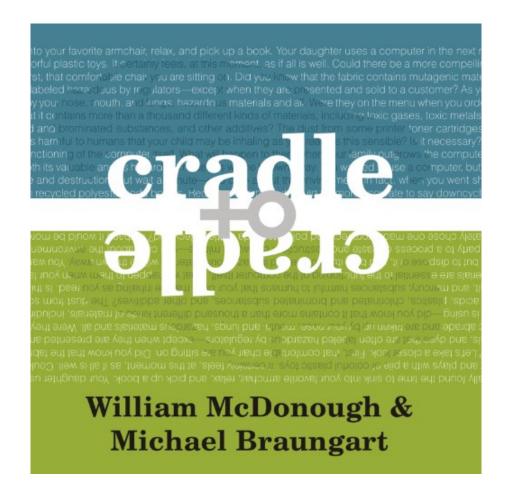


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Amazon.com Review

Paper or plastic? Neither, say William McDonough and Michael Braungart. Why settle for the least harmful alternative when we could have something that is better--say, edible grocery bags! In Cradle to Cradle, the authors present a manifesto calling for a new industrial revolution, one that would render both traditional manufacturing and traditional environmentalism obsolete. Recycling, for instance, is actually "downcycling," creating hybrids of biological and technical "nutrients" which are then unrecoverable and unusable. The authors, an architect and a chemist, want to eliminate the concept of waste altogether, while preserving commerce and allowing for human nature. They offer several compelling examples of corporations that are not just doing less harm--they're actually doing some good for the environment and their neighborhoods, and making more money in the process. Cradle to Cradle is a refreshing change from the intractable environmental conflicts that dominate headlines. It's a handbook for 21st-century innovation and should be required reading for business hotshots and environmental activists. --Therese Littleton

From Publishers Weekly

Environmentalists are normally the last people to be called shortsighted, yet that's essentially what architect McDonough and chemist Braungart contend in this clarion call for a new kind of ecological consciousness. The authors are partners in an industrial design firm that devises environmentally sound buildings, equipment and products. They argue that conventional, expensive eco-efficiency measures things like recycling or emissions reduction are inadequate for protecting the long-term health of the planet. Our industrial products are simply not designed with environmental safety in mind; there's no way to reclaim the natural resources they use or fully prevent ecosystem damage, and mitigating the damage is at best a stop-gap measure. What the authors propose in this clear, accessible manifesto is a new approach they've dubbed "eco-effectiveness": designing from the ground up for both eco-safety and cost efficiency. They cite examples from their own work, like rooftops covered with soil and plants that serve as natural insulation; nontoxic dyes and fabrics; their current overhaul of Ford's legendary River Rouge factory; and the book itself, which will be printed on a synthetic "paper" that doesn't use trees. Because profitability is a requirement of the designs, the thinking goes, they appeal to business owners and obviate the need for

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Editors of Scientific American

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"Reduce, reuse, recycle," urge environmentalists; in other words, do more with less in order to minimize damage. As William McDonough and Michael Braungart argue in their provocative, visionary book, however, this approach perpetuates a one-way, "cradle to grave" manufacturing model that dates to the Industrial Revolution and casts off as much as 90 percent of the materials it uses as waste, much of it toxic. Why not challenge the notion that human industry must inevitably damage the natural world? they ask. In fact, why not take nature itself as our model? A tree produces thousands of blossoms in order to create another tree, yet we do not consider its abundance wasteful but safe, beautiful, and highly effective; hence, "waste equals food" is the first principle the book sets forth. Products might be designed so that, after their useful life, they provide nourishment for something new-either as "biological nutrients" that safely re-enter the environment or as "technical nutrients" that circulate within closed-loop industrial cycles without being "downcycled" into low-grade uses (as most "recyclables" now are). Elaborating their principles from experience redesigning everything from carpeting to corporate campuses, the authors make an exciting and viable case for change.

Sales Rank: #11859 in AudiblePublished on: 2008-08-20Format: Unabridged

Original language: English Running time: 319 minutes

Amazon.com Review

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Editors of Scientific American

Most helpful customer reviews

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Practicle ways to have an effect on the invironment for business and individuals.

By David Thompson

Cradle to Cradle and it's following book (The Upcycle) describe how in practical terms people and businesses can affect the health of the planet. The authors are/have worked with companies and governments to put their theories into practice. It works and those companies who have gone that route have saved money and improved the environment around them. Individuals can also follow many of their ideas to improve our lives and the environment. The choices can be as simple as planting trees, recycling and buying products from companies who follow the authors stands to putting solar panels on your roof. Read the books, get to work.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A New Way of Seeing and Making.

By Rosemary

A new trend is beginning to emerge and its presence increasingly felt in our everyday lives. Let me offer an example: As you take a stroll through your neighborhood you are likely to see not just one container, but two lining the curbs of the street. To many, their existence resembles progress and an increased responsibility in the way we interact with our environment. In fact, to own and use a recycling bin (yes, you likely already guessed it) in some ways has progressed to an object of pride or a display of consumer responsibility. However, it's early and you take little notice of them as they have become quite commonplace in your neighborhood. You continue your walk and pass a couple wearing matching slip-on shoes, which you recognize from an advertisement as being made of recycled rubber and various other recycled materials. In addition, they are each carrying a cotton grocery bag which they intentionally bring and reuse every time they make such a trip to the store. You head back down your street (feeling slightly guilty after the couple

passed you and wondering if you shouldn't also be using such a bag) and arrive back at your residence. You reach down and pick up the newspaper (made of recycled paper) just as your neighbor pulls into their driveway, windows down and music playing. You recognize the soothing voice of Jack Johnson and strain your ears to listen more closely:

If you're going to the market to buy some juice. You've got to bring your own bags and you learn to reduce your waste...And if your brother or your sister's got some cool clothes...You could try them on before you buy some more of those...Reuse, we've got to learn to reuse... And if the first two R's don't work out...and if you've got to make some trash...Don't throw it out...Recycle, we've got to learn to recycle...

I think I've made my point. The message is everywhere. And as Johnson's song laid out for us above, the message is clear: Reduce, reuse, recycle. However, as widespread and as this message is becoming one must stop and ask: is it effective? William McDonough and Michael Braungart argue in Cradle to Cradle: Remaking The Way We Make Things that such a design goal is ineffective. Efficient? Yes. Effective? Not quite. They propose that such efforts, which they categorize as "eco-efficient" design, are only a "less bad" version of a poor design methodology that emerged from the industrial revolution. These efforts do not change the way products are designed, rather they seek to mitigate the effects of poor design. As result, they seek a negative goal of zero impact on the environment. The problems associated with this approach are numerous. First, it creates a dichotomy between the environment and industry, with gains to one necessitating a loss to the other (also known as zero sum, see the trend). This leads to conflict and opposing agendas between the two and does very little to reveal how the two may actually be of benefit to one another. Second, as mentioned, it only makes a bad thing, less bad. To reduce something bad or harmful does not negate its impact, but only delays it. As such, these efforts are by definition unsustainable. Third, at best it has a goal of seeking not to degrade the environment and certainly does not consider the possibility that good design may actually improve the environment. So what is the main problem with the design form that emerged from the industrial revolution? Put simply, it was designed to become waste. Or put another way, it was designed with waste in mind. The authors label such design, cradle-to-grave design, as it is purposed from inception to become waste. They suggest that to solve this design dilemma we must rethink our idea of waste, or rather not think of it as a possibility at all. If design is reborn without waste in mind then we will have new products and new systems that bring life and wasteful abundance to its surroundings. If we sow design with new life in mind, our industries and our environment will reap the benefits of this change in design methodology. The author's point out that nature's idea of waste or excess actually enriches its surroundings. What if we design products from inception that sought to do the same? What if we learned from nature's example and designed our systems cradle-to-cradle?

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

When Action & Reputation Mirror Each Other

By John Cirigliano

Braungart & McDonough's beautiful rendition of the way my father wanted the world to work: renewably, collaboratively, intellectually honestly.

We could easily call "Cradle" a dream, but the real world fascination you will find here pins Nobel Prizequality medals on the lapels of Michael & Bill.

Cradle gives us hope that the excesses of the Mechanical Age do not suffocate us with their formaldehyde gases, but will energize an age where taking a problem to its highest level of abstraction yields tools to solve the thorniest issue we face. Do our actions mirror our reputation?

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