

Green Entrepreneurship

Successful business cases of Green Entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean



Regional Activity Centre for Cleaner Production



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Territori i Sostenibilitat

Eco Intelligent Growth: cradle to cradle and sustainable design services in Spain

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Name: Eco Intelligent Growth (EIG)
City, country: Barcelona, Spain
Name of entrepreneur/founder: Ignasi Cubiñà, Jordi Monjo, Guillermo de Arquer and Albert Pradell were the co-founding team.

Description: EIG offers sustainable design and industrial ecology services specializing – but not restricted - in architecture and urban design, inspired by the concept of Cradle to Cradle (C2C). The company is the only accredited organization in Spain to offer C2C certification assessment, and also manages LEED projects to help organizations certify their buildings under this US based certification. EIG also offers environment and energy audits, CO₂ optimization strategies, soil remediation and sustainable construction consultancy, always under the C2C vision and agenda.

Investment: *Start up capital.* Initial capital of 9.000€ from founding partners of the business, and a loan of 200.000€. Founding partners chose to invest their own money in the business rather than external investment to maintain control of the company and its activities.
Sources of funding. 100% of clients are from the private sector, with 70% generated through sustainable construction services and Cradle to Cradle certification and 30% from Cradle to Cradle consultancy, the latter being the area for expected growth in the company with the intention of reverting this ratio.

Stakeholders: (Key groups at the start of the business)
William McDonough and Michael Braungart, authors of the cradle to cradle concept, who inspired the founders to set up the business and the Grupo Ferrer as the company's first big client were the two most influential players at the start of the business. Hostal Empuries was also a catalyzing project for EIG.

Employment generation: 5 full time staff, 3 of whom are partners of the business and 2-3 external collaborators. The company usually has 1 or 2 students doing work experience. EIG has a multidisciplinary team, including a biologist, engineers (chemical and IT), experts in industrial ecology (one PhD employee), marketing and environmental science.

Timeline:
2005 – Founded the business
2006 – Began work with first major clients, Grupo Ferrer to help design a sustainable building in central Barcelona, and the Hostal Empuries, a sustainable renovation and expansion of a rural hotel, based on C2C principles.
2007 – 2008 – Negotiations with MBDC to provide C2C certification in Spain
2008 – License awarded to provide certification
2008 – 2011 – Reorientation of the business to provide C2C consultancy, beyond the construction sector.
2011 – First C2C certified products and LEED projects attained

Feasibility study:	No formal analysis was carried out, the company was set up based on clear principles, a strong vision and intuition based on the years of experience of the founders working in international business, as chemical salesmen, engineers and entrepreneurs. A consideration of the existing sustainable construction certifications available was made and the US based LEED system identified as a key area of opportunity for Spain.
Key features:	The company bases its operations on the guiding principles of C2C; waste = food; use current solar income and celebrate diversity, overall to ensure human activity makes a positive footprint. EIG advocates design with abundance whilst renewing renewable resources and preserving non-renewable resources.
Overall rational and motivation:	Bring the sustainable solutions for construction and design being applied in other parts of the world to the Spanish market, and the other way around. The desire to apply environmental and economic solutions to solve the world's social problems, the aim to change people's attitudes to production and consumption. The key environmental driver is to catalyze the shift from cradle to grave thinking to cradle to cradle thinking where waste is a nutrient for all systems and eliminate toxic substances from production. EIG motivates environmental change in companies by highlighting the economic benefits of doing so.
Strengths:	The clarity of the C2C concept and the competence to apply practical tools for the transition to a more sustainable future, innovating in the design of products for service (rather than simply shifting to a service based economy). The multidisciplinary skill set of the team. Vision and Intention.
Challenges and constraints:	Helping people understand the real value of natural resources and environmental services, and that a C2C attitude can generate true positive economic value and the fact that there are no competitors in the field in Spain.
Direct activities and Impacts:	<i>Social:</i> Bringing C2C and LEED certification to the Iberian Peninsula. <i>Environmental:</i> The redesign of waste, energy consumption and site remediation of Hostal Empuries, and all environmental achievements of LEED and C2C certified projects and products respectively. <i>Economic:</i> The company has a turnover of 350.000€ p.a.
Use of innovative Technologies:	C2C thinking and Biophilic design require a complete change of mindset and given this permeates all of EIG's work innovation is at the heart of the business, examples promoted are "positive-Biochar", charcoal used as a fuel and soil nutrient, "Stone Paper" made from calcium carbonate and other recyclable nutrients, C2C solar tubes, tiles, carpets, furniture, table tops, packaging, paper, detergents, textiles, green roofs and walls, auxiliaries, etc.
Evidence of a holistic approach/world view:	The concepts used takes into consideration that the planet will need to feed 9 billion people in the near future, the challenges are social and the responses environmental and resource management.
Policies, Incentives and Regulations Needed:	Anything that encourages clean industry and the supply of clean air, water and soil such as the Clean Air Act in California. Public sector should mark clear objectives and provide incentives for the private sector with favourable fiscal measures as well as social policies regarding safe, healthy work places. Work together on the PLAN A.
Lessons and Recommendations:	Be ambitious and have a clear vision, don't deviate from this mission and maintain focus. Develop innovative solutions, be original and openminded. Just by changing from selling a product to leasing a product can be a – major - innovation in the market place and the Society.

References: www.ecointelligentgrowth.net