



£500m is the amount that extending maternity leave from nine months to a year is expected to cost the Treasury



28 million

is the number of UK addresses that Royal Mail delivers to daily

SOURCES: DAILY TELEGRAPH/ROYAL MAIL

Making it personal

ENTREPRENEURSHIP How two firms created novelty in a crowded market

Do trends create opportunities, or do opportunities create trends? Two of today's trends that seem to be weathering the economic downturn are eco-friendliness and personalised products, and a couple of Swiss firms show us how they relate to entrepreneurial opportunity.

THE SAGA OF SIGG

For 101 years, Sigg has crafted aluminium drinking bottles in Biel. For about 90 of those years, it operated in relative obscurity, peddling reusable containers in a disposable world. But during the 1990s recycling gained traction and the Sigg bottle became an environmentalist status symbol. Demand soared. Sigg responded by increasing capacity and adding flexibility to the original one-colour bottle. Consumers can today choose from 48 different bottle designs and 20 different caps, creating over a thousand possible unique and personalised combinations.

THE FABLE OF FREITAG

In Zurich, Markus and Daniel Freitag were also hard at work. Unsatisfied with the durability of available bicycle messenger bags, they wanted to create a heavy-duty, water-repellent product. So, in 1993, they opened Freitag AG. Instead of using high-tech materials, they made bags from old truck tarpaulins, car seat belts and bicycle inner tubes. Recycling materials positioned them to take direct advantage of the emerging eco trend and meant that every bag is as original and customised as the truck that hauled its skin in the first place.

URNS IN THE PLOT

The environmental trend Sigg helped in a small way to create has multiplied sales and brought its humble Sigg bottle to more than 40 countries. Designing an opportunity for an existing trend, Freitag bags are now on sale online, in five German and Swiss



Bag to basics
The Freitag brothers make customised bags out of old truck parts

shops and in 300 stores around the world. Freitag has done so well that it has created a recycling genre that other designers have started following.

NEW MARKETS

Entrepreneurs use what is available to them to create new products and markets. To illustrate the authorship of the

entrepreneur, consider the environment without the Freights or Sigg. Would there be a market for customised drinking bottles? Would people pay high-fashion prices for bags made of commercial waste? Likely not. Entrepreneurs do more than just meet existing market needs and discover business opportunities, they narrate novelty in the market. ●

details

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Rat race

the world according to Beach



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