic Messenger Bag has been adopted in cities around the world as the everyday, all-purpose carry-all. Featuring our three-panel, multi-color design, and distinctive swirl logo, the Classic Messenger Bag is as iconic in San Francisco as Levi's blue jeans and Haight-Ashbury tie-dyes.

As we move forward, we remain faithful to our working-class roots, while expanding our city-bred sensibilities to a broader range of products. All of our new products share the same sense of style, toughness, attention to detail, and dedication to quality that have made our Classic Messenger Bag a true classic.

We still make our Custom Messenger Bags right here in San Francisco, with a team of more than 25 hardworking sewers.

About MBDC and William McDonough

McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry (MBDC) is a product and process design firm dedicated to revolutionizing the design of products and services worldwide. William McDonough and Dr. Michael Braungart founded MBDC in 1995 to promote and to shape what they call the "Next Industrial Revolution" through the introduction of a new design paradigm called Cradle-to-Cradle Design, and the implementation of eco-effective design principles.

William McDonough is a world-renowned architect and designer and winner of three U.S. presidential awards: the Presidential Award for Sustainable Development (1996), the National Design Award (2004), and the Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Award (2003). *Time* magazine recognized him as a "Hero for the Planet" in 1999, stating that "his utopianism is grounded in a unified philosophy that—in demonstrable and practical ways—is changing the design of the world."

Mr. McDonough has been a leader in the sustainable development movement since its inception. He designed and built the first solar-heated house in Ireland in 1977 while still a student at Yale University and designed the first "green office" in the United States for the Environmental Defense Fund in 1985. Mr. McDonough was commissioned in 1991 by the City of Hannover (Germany) to write *The Hannover Principles: Design for Sustainability*, the official design guidelines for the 2000 World's Fair, which the City presented to the 1992 U.N. Earth Summit in Brazil. He and German chemist Dr. Michael Braungart co-authored *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things* (North Point Press, 2002), which has now been published in German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean translations. The two were also the subject of a 2001 documentary video, *The Next Industrial Revolution*, from Earthome Productions.

About Melcher Media

Founded in 1994 by Charles Melcher and based in New York, Melcher Media is a content producer, packager, and publisher with more than 60 titles and six million books in print. With a reputation for extending the craft of book-making and pushing the genres of traditional publishing, Melcher Media combines innovative ideas with exceptional design. *Publishers Weekly* recently recognized Melcher Media as producing titles that are "always visually and physically distinctive."

Melcher Media amplifies and extends brands beyond their core consumers, doing branding work and corporate publishing for such diverse companies and institutions as Lexus, Time Warner, Target, Harley-Davidson, Nike, and the Smithsonian. Melcher Media also translates TV, magazines, theater, and film to the page, collaborating on media tie-ins with partners such as HBO, Miramax, *Lucky*, *In Style*, *National Geographic*, Comedy Central, *Wicked*, and *Rent*. Finally, Melcher Media specializes in unique formats and original content, with books such as *Pop Up Book of Phobias*, *The Geneology of Greek Mythology*, and the patented waterproof DuraBooks™ line.

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