



Bagito/Power2Sustain staff from left to right: David Andrews - Graphic Design, Robert Valdez - Sales and Operations, Jeanne Biberstine - Operations Manager, Mitch Barlas - Founder/Director, Sam Spiegel - Program Coordinator and Sales. Not pictured: Taylor McLoughlin - Business Development, Rose Sprague - Sales Director



Business Profile: Bagito/Power2Sustain

Since local nonprofit, Power2Sustain, first launched in 2008 under the name, Bagspeak, founder Mitch Barlas and his team have made large strides in moving toward a more sustainable world for this generation and those to come.

After noticing an alarming lack of environmental education in schools, Barlas, a former teacher and principal, teamed up with fellow educators and created a program for K-12 students that incorporates environmental lessons into core curriculum subjects like math, science, social studies, and English language arts at no charge to schools.

To help support the Power2Sustain environmental education project and further promote sustainability in the community, Barlas and his team formed Bagito, a hybrid business that sells reusable substitutes for single-use items. After all the business costs are accounted for, 100 percent of the net profits from Bagito are donated to the Power2Sustain project.

"Our social cause is to come up with solutions to the single-use dilemma, and our financial cause is to support the next generation in learning how to value and sustain their natural world," says Barlas.

Bagito, or Reusable Solutions Group, got its start selling reusable shopping bags to support its sister nonprofit, Power2Sustain, and has recently launched a new line of

products that make everyday life a little more environmentally-friendly.

In addition to offering a new, larger shopping bag, or the "Bagito Grande," the Reusable Solutions Group created a reusable can liner for garbage, recycling, and yard waste. The durable bag comes in three sizes, is machine washable, and can be reused hundreds of times. An industrial version of the can liner is in the mix, and is being piloted in Silicon Valley.

After reading about municipalities that wanted to take the single-use plastic bag bans further than the grocery store, Barlas and his team created a reusable garment bag to take to the cleaners.

"It has a little pocket where you put your name and account number. You can use it as a laundry bag and get it back as a garment bag," says Barlas.

All of the Bagito products are made from 100 percent recycled plastics that are woven and sewn together at Bagito's partnering company in China, which Barlas paid a visit to recently to get a feel for the factory's work environment and business practices.

"I wanted to learn about the processes that they're using, and make sure they were treating their workers well, and they were employing environmentally-friendly practices, and that they were aligned with what we were doing," says Barlas. "I was

pleasantly surprised. It was clean and people were smiling."

To further support and expand the environmental education project, Power2Sustain, Barlas and the Bagito crew are continuing to brainstorm new and innovative products like a reusable mailing pouch to replace paper envelopes, and a fabric wrap for pallets used in shipping, which was thought up by an 11th grade student in the Power2Sustain program.

All of the innovative products and vital environmental education that Bagito and Power2Sustain offer wouldn't be possible without the help of the Santa Cruz Community Credit Union. Through the use of a small business loan from the credit union, Barlas and his team were able to develop new products and purchase the inventory necessary to expand the Power2Sustain program across the United States and even into other countries like Indonesia and Mauritania in Africa.

"We believe in being in service to our local community, and to the larger community, as a hybrid business and a nonprofit. That's what we're all about, and we wanted to work with a bank whose mission was the same. We found a great match with Santa Cruz Community Credit Union," says Barlas. "They truly want to help businesses of all types to be a vibrant part of the community."



**Local Dollars
Local Jobs
www.scccu.org**

Power2Sustain
740 Water St.
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 536-4160 x4
Info@Power2Sustain.org
www.Power2Sustain.org