Global Compact Network Singapore

FORWARD FASTER

Building Circularity into Everyday Operations: Alsco Uniforms's Approach to Sustainable Textile Management

UNGCNS Member Spotlight

Forward Faster in Action



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7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

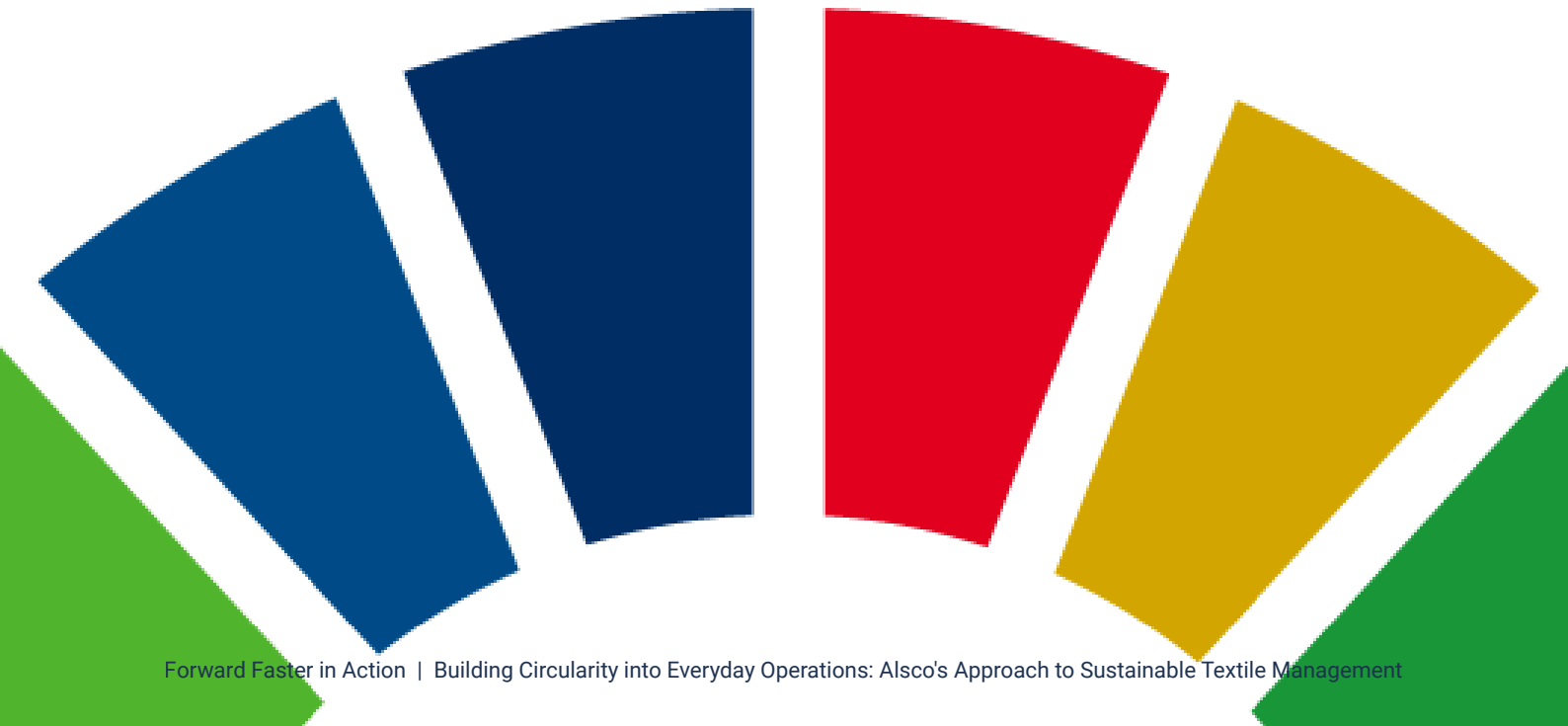
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Singapore generated 254,000 tonnes of textile and leather waste in 2022, yet only 2% was recycled. While discussions around sustainability in the textile sector often focus on manufacturing, a significant share of environmental impact is also shaped by how products are used, maintained and ultimately disposed of.

As businesses work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN Global Compact's Forward Faster initiative calls on companies to accelerate action across five priority areas where business leadership can have the greatest impact. Alsco Uniforms sustainability journey demonstrates how these priorities can be translated into practical operational decisions that deliver measurable environmental and business outcomes.

For managed textile and hygiene services provider Alsco Uniforms Singapore, this has prompted a different conversation. Rather than encouraging customers to purchase and replace uniforms, Alsco Uniforms has built its business around a circular rental model - Rent, Wash, Reuse. Garments are supplied, professionally laundered, repaired and reused across multiple wear cycles before reaching end-of-life, helping customers reduce unnecessary replacement while extending the useful life of textiles. The model demonstrates how circular business practices can be embedded directly into everyday operations versus as standalone sustainability initiatives.



Changing that mindset has not always been straightforward. "When we first started talking about sustainability and rental, many customers still preferred ownership," explains Wee Kiang Teo from the Business Development department , Alsco Uniforms. "The mindset was simple: if I buy it, it belongs to me. Today, we're seeing more businesses ask different questions — how products are maintained, how waste is managed and what happens when uniforms reach the end of their life."



Beyond changing customer perceptions, the company also had to rethink internal processes. Collecting reliable sustainability data, embedding new operational practices and helping employees understand their role in the broader sustainability journey required time, cross-functional collaboration and continued leadership commitment. Like many organisations, Alsco found that meaningful progress depended less on launching new initiatives than on integrating sustainability into everyday business decisions.

That shift reflects a broader evolution in how businesses approach sustainability. For Alsco Uniforms, progress has come less from standalone ESG programs and more from integrating sustainability into operational decision-making, customer conversations and employee responsibilities.





The transition required changes beyond infrastructure. Sustainability responsibilities were incorporated across departments through a dedicated internal team, helping employees understand how data collection, resource management and day-to-day decisions contribute to broader sustainability goals. Leadership support proved particularly important in maintaining momentum and ensuring sustainability remained embedded within business priorities.

As sustainability expectations increased, the company also began seeing changes in customer procurement processes. Questions around resource efficiency, environmental performance and responsible business practices became increasingly common, particularly among larger organisations seeking partners that could support their own sustainability objectives.

Participation in programs like ACSSB, SDG Ambition Accelerator offered by UN Global Compact Network Singapore (UNGCNS) provided additional structure to the company's sustainability journey. Through training, peer learning and globally recognised frameworks such as Forward Faster, Alsco strengthened its understanding of how businesses can prioritise actions that deliver the greatest impact across climate, water, decent work, gender equality and sustainable finance. This helped translate global sustainability ambitions into practical actions that could be embedded across the business.

These efforts also support several UN Global Compact principles, particularly those related to environmental responsibility, environmentally friendly technologies and responsible business conduct. Today, Alsco Uniforms approach contributes to multiple Sustainable Development Goals, including Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), Climate Action (SDG 13) and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).



Looking at Alsco Uniforms journey,
Dean Jones, General Manager, Alsco Uniforms Singapore shares:

> "At Alsco Uniforms Singapore, we started by identifying where we could make meaningful improvements across our operations. This included investing in solar panels, reducing plastic waste, improving workflow efficiency, lowering electricity and water consumption. Each initiative may appear small on its own, but together they create measurable progress and a stronger, more responsible business. For small and medium-sized companies, sustainability can sometimes feel complex or costly.
>
> Our experience shows that progress can begin with simple changes, clear priorities and consistent action. No organisation is too small to make an impact. Every reduction in energy, water, waste and emissions contributes to a more sustainable future. The most important step is not to be perfect from the beginning. It is to begin, learn and keep improving."

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As more businesses navigate evolving sustainability expectations, Alsco Uniforms experience demonstrates that embedding circularity into everyday operations can strengthen resilience, improve resource efficiency and create long-term value. It also reflects the ambition of the UN Global Compact's Forward Faster initiative, accelerating business action where it is needed most to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.



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UN Global Compact Network Singapore (UNGCNS) is the local chapter of the United Nations Global Compact. As a non-profit organisation and a registered charity with Institution of a Public Character (IPC) status in Singapore, UNGCNS works with businesses, government agencies, academia, and civil society to advance sustainable and responsible business practices. UNGCNS is the leading voice on corporate sustainability, driving multi-stakeholder action to forge a more sustainable future, founded on the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Editorial Support by Chahana Ramesh