

Eco Age: from green retail to green workplaces

Eco Age started life in 2008 as a retail business in Chiswick, West London, providing an eco interior design service and selling sustainable furniture and accessories. Since then the company has evolved quite radically in two very different directions.

The transformation began by moving away from retail into the business-to-business consulting sector turning offices and supermarkets into green workplaces. As demand grew, the business soon started implementing sustainable management systems into multinational corporations. Today, the Eco Consultancy side of the business provides outsourced corporate social responsibility (CSR) consultancy services. It also implements energy efficient systems, renewables technologies and waste – energy plants.

With in-house consultants and partnerships with technical providers, the firm works on projects ranging from £3m to £120m. The client list is diverse and includes the Football Association, Wembley Stadium, mining companies, large retail chains, the British Film Institute, film studios, hedge funds, fashion labels, cement producers and logistics firms.

"Working across different business sectors has always been our focus as it helps us and our client to 'think outside the box' and develop award-winning solutions by cross-feeding practices and enhancing CSR performance in the most efficient way," says founder and CEO Nicola Giuggioli.



Nicola Giuggioli
CEO Eco Age Limited

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"We build the green team within the client and then we manage the team. We have gone from supermarkets to football stadiums. Two years ago we won the Green Awards in Toronto – which are like the Oscars for us. Another recent highlight was Wembley winning best stadium in the world for CSR."

Taking sustainable practices to the red carpet

Eco Age is also well known in the fashion industry for the success of its celebrity-endorsed Green Carpet Challenge, spearheaded by Nicola's sister Livia Firth – the firm's creative director. When Livia's husband Colin was Oscar-nominated for his role in *A Single Man*, she was challenged by environment journalist Lucy Siegle to wear only ethical fashion to red carpet events. She hasn't looked back since, encouraging several other A-list celebrities to follow her lead.

"Making a difference in the fashion and jewellery supply chain is a high priority for us and an area where the two sides of the business meet," says Nicola. "Current projects include helping a big watch and jewellery brand to improve sustainability, and working with the EU to create a recognisable label which instantly tells the consumer that a garment has been ethically made."

Eco Age's retail business now focuses solely on fashion and in October is launching a small range of new products. In November, Livia will be honoured with the UN Leader of Change 2012 award – the first person in fashion to win such an accolade.



The Green Cut – a recent Green Carpet Challenge (GCC) event celebrating the very best of fashion, film and sustainability.

Flexible business model

"We opened the shop four months after the 2008 financial crisis hit. This was very hard on the business and we soon had to raise more capital. It quickly became apparent that it was a good idea to change from retail to consultancy. It showed us that in a period of crisis you need to be flexible with your business model. When people aren't spending, you need a very light and efficient company in terms of cashflow and flexibility to take advantage of opportunities."

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Shipshape talks to Nicola Giuggioli, founder and CEO of Eco Age, about how his business uniquely combines the world of A-list celebrity eco fashion with CSR consultancy services.

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Nicola hopes that the company will continue to grow over the next five years as much as it has over the past two. "Our dream would be to continue delivering at our current high level, keep winning awards for clients and

open offices in the US and Italy. We are in a strong position and unique with both very strong consultancy and marketing platforms to help communicate the brand."

For further information, visit:
www.eco-age.com
www.eco-consultancy.com