

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Member Information

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Major</u>
Christopher Waller	Sophomore	Mathematics
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Advisor(s): Aaron Yarmel, J. J. Grinde, Lauren Hince

Topic: Apple - Developing a More Sustainable E-Waste System

Division: Undergraduate

Audience: Board of Directors (Apple)

Executive Summary

Apple in recent years has made a push to become more environmentally conscious. However, a lack of transparency leads to concerns over environmental and labor harms resulting from the outsourcing of e-waste disposal. Additionally, this externalizing of important manufacturing capacity to third-party recyclers means a “carbon-neutral” Apple may be anything but in practice. As a result, Apple is prevented from reaching its goal of becoming completely carbon neutral by 2030. To solve these problems, we suggest Apple decreases reliance on third-party recyclers. In particular, we outline a “closed loop” process where Apple works directly with recyclers under sanctioned programs where environmental and labor standards can be directly monitored by watchdog groups.

The current system does not maximise the wellbeing of Apple’s stakeholders (shareholders, employees, contract workers, environment, etc.), leading to the unethical disposal of e-waste. In changing their practices, Apple has an opportunity to form credible commitments to their customers and ensure future business sustainability. Furthermore, there exist financial and legal incentives for Apple to adopt a “closed loop” solution, in addition to the ethical, financial, and legal issues that it solves.