

“Share your story” with Jan Lennon

Sustainability Ambassador Interview

Sustainability ambassadors are as important as ever; while Colart continues its sustainability journey, our ambassadors are required to spread the message, implement changes, and challenge the status quo. We have decided to launch a series of interviews with our sustainability ambassadors throughout 2021. Our first guest is Jan Lennon, sustainability ambassador at UK Kidderminster site. You can find the first chapter of “Share your story” below.

What do you like about being an ambassador?

I'm lucky enough to be a wellbeing ambassador as well as a sustainability ambassador. Sustainability, or when I was younger it was caring about the planet, is something I've been passionate about all my life. I've been a vegetarian since my early 20's and a nature lover forever. It distresses me to see us destroying our natural habitat and anything I can do to help the planet is very dear to my heart.

When the opportunity came to be a sustainability ambassador, it was a natural and progressive step for me. Having this chance and working very closely with Liza Kinson and the rest of the sustainability team at Kidderminster is a privilege.

An ambassador's role isn't just between nine to five; it's a commitment to a lifestyle change. *Being a sustainability ambassador allows me the opportunity to make a difference for the people who come behind us.*

I feel that we can do a lot and help to make a change by influencing and encouraging those around us to think about our impact on the planet. I really do believe that every one of us has a hero inside, we can do this. As we say, actions speak louder than words.

How do you bring sustainability to your everyday job?

As part of a very proactive sustainability team at Kidderminster, led by Liza Kinson, we are all encouraged to continually evaluate how we perform and how our actions impact on our sustainability goals.

My car has been parked up on the drive for a year with hardly any use and this has a direct, positive impact on the environment but working from home now brings other challenges.

Maybe one area that perhaps we haven't thought of much is Green Technology and it's an area where I can possibly be a little bit more sustainable.

I was surprised recently to learn that emails have an environmental impact. Apparently in 2019 over 293 billion emails were sent globally, that's 293 billion emails globally, every day and that apparently is the carbon emission equivalent of an extra 7 million cars on the road. So now I think before I send, is that email essential?

*Once again, **it's really about looking at the little things, making small steps**, like switching off monitors, lights, chargers etc and encouraging others also to do that.*

Tell me about a recent challenge you faced while working on a sustainability project. How did you overcome it?

As a company, we have to look at the product during its entire journey. Are we using 100% recycled packaging? We don't at the moment, but obviously, it's under review.

Amazon, until recently, required that most items should be individual bagged. We challenged them and now they have accepted certain items can be shipped without bagging, saving manpower and plastic bags.

In the carousel packaging area, instead of using plastic bags, we're about to start trialling recycled paper bags for the items that can be packaged into paper.

This change is currently being evaluated for cost, and it's something that we have discussed for a while as cost has to be a consideration.

Do you believe Colart's sustainability ambitions are relevant? How do you think you can achieve them?

More now than ever before. We hear all the time that if we don't do something now, it could be too late for our children's children.

***We've got this window of opportunity to do something positive** and luckily people are becoming more aware. We see through our own correspondence with customers asking very pertinent questions about how our products are sourced, sustainable, what's in them and the consumers are getting much more demanding now.*

*We need to have big ambitions, we have to believe in this movement as any credible business will, and we have to engage to achieve the policies that have been set out. To enhance the wellbeing of people and the planet through creativity is a great strategy, and the recent changes in behaviour with lockdowns etc are helping us to achieve our vision of inspiring every artist in the world as more and more people turn to art. **Colart has an excellent opportunity to build a better world.***

How do you think Colart contributes to society in terms of sustainability?

There has been a definite ramping up of the subject since I joined the company almost seven years ago. I see it much more at the forefront of Colart's policies and people's behaviour, which I wholeheartedly support.

I'm always pleased to hear colleagues talking and thinking about it, how we impact and how we can reduce our footprint in terms of the product.

Regarding contribution, the problem is huge. It will take millions of small actions by millions of people, and any contribution is a step in the right direction. The more we are encouraged to take those little steps, the more we are contributing.

I think we are getting there. The move to reduce our packaging, the sustainability ambassadors' efforts at each site, and infiltrating into the forethought of everyone plays a massive part in promoting change in the way we behave outside work.