

Transforming the plastics industry and leading the charge to sToPollution®

British inventor, Willy Johnson, tells Corporate LiveWire how he developed ToPo – an innovative multi-purpose bottle top that doubles up as a collectable toy.

Single use plastics are one of the biggest environmental challenges facing the world today. Not only do they release harmful toxins in their production, they also harm wildlife, poison the food chain and kill more than 100 million marine mammals each year. Startlingly, the World Economic Forum predicts there will be more plastic than fish in the world's oceans by 2050.

One of the biggest contributors to this widescale water pollution is plastic bottle caps. In the summer of 2016, the North Sea Foundation reported bottle caps are among the top five items found during beach cleaning and beach litter monitoring and that over the last 30 years, more than 20 million bottle caps and lids were found during beach cleaning activities around the world.

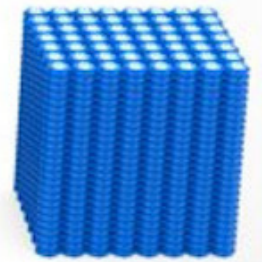
Recognising the need to address this global problem, British inventor Willy Johnson found an ingenious solution for avoiding plastic waste by giving bottle caps an additional purpose. The award winning inventor recently spoke with Corporate LiveWire to explain how he came up with the concept and outline its potential impact in the global efforts to sToPollution®.



Willy Johnson
Inventor of ToPo®

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Willy Johnson is a British inventor with more than 55 years of experience. He has more than 150 design patents to his name and is the winner of the Oscar de l'Invention and the Prix de Presse, two Gold Medals in addition to five other medals. Willy has also won numerous industry accolades such as Plastic Industry Award for Consumer Product of the Year 2019 for ToPo® and a further seven international awards for sToPollution®. A Doctor of Design, honoris causa was conferred in 1997 from Southampton University.



Winner of Innovation in Sustainable Waste Solutions



How are single-use plastics impacting the environment?

Single-use plastic is the achilles heel of the plastics industry today. They are thrown away without thought and are finding their way onto the ground, and worse, into the sea. Over time, these items are breaking down and becoming "micro particles" which enter into the food chain with possible and potential dire consequences to health.

How can ToPo help combat the impact of single-use plastics?

Since any plastic closure used on liquid containers is unfortunately a utility necessity, it becomes a "single-use item" wantonly discarded. Converting the plastic screw closure into a reusable educational toy stops it from being needlessly thrown away and it thus becomes a much sought after and collectable item with an enormous play value and domestic use.

Where did the concept come from and how does it work?

Quite by accident! I dropped a plastic screw top on the floor and on picking it up it attached to another couple of caps. At this point came the "light bulb moment" of being able to connect them together to make a Lego type toy using a linking system and ToPo® was born.

How does its unique design enable it to be utilised for a second-purpose?

The linking system – which connects both vertically and horizontally – provides many different opportunities, from constructing (Lego-like) models to word and numerical games, mosaic pictures, messages, and even wall hanging pictures. Only the imagination itself is the gate keeper to what can be achieved.

Bottle lids are often discarded rather than recycled. How important was it to establish an effective recycling solution and initiative for ToPo?

As in all things, there is a limit to its life. In addition to being collected in their billions, ToPo® can be recycled en mass. Because of its intrinsic value, it can also be converted into cash to help in children's charitable causes.

Where can we currently find ToPo being used or sold?

ToPo® is now in its first stage of promotion, seeking licensors both in the plastic industry and the beverage industry to take advantage of its IP. With patents now granted in both the EU and the United States, ToPo® is in a prime position to stop the plastic closure from being a single-use plastic discardable item and "sToPollution®".

Are there any other exciting developments on the horizon?

It is rare that a single invention can offer so many different advantages other than for its original "necessity" but ToPo® does just that. Besides its most pressing and important reason of help in the war against environmental pollution, it is also of great commercial and monetary value. It helps the beverage product "stand out" visibly on the store or supermarket shelf because it is wearing its singularly noticeable and unmissable "crown". It also makes families happy by providing a free toy. Both of these factors help products increase sales, which in turn increases profits – which every shareholder is hoping to achieve.

