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Pack industry should stop playing the victim, says top professor

Liz Gyekye, 20 October 2011

1 COMMENT – The packaging industry should stop being a victim and take pride in the role it plays in saving people's lives, according to a world-renowned chemist.[Share](#) [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) [p](#)

Speaking to exclusively to *Packaging News*, at the Ardagh Group's sustainable packaging event in Paris, Professor Dr. Michael Braungart said that the packaging industry is saving more lives than any other industry, by protecting food and ensuring longer shelf-life for food.

Speaking about the packaging industry's efforts to pursue sustainability initiatives, such as reducing packaging weight, Braungart added: "The packaging industry is always doing guilt management. They say 'we were 100% bad and now we are 90% bad and our goal is to minimise our impact'.

"That makes them victims in the beginning because they are already saying 'please beat me I'm bad'. They get victimised by making themselves victims. They should, first, have a lot of self-esteem and a lot of pride for what they do.

"We need to attract the smartest people to the packaging industry, not the ones who feel bad about what they are doing."

Cradle-to-cradle

Braungart is the joint founder of the cradle-to-cradle concept.

He said that there is a lot of potential for packaging to be used systematically.

Braungart said that right now, the industry is trying to reduce the weight and minimise the material, instead of making "beautiful packaging" that people can take pleasure from.

He explained: "It's not about efficiency it's about effectiveness."

He said that packaging either needed to be designed to go back into the biosphere or designed to be upcycled into other products. For instance, a coke bottle being turned into textiles or cartonboard embedded with seeds that can be returned into the biosphere at its end of use.

'A washing machine is packaging'

He said that other industries could learn a lot from the packaging industry.

He explained: "Basically, everything is packaging or content like a newspaper is information packaging, the washing machine is the packaging to clean stuff and the TV is entertainment packaging."

Speaking about migration of certain materials from packaging into foodstuffs, Braungart said that materials such as magnesium could be used in packaging that can be absorbed by foodstuffs "because people all over Europe, and in the UK, have got a traumatic deficit of uptake of magnesium and magnesium is not toxic under any circumstances".

He concluded: "Let's learn how we can make packaging not less bad but packaging which is good."

What do you think? Do you agree with Professor Dr. Michael Braungart? Leave your comments in the box below.

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