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“Sustainability is about nourishing the planet”

Quadpack Sustainability Director Marleen Swart shares her vision for the company’s and the industry’s journey towards a positive impact.

Quadpack’s Sustainability Director brings high-level expertise and her own unique vision to the company. Marleen Swart's background lies in sustainable growth strategies, having worked at a number of leading consultancies. A graduate in economics, with Master’s degrees in behavioural economics and sustainable business & innovation, her experience is paired with significant qualifications. Here, she outlines her plans and shares her views on the industry.

What does your role as Sustainability Director entail?

It is my responsibility to develop and implement our sustainability strategy, mission and vision. A big part of the job is staying on top of current and future challenges and regulations, and overseeing our reporting commitments. At Quadpack, sustainability is integrated into all departments, from people and operations, to sales and product development. I work closely with Sustainability Champions Lyne H  ne Bouchard and Hulya Gray and, together with the team, we ensure that this integration is aligned with the strategy. We seek to reduce the impact of our processes, so we set targets for carbon emissions, water usage, (hazardous) waste and energy, and monitor progress. Last, but not least, I interact with external stakeholders like clients, suppliers and partners, to create collective movement in the industry.

How did you come to join Quadpack?

I got to know Quadpack when I did my Master’s degree at the EADA Business School in Barcelona, Spain. Quadpack has close ties with the school, sponsoring degree projects and nurturing young talent through internships and knowledge sharing. I was impressed with how sustainability was ingrained in the company. I learned that it is a certified B Corp, a front runner in life-cycle assessments, with a young and dynamic culture and a female CEO and I knew that

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this company was the perfect fit for me!

There are many definitions of sustainability. What does it mean for you?

For me, sustainability is about nourishing people and the planet. It's about giving back more than you take, leaving behind a better world for future generations. It's a positive loop: if the planet flourishes, people can flourish. And when people flourish, companies can do, too.

Packaging produces much of the plastic waste on the planet. Is the beauty industry doing enough to deal with the problem?

The short answer is no. The industry's reliance on plastic packaging contributes significantly to environmental pollution, particularly ocean waste. Beauty (packaging) is a non-essential industry. As such, we need to question our right to exist. Production and consumption of cosmetics continue to grow, raising ethical questions about their sustainability and necessity. If we want meaningful change, we have to go further than mitigating our impact – not “do less harm”, but actively “do more good”.

So how do we “do good”?

Of course, we need to reduce our environmental footprint, but we also need to innovate and adopt practices that contribute positively to environmental and social sustainability. To achieve systemic change, we need to recognise the interdependence between businesses, supply chains, local communities and the wider eco-system. Beside sustainable production, we also have a role to play in ensuring responsible sourcing and promoting conscious consumption – and this requires an unprecedented level of collaboration.

How is Quadpack addressing the issue?

When it comes to sustainability, it's a question of progress, not perfection. To change, you first need to measure. Until recently, the tools we needed didn't exist. We have moved from human consulting to a tech-led approach, using in-house tools to control our own data. We measure the impact of our product solutions using our LCA tool, setting a baseline that we – and our clients – can use for improvement. We have specific targets for our products to be made of recyclable, recycled or biodegradable materials by 2030. In terms of operations, for Scope 3 emissions, we

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have abandoned spend-based measurement to adopt the more accurate, weight-based approach, using a bespoke ESG platform. We're in a transition year, recognising and neutralising negative impact, so we can move towards creating positive impact.

What's next in sustainability, at Quadpack'

The scope of our sustainability strategy is internal, as well as external, involving the whole value chain. We are cultivating a transparent and accountable supply chain, with partners committed to ethical practices. Our own factories are working towards net zero operations and, in the case of Quadpack Wood, we are close. We aim to empower our people within our 'diversity, equity, inclusivity & belonging' framework, with personal development plans and opportunities for growth. We aim to encourage responsible consumption and environmental stewardship among our clients and, by extension, consumers. Providing visibility into product end-of-life strategies is just a first step.

Our ambition is to be a catalyst for positive change. We want to cause a ripple effect throughout the industry. Our purpose is to take care and give back, for future generations, which requires a holistic approach to sustainability. Ultimately, we want our solutions 'and our industry ' to nourish people and the planet.

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About Quadpack Industries SA

Quadpack Industries is an international manufacturer and a provider of enhanced packaging solutions for beauty brand owners and contract fillers. With offices and production facilities in Europe, North America, and the Asia Pacific region and a strategic network of manufacturing partners, Quadpack develops bespoke and customised packs for prestige, masstige and mass market customers. For more information, please visit www.quadpack.com.

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