

# ONE MORE TIME: TURNING TRASH INTO TREASURES

by Kate Channell

Seven years ago, J.T. Marburger was not all that familiar with recycling. Today, he knows more about recycling and turning recyclable material into consumer goods than most. In 2007, J.T. was approached by Coke Recycling to start turning recycled plastic Coca-Cola bottles into branded merchandise. He started researching polyethylene terephthalate (PET) and the process used to turn plastic bottles into polyester yarn and fabric. In 2013, Marburger opened plants in Guatemala and El Salvador running and producing recycled PET (RPET) merchandise.

J.T. started in pharmaceutical sales right out of college. He soon realized he did not love that particular career and wanted to do more, so he joined his mother's firm, Incentive Marketing, in 1990. During his time as president of Incentive Marketing, J.T. secured his first major contract with Turner Time Warner. The partnership with Turner Time Warner opened many doors, allowing him to develop strong relationships with Turner Sports affiliates, which include MLB, NASCAR, NBA, NFL, and NHL. He would go on to grow the company from a \$200,000 a year business to \$6 million before merging with CorpLogoWare fifteen years later. As president of CorpLogoWare, J.T. grew the company again from \$10M to \$45M in three years.

In 2008, J.T. severed ties with CorpLogoWare and started Insignia Promotions in Atlanta. Insignia Promotions provides environmentally friendly, repurposed waste into branded merchandise to other companies, which include some of the largest brands in the world. In 2009, RPET merchandise was sold in 22 different countries and grew to 41 countries in 2010. Then, in 2012, Renew Merchandise was born from Insignia Promotions. Renew Merchandise's focus is to offer recycling programs for companies looking for affordable alternatives to improve their environmental impact. According to company officials, "Companies around the world are rapidly turning to recycled PET (RPET) products to provide customers with eco-friendly branded merchandise while maintaining top quality and comfort."

When Coke Recycling approached J.T. in 2007, little did he know the magnitude of turning recyclable plastic bottles into promotional merchandise such as reusable bags, hats, and shirts, among other promotional items. Since 2007,

J.T. has partnered with McDonald's, various MLB teams including the Atlanta Braves, Chicago Cubs, Arizona Diamondbacks, Texas Rangers, and Cincinnati Reds, FIFA World Cup, and the Olympic Games. J.T. was awarded the exclusive contract for the worldwide distribution of RPET for the Coca-Cola Company in 2009. All RPET uniforms and t-shirts show the iconic Coca-Cola contoured bottle with a number in it. That number represents the number of bottles used to create the item. Today, all Braves employees are outfitted in RPET uniforms. Prior to the London 2012 Summer Olympics, J.T. opened a

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**J.T. Marburger speaks to students in an Introduction to Business class over the summer to brainstorm the branding of the recycling project.**

London office for Insignia Promotions which was named one of Think London's "Top 100 Companies to Watch."

J.T. has also worked with the Tennis Industry of America and Penn Tennis to recycle tennis ball cans, turning them into shirts, sweat bands, racket bags, etc. Most recently, J.T. has been working with Chick-fil-A to find a sustainable use for its famous Styrofoam cups. He has found a way to turn recycled Styrofoam into a number of Chick-fil-A branded merchandise, including reusable cups, pens, and name tags.

Currently, J.T. is working with college campuses around the nation to build sustainability programs that allow the campuses' recycled plastic bottles to be turned into licensed college apparel. "We are very excited that Georgia Southern, my alma mater, has decided to join our fast-growing list of partners," said Renew President J.T. Marburger. "We want students involved in the project to gain real world experience while being eco-minded, and this is a great way to do both." In addition to working with his alma mater, J.T. has also started working with the University of Oregon, Tulane University, and the University of South Carolina.

The College of Business is working with J.T., along with the Center for Sustainability (CfS) and the University Store, to launch RPET Georgia Southern licensed and branded apparel One More Time. Over the summer, College of Business classes started the branding phase of the project. The branding phase will continue into the fall semester, culminating into a marketing plan developed by the MBA strategic marketing management class. One More Time merchandise will be sold at the University Store and

online at [onemoretimemerchandise.com](http://onemoretimemerchandise.com). Other retail points of sale will be determined going forward.

With the help of on-campus student organizations, student ambassadors will spread the word about the new sustainability program, getting their classmates and peers excited about the endless possibilities that our campus recycling program will offer. The Georgia Southern Center for Sustainability will be a key component to this project. Funded by a student-proposed sustainability fee since 2013, the Georgia Southern CfS provides sustainability education and outreach for the campus community with a speaker series, an academic concentration in sustainability, and campus sustainability initiatives such as "No Impact Week." Named one of the top green universities in the country by *The Princeton Review* for the past four years, Georgia Southern will deepen its commitment to sustainability even further through the partnership with Renew Merchandise.

J.T. has strong feelings about students gaining experience while in college, which is why it is so important to him that our College of Business students be involved in this project starting at the ground level. "In today's job market, employers are looking for more than a degree," says J.T. "Hopefully, this project will build Georgia Southern College of Business graduates' résumés and provide a competitive advantage to our graduates in the job market."

For more information and to follow the progress of One More Time, go to [facebook.com/gsonemoretime](https://facebook.com/gsonemoretime) or [twitter.com/gsonemoretime](https://twitter.com/gsonemoretime). ♦