

“We found that one of the biggest issues was that people didn’t discard them properly, mainly because they are so small. If flushed down the toilet, they often don’t get caught by filtration systems and are dumped directly into the ocean, and later end up in the stomachs of sea creatures. We felt that by solving this problem, we would create an impact on marine life as well as single-use pollution,” says Aagaard.

Their first product, LastSwab, is a reusable alternative to disposable cotton swabs on paper or plastic stems. LastSwab comes in two models – a standard swab and one with a finer tip for makeup applications. It is made from plastic with a thermoplastic rubber tip, which means it is not recyclable. But one LastSwab is expected to last for 1,000 uses, or roughly three years, which greatly reduces the quantity of waste compared to single-use swabs.



LastObject

After developing LastSwab, LastObject designed more durable replacements for disposable household items and expanded its product line.

“We want to go after the single-use products that have the biggest impact, things that people use every day,” says Aagaard. LastObject’s second product was a reusable tissue pack that can be washed 520 times to replace more than 3,100 disposable tissues. This was followed by compostable cotton rounds for makeup removal that can be used and washed 1,000 times. During the pandemic, they have

added a washable face mask made to WHO standards to replace disposable PPE

(<https://earth911.com/eco-watch/ppe-use-protects-us-against-coronavirus-but-its-harming-the-oceans/>).

Instead of courting venture capitalists like most start-ups, LastObject takes a more grassroots approach to funding its development.

“We use crowdfunding for all our products. We see it not only as a financial tool but also as a way to validate our product early on. It’s the perfect way to see whether people are willing to spend money on your product and if there are any changes you should make,” says Aagaard.



Popular Appeal

Making sure their approach has popular support is especially important for the type of products they make. Decades of marketing have conditioned people to think of these products as necessarily

disposable for the sake of hygiene.

“We completely understand that it’s difficult to change habits. That being said, think of it like your toothbrush. Treat it with care and don’t let it sit in water. Same with LastSwab. Clean it with soap and water after every use, there’s nothing unhygienic about it,” says Aagaard.

Even people who aren’t put off by a sense of hygienic unease can have a hard time giving up the convenience of disposable products. To make using reusable products more convenient, LastObject uses accessories. For example, they make the organic cotton LastTissue more than a regular handkerchief with an accompanying travel-sized silicone carrying case. The case keeps clean tissues separate from used ones. They sell a small mesh bag to keep the tissues from getting lost in the laundry. They also sell refill packs of extra tissues for backup use on wash days.

LastSwab and LastRound both come with cornstarch-based bioplastic cases to keep them clean between uses. The newest product, LastMask, is stored in a food-grade silicone case that also contains a refillable spray bottle. The spray bottle does not need to be removed from the case to sanitize hands before touching the mask.



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Next Objects

LastObject plans to continue developing new reusable replacements for single-use items.

“We have a lot of exciting products on the sketching board that we’re working on and plan to release in the coming years. We will continue to launch products in the bathroom area for a while. Our main focus is creating products that really make a difference to their single-use equivalent,” says Aagaard.

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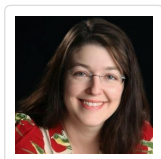
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Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing here (<https://gemmadeealexander.com/>).


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