



**Linea Insights**

**Environmental Champions or  
Cynical Marketing Ploy?**

There have been numerous press release articles in recent months regarding supermarkets saving the environment by reducing plastic packaging.

Whilst the reduction of single use plastic is long overdue and to be commended, I'm not sure that supermarkets should position themselves as bastions of the environment.

Cast your mind back many years we tended to buy fruit and vegetables from the local greengrocer. The process involved hand picking the fruit, weighing it and popping it into a brown paper bag. It didn't take long, provided flexibility regarding quantity and didn't require additional packaging.

Then came the dominance of supermarkets and the drive to package everything in plastic, even though many of the items came in suitable and sustainable packaging which had protected fruit and vegetables for time and eternity.

So why double and unnecessary package these goods? Simple to increase desirability, volume and ultimately revenue. But clearly at the cost of the environment.

Clearly our focus and understanding regarding plastic has evolved over the last 40 years, but given the vast resources at their disposal it wouldn't be too difficult to understand that a man made substance which does decompose won't be good for the environment.



So back to the recent articles promoting supermarket sustainability. We will all acknowledge that mistakes happen and the key is learning from them. However having made an error of judgement of this magnitude and nature, I think we would also agree that the last thing we would want to do is herald the rectification of the mistake as a leading environmental improvement initiative.

Supermarkets it's great that you are taking action to reduce plastic waste, but at least have the decency to acknowledge that you caused the issue in the first place and don't try to market yourselves as bastions of the environment for resolving it.

Furthermore if you are really interested in resolving plastic waste why not take a more definitive and through steps, such as:

Removing plastic bags from your fruit & vegetable, bakery, deli, fish and meat sections.

Removing plastic carrier bags all together and replacing them with paper or environmentally friendly alternatives - not just charging the government levy or worse profiting from 'bags for life', which by the way are made from more plastic and don't last a lifetime.



Use your significant buying power to lobby manufacturers to only supply goods which are packaged in an environmentally friendly manner.

Live by your CSR policies and devote some of your vast profits to tackling these issues, by providing appropriate recycling facilities so the local authorities don't have to deal with the problems of food packaging waste and along with manufacturers educate the next generation to better manage the issue. Perhaps even sponsor the development of scientific solutions.

Then the world will know you are serious about tackling the problem, rather than jumping on the marketing band wagon. At this point you really can hold yourselves up as bastions of the environment. Furthermore, watch what such an approach has to customer retention and revenue generation.

**Linea's Leadership team encompasses a diverse range of specialisms and comprises experts from various disciplines with a shared passion for excellence, commitment to deliver positive results and mutual determination to put clients at the centre of everything we do.**

**We have significant experience in developing policies and improving organisational sustainability. Contact us to see how we can help your organisation.**

**[Meet Our Leadership Team](#)**

## About the Author



### **Ian Chambers**

A Business Improvement specialist with over 20 years' experience devising and leading complex Operational and Financial Turnaround, Transformation and Continuous Improvement Programmes.

With a background in Change Management, Lean Transformation, Financial & Commercial Management, Supply Chain / Procurement Optimisation and Programme Delivery gained within leading UK and International Public and Private sector organisations.

Ian possess an extensive track record of devising, managing and implementing comprehensive, multi-million pound, cross organisational transformation and continuous improvement programmes for NHS, Public and Private organisations and is an expert in delivering sustainable operational improvement and financial balance in challenging situations.

He received national recognition for collaborative programme delivery in the Government Efficiency Awards, was shortlisted as finalist in two further National Awards for NHS Transformation and achieved runner-up in the IFT Public Sector Turnaround Programme of the Year.

Ian holds an Honours degree in Business Management, is a Fellow at the Institute for Consulting, Fellow at the Institute for Operations Management, Fellow at the Chartered Management Institute, Fellow at the Institute of Logistics and Transport, Member of the Asia Transformation & Turnaround Association. Member of the Institute for Turnaround and committee member for the IFT North of England.

He has held numerous board and senior advisory positions, is a certified Lean Practitioner, Master Coach and a member of government and corporate turnaround panels.

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