



Creating Mission-Driven Companies

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☀ Call to Action

Encourage your sports teams to take the SUPR's Plastic Free Pledge to reduce plastic pollution. Spread the word blue-standard.com/programs/sports-program/

☀ Values

- Compassion
- Innovation
- Imagination
- Environmentalism

☀ Lessons Learned

Be a witness. When you observe history unfolding around you, make sure to record what you see, so future generations can learn from it.

Dig deeper into stories that may seem irrelevant to you. Truth is often hidden from plain view. Ask questions. Explore!

Raising awareness about injustice is good. Doing something about injustice is what changes the world.

Share your story and live with passion, and people will follow you.

As a young reporter, David Dietz embarked on a dangerous journey to the Middle East, to cover the political situation that came to be known as the Arab Spring.

He saw revolution in six countries, and was on the ground for critical developments in political movements as they were happening across the region. David covered many stories as the Arab Spring unfolded. But it was through one feature story he wrote about the Egyptian cotton industry that he learned about harmful industrial and agricultural practices that were having a devastating toll on the health of farmers; and the direction of his career changed almost immediately. He has gone on to found multiple mission-driven companies, from Modavanti, an ethical boutique fashion business, to his current project, SUPR, which is working with professional sports teams to reduce single-use plastic waste. "We are at a tipping point," he says. "Saving the planet will be part and parcel of successful businesses of the future."

☀ Language Arts

Conduct research into the cotton industry in Egypt: What are the common practices (both in cultivation and in processing)? Why are these practices dangerous to humans, and the environment? How can they be improved? Then, compare the practices used in Egypt to the ones used in the US. What similarities do you see? What differences? With the information you gather, create a short video (no longer than 5 minutes) in which you explain the health risks associated with the cotton industry for those who work in it.

How do you start a new company in a field you know nothing about? Choose an industry you're unfamiliar with but that could benefit from a more environmentally-friendly approach.

Working in groups of 3-5 people, create a presentation in which you detail the steps necessary to learn all you can about this industry and the traditional practices associated with it. How can these traditional practices be replaced by environmentally-friendly and sustainable practices? How would you market and handle the day-to-day operations of this company? What would be the main challenges?

After reading David's story, participate in a [Socratic Seminar](#)¹ with your whole class, in which you discuss David's story as well as his motivations, achievements, and impact on the world.

STEM Activities

In groups, research one of three aspects of sustainable cotton farming practices: you can choose to focus on [water](#)², [biotech](#)³, or [land](#)⁴. How do sustainable farming practices help the environment and improve human health in relation to the aspect you have chosen to study?

Select an article of clothing you own made from cotton. Research the origin of the cotton used to make it and the production process used by the company behind it. Do they use sustainable processes? If not, what companies and brands are known to use sustainable farming and production techniques? Create a poster presentation of your research: include figures on the resources and byproducts used to create your clothing item.

Attend a school-sponsored event such as a sports game, dance, or a play and take note of any waste, particularly plastic waste, that you see there. Does your school provide/sell products made or packaged with plastic during these events? If so, devise a solution to reduce the amount of plastic waste used at school events. Present your idea to the class and/or a school administrator, including any data you have collected to support your idea.

Sustainability Innovations

David's passion for sustainability began when he learned that cotton was the second-most destructive industry in the world, after oil and gas. Today, [U.S. Cotton](#)⁵ and the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocols are serving as a barrier against non-sustainable cotton practices. U.S. Cotton is complying with UN Sustainability standards in order to align the demand for sustainable cotton with the growing UN Sustainable Development Goals.

One of David's current success stories is centered around SUPR. SUPR has three different levels of certification for their partners (Bronze, Silver, Gold). What are the requirements for each certification level, and which sports teams are involved? If one of your favorite teams is not SUPR certified, write them a letter explaining why they should participate in a SUPR certification.

In this [article](#)⁶, the 10 worst single-use plastics and their eco-alternatives are highlighted. Do you regularly use any of these single-use plastics? If so, track your plastic usage for a month and find eco-friendly substitutes to your normal daily choices.

In the fight to reduce plastic usage, [bioplastics](#)⁷ have been developed. Read this description of bioplastics and the potential substances that can be used to create them. Create a list of pros and cons of bioplastic usage and identify the areas in which they can be most effective.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Sustainable Fashion Industry. New clothes will continue to be made, of course, but they can be made sustainably. Materials like

organic cotton or recycled plastics can be utilized, and designed in such a way that the clothing at the end of its (ideally long) lifespan can be recycled or composted (for example by not mixing natural and synthetic fibers). [Here is a great introduction to the field](#)⁸. And an [article on the many ways sustainability is shaping the future of the fashion industry](#)⁹.

Environmental Journalist. Many people who love to write make their careers as full-time journalists. Some dedicate their writing to chronicling the many environmental problems we face, as well as exploring the many innovative solutions to our sustainability challenges that are being developed. Some are freelancers, pitching stories to a variety of outlets. Others work full time for a news outlet, or with nonprofits, or even government offices. To learn more about this career, [read here](#)¹⁰. And here's a valuable resource: the [Society of Environmental Journalists](#)¹¹, which offers job boards, mentoring, annual conferences, and listservs for environmental journalists.

Permaculturist. Cotton farming as it is currently practiced, like other forms of modern agriculture, is toxic to humans, animals, and the soil. Sustainable farming, or [permaculture](#)¹², can produce higher yields, heal the land, and not harm people or animals. Today there are hundreds of permaculture training opportunities, and this skill can be applied on large farms, farmsteads, backyards, urban or school gardens, or anywhere you might grow plants. Learn more at [freepermaculture.com](#)¹³, which includes an online introduction to permaculture and a database of permaculture jobs and volunteer opportunities.

1 <https://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/socratic-seminars#:~:text=The%20Socratic%20seminar%20is%20a,to%20the%20thoughts%20of%20others.>

2 <https://cottontoday.cottoninc.com/cotton-production/water/>

3 <https://cottontoday.cottoninc.com/cotton-production/biotech/>

4 <https://cottontoday.cottoninc.com/cotton-production/land/>

5 <https://cottonusa.org/sustainability>

6 <https://www.wwf.org.au/news/blogs/10-worst-single-use-plastics-and-eco-friendly-alternatives#gs.l1ypkk>

7 <https://www.plasticsindustry.org/supply-chain/recycling-sustainability/bioplastics>

8 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_fashion

9 <https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/sustainable-fashion-jobs>

10 <https://www.openschoolofjournalism.com/specializations/environmental-journalism>

11 <https://www.sej.org/>

12 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permaculture>

13 <https://www.freepermaculture.com/>

