

LA HORMIGA VERDE

CONTEXT

La Hormiga Verde is an electronics recycling company. Ignacio García, the owner and manager, tells us that the company, which has 36 employees, dismantles these devices and separates the raw materials by type to then sell them and reintroduce these materials into the market, giving them a second life. In 2021 they carried out a measurement of the raw material recovery ratio, obtaining a result of 99.7%. They also have another section of the company dedicated to reconditioning electronic devices such as printers and computers

Its main business is to recover everything from plastics to metals such as iron or copper for resale to interested companies. However they wanted more than merely providing plastic waste to third parties. Therefore, they started exploring the possibilities of turning the waste into a product with value. This resulted in a project focussing on building furniture with recycled materials, specifically their focus is on creating plastic wood and turning these into tables, benches, wastepaper baskets, flower pots, etc..

THE IMPLEMENTATION

It is a company that bases its business model 100% on the reuse of materials, so the transfer to this new activity focussed on the creation value of their plastic waste did not pose a major step, everything that is done in the company has circularity as an objective.

At first, La Hormiga Verde dedicated its activity solely to extracting materials, which meant they ended up with tonnes of plastics that they had to dispose of so as not to have to throw them away. This led to the idea of trying and seeing what they could do with them, so they began to treat the plastic in different ways to obtain as a result plastic wood, a totally recycled material that can be worked in the same way as wood.

With the plastics extracted from the objects they dismantle, they make plastic wood, a very resistant, hard and flexible material that can be used to build a multitude of things. They currently make sheets and strips of this material with which they make structures such as benches, chairs, tables, shelves and other objects such as waste paper baskets, flowerpots, photo frames, trays, etc.

This plastic is obtained from the fusion of plastic leftovers from other objects, which means that in the process they can give it different shapes. They have also organised competitions in schools to give ideas for new products and use of the plastic wood laminates.

IMPACT CREATED

The company highlights that in big cities, people are less involved in waste collection than in smaller towns, where everyone pitches in to help and collect as much waste and equipment as possible. By showing the possibilities of turning plastic waste into valuable products for urban furniture, people can actually see the results of recycling plastic waste and become more motivated.

They collaborate actively with different entities and organisations to turn “their” plastic waste into new products that this entity then re-uses, a good example is the collaboration with a municipality, where the collected plastic waste was turned into office desks.

Their plans for the future are to continue to collect the materials and transform them into reusable raw materials, i.e. the plastic wood, but find partners or collaborators that actually take the production of the furniture a step further and develop standard (mass) products for a larger and more commercial market. At the moment La Hormiga Verde sells the furniture they make as well, but see this is a way of positioning the plastic wood laminates and generate awareness about the possibilities. Selling is done online or at their premises.

As a potential impact of their work, the use of plastic wood as a substitute for conventional wood as their qualities coincide perfectly. As a note on the side, the efforts made by the company have resulted in an increase in their staff, as a special employment center, this means work opportunities for persons with high risk of exclusion, generating an even more positive social impact, beyond reducing plastic waste.

MORE INFORMATION

They also have a platform for contests and challenges for people to give ideas about some topics they propose. <http://www.concursolahormigaverde.org/>

- Website: <https://www.lahormigaverde.org/>
- Pictures:



- ❑ Videos: [La Hormiga Verde: economía circular, ecológica y social | A esta hora](#)
- ❑ Social Media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CEElahormigaverde/>