Closing the Waste Loop with Eric Rosen (TerraCycle)

**Eric Rosen:** [00:00:00] We're in a waste crisis and the more solutions the better. And it's great to be a part of something that is developing solutions.

**Lena Samford:** Welcome neighbors to Hometown: Earth, the podcast that brings a down to earth approach to all of your sustainability questions. I'm your host, Lena Sanford here on the BLEAV podcast network.

The number one podcast network for professionals here. We believe that everyone can change the world. Do you believe I'm a Midwest gal with big dreams to discover what it takes to reduce my impact on this beautiful place we call hometown or join me every Tuesday as we navigate what actions we can take big or small to make a positive impact in your life and the lives of your neighbors on hometown earth and low names.

I am so excited to have you on the show for today's guests. If you're new to hometown earth, I've mentioned the innovative waste management [00:01:00] company, TerraCycle from the very beginning TerraCycle partners with companies across the globe to recycle products and packages that would otherwise be landfilled or incinerated, everything from cigarette butts to dirty diapers.

This has really helped to keep waste from our environment in a new and innovative way, but there's still the problem of getting these items to TerraCycle for them to remanufacture into something new and honestly, the creation of these single use items in the. They knew that recycling alone is not the answer to the world's waste problem, in comes, the brain child of TerraCycle Loop -Loop.

Re-imagined the way we shop reducing waste at the source through design and innovation of the products themselves with [00:02:00] their company partners. It's as simple as behind the products you love and completing a simple and sustainable return when you're finished, it's a solution to the root cause of waste, not just dealing with the symptoms.

In this episode, we get to hear from PR expert Eric Rosen about the Loop process and their mission to eliminate the idea of waste world wide. Get ready to be blown away. As you hear more about the sustainable future of consumption through. Are you ready when inspiration strikes? Now you can take notes while listening to hometown earth write quotes, facts, or even journal with our limited collection of pocket notebooks, designed by a local artist and produced on 100% recycled paper.

These will be your new favorite on the [00:03:00] go notepads. Get yours today @lenasanford.com forward slash shop. Eric. Thank you so much for joining us on hometown earth. We would love to kinda hear a quick rundown of your role with the company and how you describe Loop.

**Eric Rosen:** Well, thanks for having me and I really appreciate it.

 I've been with Loops actually since before its inception Loop kicked off in July of 2019. I was with the company even before that I handled media and public relations for Loop in north America, little background on Loop. For those that don't know, it is a global reuse platform that is enabled by a multi-stakeholder coalition of manufacturers, retailers and consumers that aims to eliminate the idea of waste and what Loop does is it partners with brands and retailers to shift from a disposable to a durable supply [00:04:00] chain, which ultimately enables consumers to responsibly shop for a wide variety of commonly used products from shampoo to Clorox, to Haagen-Dazs ice cream to Coca-Cola. So that kind of is a pretty good summation of Loop.

 And the platform as I mentioned, it launched in 2019 in, in Paris and in the United States and is now available in the UK, in France and in the U S and Canada and Japan. So a very rapid expansion.

**LENA:** I remember my sister saying recently, like I wish there was some way I could get these brand name products that I love and know, and then eco-friendly refillable way.

And it's like, Lupe delivers exactly that. So I really appreciate that rundown, but one of the things that we have been talking about is, you know, like major. [00:05:00] To practicing better waste management is to reframe waste as a resource. So how does Loop kind of view waste and the future of the

**Eric Rosen:** that's a great question.

Loop's parent company is a company called TerraCycle and TerraCycle. It's been around for about 20 years. And is the global leader in in recycling partner, recycled waste, cigarette butts, bubblegum things that are typically not recycled. And TerraCycle and Loop share a mission. And that is to really eliminate the idea of waste.

So what we hope is that we see moving forward a world of products that do come in durable and reusable packaging. And that, you know, we, we don't feel, even though TerraCycle is a recycling company, we don't believe that we can recycle our way out of the waste crisis that we have to attack waste at the root cause, which is to not create it in [00:06:00] the first place..

And that's what Loop really drives that, which is, you know, it's the idea of developing and creating a circular economy. So that's kind of the hope as a little background with Loop and its synergy with its parent company, TerraCycle, all of Loop products are durable and reusable. However, they will get banged up and the brand.

And I'll explain this at some point as we're talking, but the brands own the package in, in Loop. And at some point when a pack those around and around and around 50 times, it will get banged up scratched and the brand will want to pull that pack out of. At that point, it can go back to TerraCycle and probably will go back to TerraCycle to be recycled.

 So again, w we're dealing with the idea of really having no, no waste whatsoever.

**LENA:** [00:07:00] Yeah, I love that. I, I think that it's almost hard for people to imagine a world where there is no waste, but y'all are bringing it to to people's doorstep and to the stores that they are frequenting. So can you tell us a little bit more about how, you know, people can access the Loop system and you know, how y'all make it approachable for

**Lena Samford:** people?

**Eric Rosen:** In the United States loop is available in store in 25. Fred Meyers. Which is a Kroger brand in the Portland, Oregon Metro area. It's our goal to scale as rapidly as, as we can. And what we've seen around the world is that, you know, in, in Tesco, in the UK, we launched and expanded very quickly. We launched in Japan and expanded from 10 to 30 stores very quickly.

So it is our hope to sort of spread through across the country. We're just launching in Portland. Actually today, [00:08:00] consumers, there will be able to go to their store shop for Loop packaging. And, and that just as I'm talking to you, it's just kicking off. So,

**LENA:** oh, that's exciting. Congratulations.

**Eric Rosen:** It's really very cool stuff.

We're also available in burger king in New Jersey. McDonald's in the UK, Tim Horton's and Canada. So slowly but surely. Kind of spanning the globe in a variety of ways in places.

**LENA:** I think it is like a global revolution. And you kind of talked about, you know, it's in, it's in stores, so, you know, say Loop is kind of everywhere for everyone.

Can you walk us through an ideal scenario or a day in the life, if you will, of you going to the store and using Loop?

**Eric Rosen:** You know, one of the things that. That Loop wants to do is make the process and the shopping and the returning [00:09:00] as convenient as possible for the consumer. The ultimate goal of Loop is actually to have a consumer be able to shop anywhere and return anywhere.

So ultimately a consumer could shop at a Fred Meyer in Portland and return at a Tesco in the UK. So that's the ultimate goal is to truly, to be able to buy anywhere and return anywhere and to be at just ubiquitous. So that really, you could take your shampoo on an airplane, finish it in the UK and return it there.

The process works and the way this works and you ask to take, you know, a day in the life. So I would walk into a Fred Meyer. There will be a Loop aisle in that Loop aisle. All the products that are packed in, in durable reusable packaging I'd shop no differently than I would. if I were in the rest of the store purchasing other products. [00:10:00] In the Loop model, the brand owns the package and the consumer only purchases the product now in a typical packaging and what we're used to the consumer.

When you walk into the store and you buy Pantene, you want the Pantene, you don't want the package. You use the shampoo, you throw the package. Loop sort of like the milkman of old. So the brand owns the package. So now let's go back to a day in the life. I walk in, I buy Pantene I buy Haagen-Dazs. I buy all the goods that I want.

I bring them home. I use them when they're empty. I simply bring them back to the store, drop them off at the store and go shopping for my next purchase.

**LENA:** Sounds pretty simple,

**Eric Rosen:** But that's exactly it -is to make it as simple, as convenient as possible. And people are going to go back to the store because you've got to go shopping.

So it doesn't require you to go out of your way. It doesn't require you to do anything differently than you [00:11:00] would do anyway.

**LENA:** Well, so can people also buy, you know, online? I know that was a pilot program that y'all were running, is that in the plans for future, so people could do either?

**Eric Rosen:** We are no longer online. The feeling and what we believe is that we can be a lot more impactful if we are truly everywhere. And so the idea is we're no longer online. We will be expanding around the country in store, and we're coming to Walgreens pretty soon, I believe in the spring or summer. So you'll start seeing more and more Loops, worse, popping up all over the country.

**LENA:** Yeah, I think there's a good opportunity to talk about kind of responsibility really quick, because they're used to just, you know, putting it out in the regular bin, out to the curb and not dealing with it anymore because it was theirs and they were responsible for it. So they're trying to do something with it.

 But TerraCycle, you know, you [00:12:00] kinda gotta make the effort to send it in or get it to. That drop off, but I really do like how Loop kinda gives that responsibility back to the companies who is creating the product to start off with. Yeah. So I think that, you know, another thing that we've talked about is the fact that the consumer has to have another responsibility of cleaning their recyclables. But with Loop, they don't have to do that. Can you talk a little bit about that as well? How Loop can solve kind of that responsibility problem and upholding that with people's busy lives and kind of instill confidence in them to participate in Loop.

**Eric Rosen:** You touched on a couple of things. One is, is corporate responsibility. And, you know, while, while it would be wonderful, if corporations were, you know, truly being good corporate citizens. What really moves the needle for corporations is consumer demand. [00:13:00] And what you're seeing now more and more is our consumers who are really voting with their, with their wallet and pocketbooks and it's driving more and more brands to become more and more sustainable.

Yeah, that's sort of their responsibility. It's also, they're just pretty simply making a smart business decision. From the consumer's perspective ,and we go back to being as convenient as possible, when you were talking about cleaning, you're absolutely absolutely right. To drop it into your blue bin for recycling that you need it rinsed.

It can't be contaminated withLoop. I'll keep reiterating the ideas to be as convenient as possible and as simple as possible so that a consumer doesn't have to change. It's their behavior. It's what's going to make the platform effective. So no, you don't. The consumer has to do absolutely nothing except return the pack and the pack can be dirty dented.

 It doesn't matter. It goes back to the. The store [00:14:00] gives it to Loop. We have our proprietary cleaning process, which cleans and sanitizes. Every pack that pack gets sent back to the brand to be refilled it's refilled sent back to Loop and put on the. People are very, very confident in our sanitization processes.

And they're incredibly stringent. The brands have had to approve all of them as well. So it is it's it's, as you said, it's very, very convenient. And the consumer, the responsibility of the consumer is merely to bring the pack back.

**LENA:** That's pretty simple for most people to do. Yeah. And I think you kinda touched on a good thing there as far as you know, obviously we're keep saying how convenient it is, but also just the fact that a lot of these consumers.

They don't have sustainability top of mind. Who do you want to use your products and why is it important for [00:15:00] Loop to bring in? Not just the sustainably minded groups of people, but also their families and their friends who might not be, and just be looking for, you know, a good product to essentially the products that they know and love.

**Eric Rosen:** Every consumer to use Loop products, not because it's a Loop product, but because it's better for the environment, better for the planet again, and I'm pounding away at this, but the idea to make it as simple, as convenient as possible. So yes, not for just the sustainable minded person, but for everybody.

And the products are identical. If you're shopping for Pantene, why not shop for Pantene and a reusable pack? You're using the Pantene anyway.

**LENA:** Right. That's the thing is you mentioned you know, people not having to change their routine. So it's almost just changing it at the, at the point where they buy it, so that it's easier.

 And then we don't have to worry about [00:16:00] people mismanaging the products that, that they buy.

**Eric Rosen:** Absolutely true. And one of the things you'll, you'll find when you walk into a store that has a Loop aisle or Loop Isles, you can't miss it. It's. The packaging is beautiful. The aisles are, are very, they're very pretty to look at.

So a consumer can't miss a Loop aisle a lot of the packs are really beautiful packages. I mentioned Haagen-Dazs, Haagen-Dazs created a stainless steel double wall pack. That is absolutely gorgeous to look at. And, you know, we're used to the waxy throw away ice cream, container. What they developed was something really, really nice.

And some of these also have features that you don't see with single use packaging that Haagen-Dazs container if left out on the counter, we'll keep your ice cream frozen for hours. So [00:17:00] all kinds of cool stuff.

**LENA:** It's not just the product packaging. It's almost like elevating the function of it as well.

**Eric Rosen:** Absolutely true.

**Lena Samford:** Yeah. I love that. Well, so say somebody is walking down an aisle and they see these Loop aisles - why would consumers choose these products? Like is what is the price comparison and kind of the life cycle of, of this product? What would be the draw there besides saving the planet?

**Eric Rosen:** I was going to say, I mean, the draw is saving the planet, but if the cost is no greater than purchasing the exact same product in single use.

So that's it. That's exactly the draw. There is. There is absolutely no reason that a consumer would want to purchase a single use product that the cost is, is comparable and the package is reusable. So no reason for them not to want to there is a [00:18:00] small deposit on every package. That is a hundred percent refunded when the pack is returned.

The reason for that deposit is again, in this particular model, the brand owns the package. So the package is an asset to the brand. So as soon as the brand gets the pack back, the deposit is refunded. It doesn't matter if the package is dented, ding dirty, filthy, smashed doesn't matter, but the, the asset is the brands as opposed to the consumer.

**LENA:** And that's just yeah. To help things stay away from that waste stream. We, we want to keep it in in the recycle recovery area, if possible. So. I really like that. So it's kind of worth noting too then that, you know, more normal, like plastic recyclables that people would find in their households, you know, are only used once and kind of can be recycled a couple of [00:19:00] times, depending on if they did it correctly, but Loop's products can be reused up to what is it a hundred times? And that they're fully recyclable. So what, what happens when a customer brings back a product that is banged up and busted and, or maybe not recoverable to be reused again, what are they recycled or reused into at that point?

**Eric Rosen:** Most of the things that TerraCycle will recycle will be turned into, will be pelletized.

And those, those pellets can be turned into virtually anything we've turned pellets into shipping pallets we've turned pellets into picnic benches, playgrounds. Once, once something is pelletized, you can print it into just about anything, not about Loop, but about TerraCycle. I mentioned that TerraCycle recycles cigarette butts.

And, you know, if you take a cigarette butt the filter is mostly plastic and the rest of the cigarette, [00:20:00] the tobacco and the paper is compostable TerraCycle separates. The two things takes the plastic, pelletizes it. And turns it into shipping pallets. In an ideal world, you might take the container and turn it back into itself, but that's not guaranteed that.

**LENA:** Right. Yeah. Yeah. It seems like y'all had some innovative stuff. I think I saw something that was like you know, stuff made out of bubblegum and the cigarette butts. Obviously you've got some really creative folks on the team. So, if you don't mind, just telling us a little bit about like the sustainability of these products versus these plastic products that people are normally,

**Eric Rosen:** I will start with that, that plastic is not necessarily the demon Loop itself Loop itself as is material agnostic.

The material is. [00:21:00] Necessarily matter to us, there are very durable, reusable plastics, and that's okay. Where we get into problems is with anything that's single use. And then we have use it once, throw it away and we create all this trash, the life cycle. It's a really simple question because as I mentioned, the brands own the packs.

We can get something go around 10 times. We could get something go around a hundred times before the brand decides to take it out of circulation. So it truly is dependent on the brand and dependent on how badly the package gets banged up or broken.

**LENA:** So it's more of a collaboration almost. It seems like with these companies, is that fair to

**Eric Rosen:** say?

Totally fair. The language we often use is that the brands that are participating in Loop are they're partnering with us. So it is absolutely a collaboration.

**LENA:** I love that. [00:22:00] So you kind of mentioned some of those names, people, you know, don't want to change their routine, say they know and love, you know, Tide and Pantene and those big companies. And maybe don't want to switch it up. So who, who are those companies there? And you know, how do y'all decide which companies you want to work with and which ones you don't?

**Eric Rosen:** Ultimately we want to work with all companies because we don't want any waste. So we, you know, we love to work with all companies. But you know, how we pick and choose is kind of company develop and change their supply chain to accommodate reusable, durable packaging, Unilever, or Procter and gamble are the big, the biggest of the big multinational corporations are partnered with us.

 Pantene, Clorox Coca-Cola nature's path. McCormick spices. Those are some of the big ones. Then we've got smaller mom and pop businesses. We there's a, there's a company. I just drew a blank on their name, [00:23:00] but they make, they make nut butter. They're a very small company. They're very sustainable. So companies large and small multinational, not multinational.

 Just companies that really are willing to, to either change or develop sustainable reusable packaging.

**LENA:** Yeah, I think I even saw Meow Meow Tweet tweet, which is a brand that I use and loves, and they were on one of your lists. And I was like, wow, that's really convenient for me. And I really love that.

**Eric Rosen:** And you can go, and your listeners can go, to explore Loop.com.

You'll be able to see all the, all the brands that are participating. And, and you'll see exactly what I said large brands, small brands, medium-sized brands. We want them all.

**LENA:** Yeah. Well, so what I'll throw you a question for a Loop. What's been your favorite part about seeing Loop grow kind of as a company [00:24:00] and develop this since you've been on the train for quite some time.

**Eric Rosen:** That's a great question. And not often do you participate in something that you truly. Could change the world.

My feeling going to work every day is that I'm I am doing something that is truly making a difference and changing the world. And so that, that, it's, it's one of my favorite things watching, watching this grow from just the concept. In 2018 to being on four continents in 2022 is incredibly exciting.

It's, it's incredibly exciting to me. It makes the day fun. We're in a waste crisis and the more solutions the better, and it's great to be a part of something that is developing solutions.

**LENA:** Yeah, absolutely. And I think, you know, like I said, we've been talking about practicing better waste [00:25:00] management and really that could look as simple as you know, eliminating the idea of waste altogether and just keeping up with Loop and TerraCycle and kind of following the lead of y'all's innovation. So I really appreciate you coming on and kind of giving us an insider view of everything. Is there anything before we go that you want to tell us about Loop that we haven't touched on already?

**Eric Rosen:** I think just for everybody listening, check us out at ExploreLoop.com. Keep an eye out- we'll be coming to wherever you are soon, hopefully, and continue to recycle and stay sustainable.

**LENA:** Well, I really do appreciate it and I know I'll be using Loop as soon as it rolls out in Missouri. So I'm really excited for that. And heck maybe I'll drive across the country and end up being able to drop it wherever I live in. So. Well, thank you so much, Eric. I really appreciate [00:26:00] you joining us today on Hometown: Earth and hope you have a good rest of your day.

**Eric Rosen:** Thank you Lena I appreciate you having me.

**Lena Samford:** I hope you enjoyed this episode of hometown earth as much as I did let us know by rating and subscribing. So you never miss an episode. New episodes drop every week on Tuesday, head to the show notes, LinkedIn, the episode description for more details and let us know in the comments, what you want to hear.

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