

**Unbiased global packaging intelligence and analysis**



On-site Conference Coverage

**PACKAGING INDUSTRY HITS ITS SWEET SPOT  
BY BALANCING ECONOMICS WITH ENVIRONMENT**

The stakes have been raised, and so has the response: sustainability and sustainable packaging now show clear evidence of moving from a formerly difficult-to-grasp, niche concept to one irrevocably embedded in the core DNA of packaging industry converters and brand owners.

The **Sustainable Packaging Forum** found the pulse of an industry beating stronger and more consistently than ever before. The Forum, held Sept. 25 to 27 in Pittsburgh, was remarkable in the number of companies that not only vowed their allegiance to sustainability goals but had already put in place policies, strategies, and achievable targets to achieve those ends within a shortened time window. Many of them have even achieved what some had once considered impossible: deliver returns to shareholders by embracing sustainability as a core strategy.

The change, which still has some off-guard, has seemingly been made overnight. At the inaugural forum in 2005, about 175 attendees wondered aloud how to define sustainability and were uncertain of the effect on their organizations.

This year, more than 500 attendees -- representing nearly every major brand owner, converter, and packaging supplier in North America (and many from Europe and even Australia, Mexico, and Japan) -- not only thoroughly understood the idea behind it, but many have made sustainable packaging the linchpin of their package sourcing, design, product

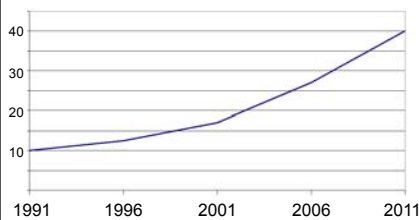


*"Companies are responsible for an enormous range of issues," explained keynoter Andy Savitz, to the packed room of notable packaging executives. "Every individual company is facing social or environmental imperatives that it must respond to."*

**Bottle Rocket**

Bottled water growth, largely in PET, has skyrocketed in usage in the United States.

(Average gallons consumed per person)



Source: Beverage Marketing Corp.

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*The Coca-Cola Company*

A Conversation with  
Coca-Cola's Scott Vitters

## On-site Conference Coverage

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development, and processing efforts.

The power of the proof in the business case for sustainability and sustainable packaging was evident in sheer numbers, with a full house overflowing a massive conference room.

The reason the event has grown in size and stature corresponds with the critical nature of sustainability itself. Keynote speaker Andy Savitz, author of "The Triple Bottom Line" and a leading voice on business sustainability issues, set the tone by reporting that companies have a sudden urgency to develop "new products, new processes, new markets, new models of business, new methods of reporting" that envelope sustainability strategies.

Savitz spoke of how successful companies in the new "age of corporate accountability" must tap a sweet spot that overlaps business interests with the interests of society and the environment. The embracing of sustainability objectives can make or break a company.

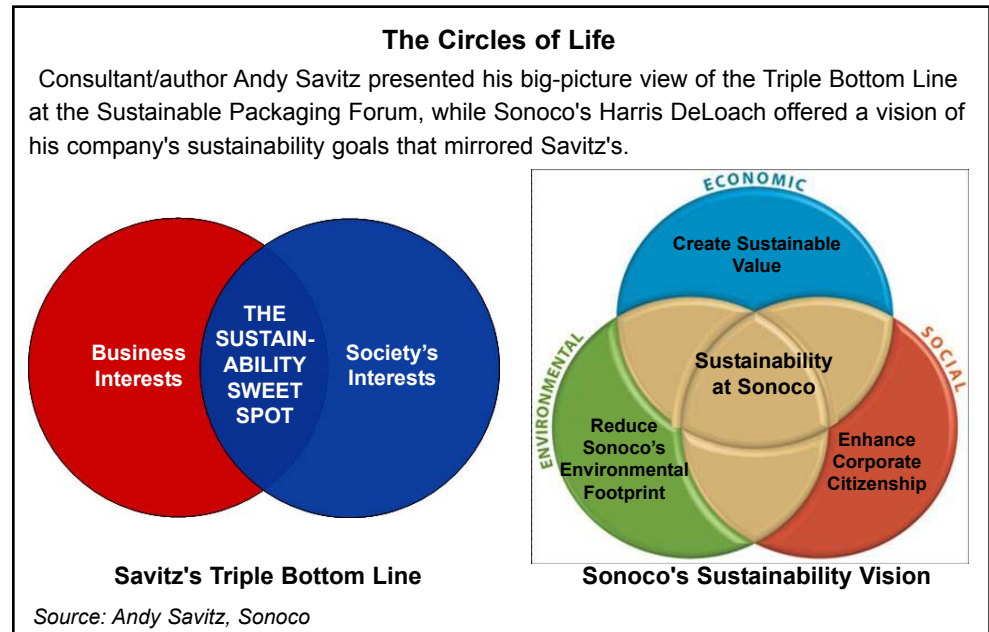
While Savitz threw down the gauntlet, the packaging industry has responded in-kind by reformulating its own policies and reshaping its culture. That tone was set early in the conference when Harris DeLoach, chairman/president/ceo of **Sonoco**, followed Savitz to the podium.

In a bit of serendipity, DeLoach laid out a three-pronged packaging strategy that was similar to Savitz's Triple Bottom Line, balancing the three goals of social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and economic performance within business units.

That message further soaked in after attendees heard a cavalcade of reports from **DuPont, Alcoa Packaging, Kraft Foods**, and

**MeadWestvaco**, executives, all of whom have taken leadership roles in sustainability.

As Paul Thomas, evp/group president of Alcoa Packaging and Consumer Products, told



the audience in blunt words, financial goals must not be sacrificed at the alter of sustainability. "Sustainability is not about just developing a plan," he said. "It is about developing sustainability plans...that will continually improve what you do and are important to your business and have economic benefit."

Opening the Forum with a "State of Sustainability" report, Packaging Strategies director David Luttenberger coined the idea later enunciated by Thomas as "ECONomics." In a rhetorical challenge to the audience, Luttenberger asked, "Are we now able to develop, execute, and maintain sustainability initiatives that support environmental responsibility while at the same time create economic benefit?"

The answer seems to be a resounding yes by some visionary companies in the packaging universe. [PS]

*\*Comprehensive Forum coverage will be featured in an expanded Oct. 15 issue.*