

interview

Geo Heetebrij Sustainability Manager



Since May 2023, Blue Box Partners has its very own Sustainability Manager, Geo Heetebrij. Geo is a native Dutchman with vast experience in the paper and cardboard industry. After having worked a few years as a software engineer, he turned to the paper and cardboard industry to never leave again. Between 2003 and 2023, he held various positions in the industry, evolving from Internal Account Manager to Account Manager and eventually European Technical Account Manager, responsible for all technical support regarding new product development, European project management, and troubleshooting. In 2023, he decided to add a new chapter to his career. We sat down with him and asked him about his career change and his plans for the future.

Congratulations on your new role, Geo! What motivated you to take on the role of Sustainability Manager at Blue Box Partners?

"In my two decades within the corrugated industry, sustainability has always been inherent. However, as a parent to two wonderful children, I have seen the world around me change. I feel a personal responsibility to contribute to a more sustainable environment. Blue Box Partners, with its unwavering dedication to sustainability, convinced me that I could play a pivotal role in driving positive change within the packaging industry and contribute to a liveable world for our children and generations to come."

How have you experienced your first months at Blue Box Partners?

"The initial months have been both eye-opening and inspiring. Blue Box Partners represents privately owned companies with sustainability at their core. I have witnessed this commitment with my own eyes during my visits to various paper mills. For instance, Blue Paper

in Strasbourg showcased impressive sustainability practices, such as using waste heat to warm the houses of the neighbouring community."

What has been your primary focus these first few months?

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What short- and long-term challenges do you see for Blue Box Partners and our industry in general?

"We will be facing challenges posed by the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) and the EU Deforestation-free Regulation (EUDR). The PPWR is currently published as a preliminary proposal and requires our business to engage in strategic lobbying to minimize its impact on the paper industry. On the positive side, this regulation will address the issue of empty space in packaging, a frustration for everyone ordering a pack of razor

knives online, only to receive a box containing 90% air. The less resources we use, the better.

In addition, the EUDR, which replaces the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR), extends beyond preventing illegal wood and aims to combat deforestation and forest degradation. The new regulation enforces greater transparency and traceability, which is important to support our worldwide environmental goals.

On top of these challenges, the year 2030 is rapidly approaching, and we are obliged to reduce our carbon footprint by 55% in accordance with the EU Green Deal. We are committed to achieve these targets within our four partnerships, with the ultimate goal of becoming climate neutral by 2050."

What are your plans and ambitions for the future?

"My plan is to elevate sustainability at Blue Box Partners, aligning with customer demands and surpassing expectations. We aim to step out of the shadows and share compelling stories. Specifically, in 2024, each of the Blue Box Partners will publish its own Corporate Sustainability Report. Moreover, our partners will join the Science-Based Target initiative (SBTi) and set their own SBTs to further solidify their sustainability goals and share their ambitions with our customers. My aspiration is to spread the passion for sustainability within Blue Box Partners and showcase our significant contributions to a sustainable Europe."