

**Increasing Participation in Patagonia Textile Recycling Programs: A Strategic Proposal for  
Collaboration with Amazon Supply Chain Services**

Dhanya Sethuraman

Samantha Anders: Friday 12-1 Section

Department of Organizational Studies/ Program in the Environment

University of Michigan

To the Patagonia Board of Executives,

I am writing to advocate for a potential new sustainability initiative to further our core values, namely environmentalism and not being bound by convention. I propose a collaboration between Amazon's supply chain system and Patagonia's Worn Wear and Common Thread Initiatives. I would like to challenge us to leave convention by considering the potential long-term benefits in making our high standards accessible to not only the average Patagonia consumer, but a wider base of potential consumers who feel that high-effort sustainability is not for them. Consumers may choose other less environmentally-centered companies and products over ours due to the speed of purchase, popularity, and widespread physical and digital networks that the companies utilize to promote their products. I believe that partnering with Amazon, a company that has already established those appeals to the majority of the global market, to expand our Worn Wear program, will set us up for long-term viability of this program, and therefore a realistic sustainability goal for today's consumers. This partnership would allow those with Amazon memberships to return their used Patagonia gear to us through physical drop-off locations like the Amazon lockers, or along with returns of other items through Amazon delivery services. I advocate that this approach would be particularly successful for the Common Threads Initiative, due to the two-way transit needed to recycle a customer's product.

Take a look at a fallen pioneer in textile recycling, Renew:cell. The company declared bankruptcy in 2024, a tragedy cited by Stanford Social Innovation Review to be in part due to issues with organization, sourcing, and accessibility of their recycling program (Carey, et al., 2024).

“The sourcing of used clothing proved resource-intensive and required a disciplined organization to work with collectors and sorters scattered globally...The systems for predicting raw material needs lacked vigorous sourcing controls” (Carey, et al., 2024).

Despite Renew:cell's strong dedication to revolutionizing sustainable fashion and textile sourcing, their naive business model failed them, perpetuating low resource productivity and concurrently killing the hopes of companies following in their footsteps (Carey, et al., 2024). This is a lesson to note when considering this new initiative: while counter-intuitive, Patagonia should consider that the most effective path to achieving total circularity is through partnering with well-established and reliable companies with generally sustainable practices (such as Amazon). By doing so, Patagonia creates the opportunity to tap into a successful supply chain model and engage a much wider audience of sustainability participants. On a smaller scale, the principle behind this proposal has been proven in small businesses across the country: collaborating with Amazon Lockers has allowed convenience store owners to see increased traffic in their own businesses through the reputable physical presence of Amazon. A convenience store owner, George Beal, explains that hosting an Amazon Locker at his several Johnny Quik Food Stores has created a “convenience to the neighborhood” (Dillard, 2020). One might claim that convenience may entail consumerism, and aligning with Amazon's culture of consumption detracts from our core values; on the contrary, Patagonia must enter the lives of the common consumer to enact its high morality. By allowing the Common Thread Initiative or the Worn Wear Program to have entry and exit points at Amazon Lockers across the world, for example, we increase the likelihood that the common public enhances our triple bottom line

(Soderstrom, 2025) by promoting local businesses (Dillard, 2020), increasing participation in circularity in the textile industry, and increasing our profit to reinvest into natural capital.

In order to track the success of this initiative and avoid environmentally harmful externalities (Soderstrom, 2025), Salesforce's carbon accounting tool, Net Zero Cloud, should be utilized by Patagonia (Hoffman, 2022). It is projected that demand for this sustainable auditing tool will increase in 2025 (Hoffman, 2022), so Patagonia should consider investment in a reliable ESG cloud earlier, rather than later. Most relevantly, Salesforce's Sustainability Cloud ("Net Zero Cloud") covers carbon accounting for value chain emissions (Scope 3 emissions), both upstream and downstream. While Patagonia's tracking of Scope 1 and 2 emissions (direct indirect emissions) is important, Net Zero Cloud tackles the difficult challenge of universally and accurately recording metrics for supply chain emissions as well. Additionally, a main benefit of this cloud tool is the accelerated timeline of carbon accounting, allowing for a faster pivot depending on whether the proposed initiative is succeeding by the metrics. Salesforce additionally aligns with our core values through initiatives such as their 1-1-1 model (Salesforce, n.d.), through which they dedicate 1% of their equity, employee time, and product back into the community. A reliable system for tracking metrics will be the first step to Patagonia's long-term success in the natural capitalism, and therefore independent environmentalism, movement.

To measure the progress of the Amazon-Patagonia initiative, it is in Patagonia's best interest to aim for the following metrics:

- 1) Increase the number of individuals who participate in the Worn Wear Program who accessed it through the Amazon Supply Chain (Lockers, return services, etc.) in comparison to the 2024 Patagonia-managed baseline by 15% by 2027, and 25% by 2030.
- 2) Decrease the raw sourced material made to create new Patagonia apparel by 20% and increase recycled Patagonia textiles by 20% by 2030, with an interim goal of 5% by the end of 2026.
- 3) Net-zero carbon emissions for supply chain activities by utilizing Amazon's commitment to cargo e-vans, reduced aviation emissions, etc. by 2040 (Amazon, 2023).
- 4) Collaborate with Amazon to add 5,000 new Amazon lockers to sustainably-run small businesses and B-corporations across the United States by the end of 2026, and maintain the rate of addition for five years with an effective goal of seeing a 25% average increase in foot traffic and 30% increase in in-person business to those locations.

These metrics are relevant (Anders, 2025) to our core values and are intentionally made to be achievable within the short-term in the unlikely event that we must pivot or abandon the collaboration with Amazon. Metric #4, in particular, aligns with our hopes to re-ignite small businesses who take particular care to reduce waste, innovate sustainable practices, and create economic opportunities for their local communities. In this way, Patagonia holds up its commitment to do things our way by innovating a long-term, low-maintenance, and effective symbiotic relationship between powerful companies like Patagonia/Amazon and smaller businesses struggling to monetarily sustain their commitment to the Earth. This initiative is Patagonia's best chance to parent and leave a legacy for sustainable fashion and business models as a whole.

## Sources

Amazon. (2021, 1 September). "The Science behind Amazon Prime." Amazon Science, [www.amazon.science/latest-news/the-science-behind-amazon-prime](http://www.amazon.science/latest-news/the-science-behind-amazon-prime).

Amazon. (2023). *Driving Climate Solutions*. (n.d.). Sustainability (US). [sustainability.aboutamazon.com/climate-solutions](http://sustainability.aboutamazon.com/climate-solutions).

Anders, S. (2025, February 7). Discussion: Discussion Section Week 5: SMART metrics [PowerPoint slides]. University of Michigan, Organizational Studies 208: Business and Sustainability.

Carey, T., & Antoshak, R. (n.d.). (2024, July 24). *Lessons from a sustainable fashion bankruptcy (SSIR). What Renewcell's Former CCO Learned From Bankruptcy*. Stanford Social Innovation Review. <https://ssir.org/articles/entry/renewcell-cco-bankruptcy>

Dillard, G. (2020, November 30). *Convenience store owners embrace Amazon Lockers*. The Business Journal. <https://thebusinessjournal.com/convenience-store-owners-embrace-amazon-lockers/>

Hoffman, A. (2022, April 13). *Can Salesforce Compete in the Carbon Accounting Market?* University of Michigan Erb Institute Collection of Sustainability Cases.

Salesforce. (n.d.). *Our founders created the 1% Pledge*. (n.d.). Salesforce. <https://www.salesforce.com/company/pledge/>

Soderstrom, S. (2025, January 15). Lecture: Triple Bottom Line, Environment [PowerPoint slides]. University of Michigan, Organizational Studies 208: Business and Sustainability.

Soderstrom, S. (2025, January 13). Lecture: Business Economics [PowerPoint slides]. University of Michigan, Organizational Studies 208: Business and Sustainability.