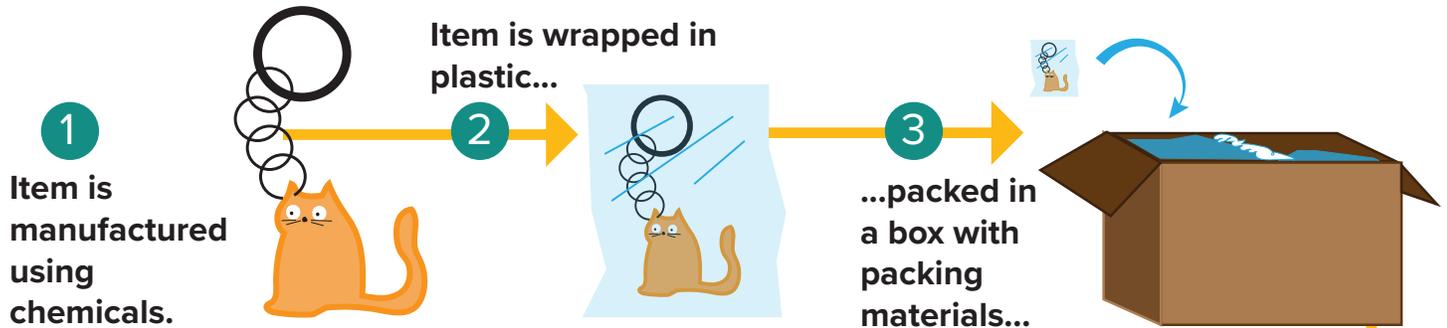


# LIFE CYCLE OF A GIVEAWAY

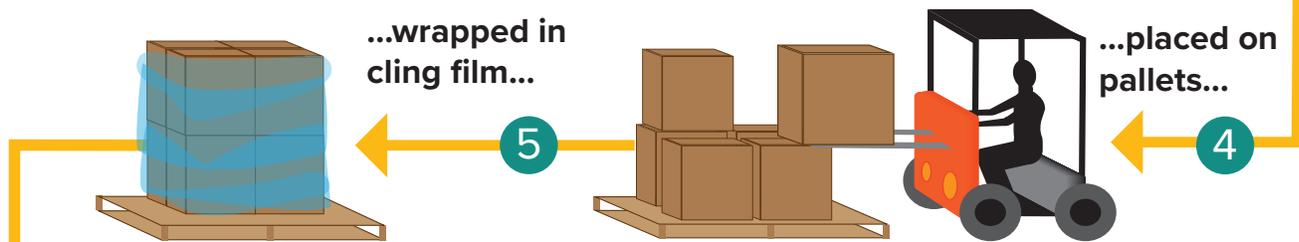
Connecting with people to generate leads is an essential part of live exhibitions like tradeshows and conferences. Traditionally, it's been easy to hand out stress balls, keychains and other cheap-to-produce swag to start that initial conversation. But - at what cost to the environment? And does that fidget spinner really provide the memorable impact you want it to? Let's explore what it takes to make a disposable tchotchke and discuss the values of an alternative.



**1** All manufacturing risks exposure to chemicals. However, factories that manufacture cheap (usually plastic) items outside the U.S.A., may not adhere to OSHA safety standards for PPE and safe handling instructions for chemicals. <sup>1</sup>

**2** Most plastic bags are made from polyethylene, which is extracted from crude oil or natural gas. Both the extraction of these resources and their processing have negative environmental impacts. <sup>2</sup>

**3** Packing materials like packing peanuts are made from polystyrene foam (Styrofoam), which can cause negative health impacts, easily breaks up into smaller pieces for the wind or small animals to pick up, and takes over 500 years to break down in a landfill. <sup>3</sup>



**5** Pallet wrap is also made from polyethylene like plastic bags, and is almost impossible to reuse. Recycled cling wrap is more expensive than virgin materials, providing little incentive for use. In landfills or incinerators, it can release a highly toxic chemical called dioxin, says the World Health Organization. <sup>5</sup>

**4** Wooden pallets, the most popular option for shipping, are not often responsibly sourced for ethical wood sources, which protect against deforestation and unsafe or inhumane labor practices, and focus on local lumber to reduce GHG emissions for timber shipping. Look for products with an FSC certification. <sup>4</sup>



**6** Transportation of goods and people (especially internationally) is indisputably the highest GHG impact for any event. Smart Way shipping and local manufacturing help reduce this

**7** **8** Polystyrene foam used for packing is generally not considered recycleable, and it easily breaks into smaller pieces for the wind or small animals to pick up, and takes over 500 years to break down in a landfill.<sup>5</sup> If wood pallets are not reused or recycled properly, the natural resource of wood is wasted on one-time-use shipments. Pallets must be recycled separately, as most recycling centers do not accept them.<sup>4</sup>

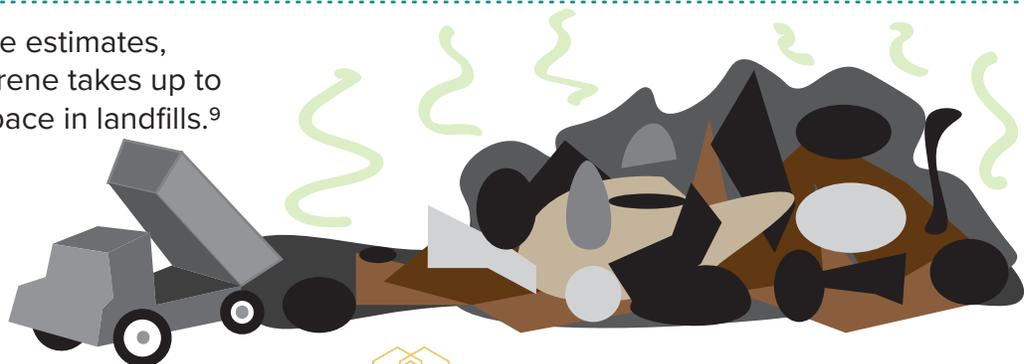


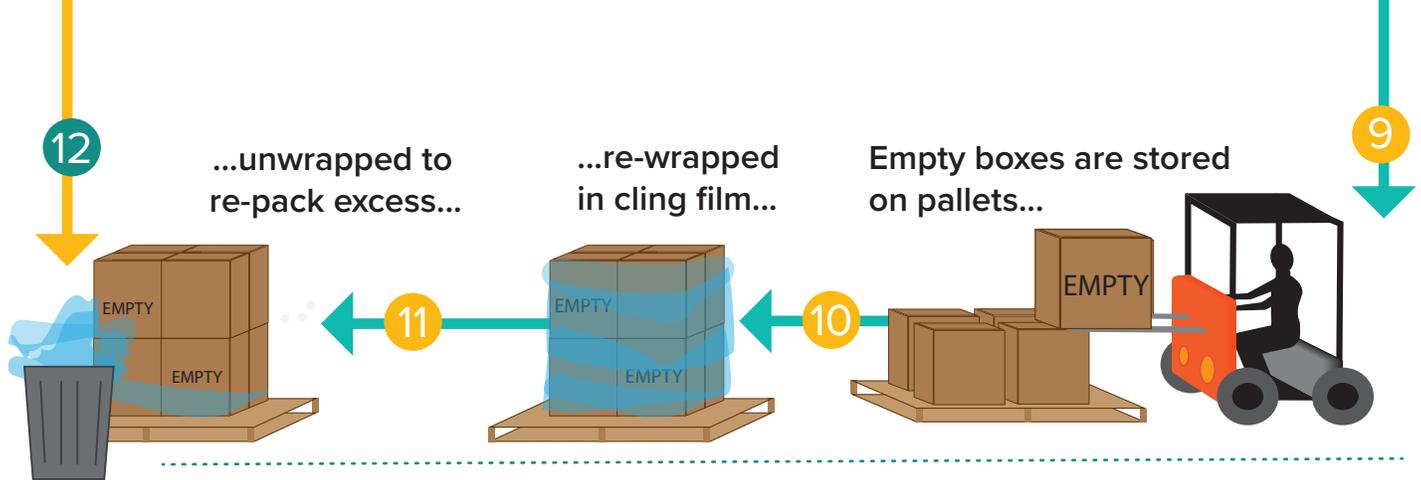
**9** Plastic bags take over 1,000 years to decompose. They are hard to recycle, and energy-intensive when recycling is possible. Consider the utility of a plastic bag over this type of item - is it necessary in the first place?<sup>2</sup>

**11** Nearly 40% of all trees harvested worldwide are used to make paper products. Considering the negative effects to biodiversity and climate change from deforestation, printed products should always include recycled content.<sup>8</sup>

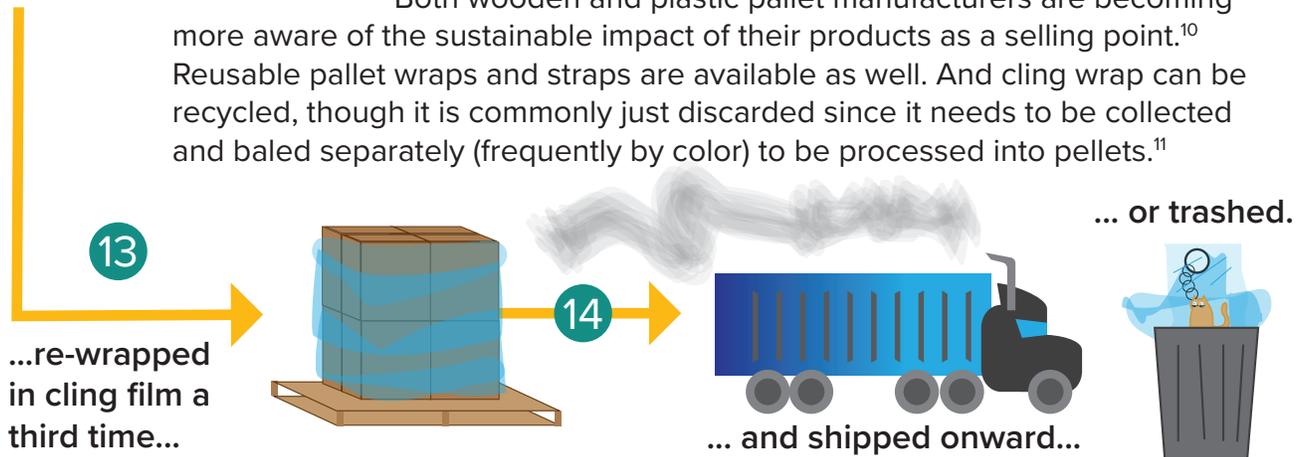
**10** The moment of give away exchange can be a powerful moment of connection. But compared with experiences or higher-quality items, swag may leave potential customers unimpressed.<sup>7</sup>

**12** By some estimates, polystyrene takes up to 30% of the space in landfills.<sup>9</sup>





9 10 11 Newer models for sustainable freight materials are emerging. Both wooden and plastic pallet manufacturers are becoming more aware of the sustainable impact of their products as a selling point.<sup>10</sup> Reusable pallet wraps and straps are available as well. And cling wrap can be recycled, though it is commonly just discarded since it needs to be collected and baled separately (frequently by color) to be processed into pellets.<sup>11</sup>



13 Packaging is the number one contributor to plastic pollution. New products and systems for reuse, recycling and composting of a disposable wrapping material must be introduced to combat environmental contamination.<sup>12</sup>

14 We place importance on giveaway items because we always have. Shipping these items can be costly, with a high margin of error for damage, delay, or loss. A new way to think about giveaways is to prioritize experience, such as providing a manicure or massage, a moment of connection such as allowing booth visitors to vote for a charity project your company will contribute to, or an activation like a photo booth or game to give you a structured way to learn about visitors and their needs.

It's not a secret why swag has been an important tool for client leads at events: more than half (52%) of the attendees are attracted to exhibits that offer giveaways or freebies.<sup>13</sup> However, the value of an *experience* is the opportunity to stand out from the crowd. 74% of trade show attendees say engaging with exhibitors increases their likelihood of buying the products/services on display.<sup>13</sup> In short, it's not the item that matters. It's the people.

When we talk about sustainable solutions for live events, Honeycomb Strategies means generating the communal power to sustain. We sustain our earth, our economy, and our connections by pivoting from disposable, damaging items and focusing on what mattered all along: human connection.



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## SOURCES

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<sup>2</sup> **UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO**; <https://www.colorado.edu/ecenter/2022/02/23/issues-plastic-bags-ripple-effect>

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<sup>4</sup> **FSC**; <https://us.fsc.org/en-us/certification>

<sup>5</sup> **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**;

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<sup>6</sup> **EPA**; <https://www.epa.gov/smartway>

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<sup>8</sup> **WORLD WILDLIFE FUND**; <https://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/pulp-and-paper>

<sup>9</sup> **SEJ**; <https://www.sej.org/publications/backgrounders/styrofoam-facts-why-you-may-want-bring-your-own-cup>

<sup>10</sup> **GREENBIZ.COM**; <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/why-selling-environmental-benefits-pallets-heavy-lift>

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<sup>12</sup> **SWAP WHITEPAPER**;

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<sup>13</sup> **TSL** <https://www.tradeshowlabs.com/blog/trade-show-stats>



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**Honeycomb Strategies** specializes in custom sustainable solutions for the event industry through tailored program development, accurate data management, and genuine stakeholder engagement for measurable impact.

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