

Superhero Spotlight Jeff Golfman: How He Turned Wheat Into Paper to Save the Trees

Written by Tera on September 5, 2012 --



Superhero Spotlight on Jeff Golfman: How He Turned Straw Into Paper to Save the Trees

I just have to think about my friend Jeff Golfman and I get all choked up with tears. We all hear stories of people who want to do something to “save the planet” but there are few who take it beyond the realm of philanthropic parlour talk and bring it into the arena of real life on planet Earth. There are few that are willing to roll up their sleeves and persist in spite of overwhelming obstacles to make change happen. But my friend [Jeff Golfman](#) is one of those people.

Driven by an unyielding commitment to save our forests and improve conditions on planet Earth, Jeff did something few would have imagined possible. He turned wheat into paper. In this short interview he explains how he did it, what kept him going in spite of the obstacles and what you can do now that he’s come this far to get the mes-

sage out and help our trees continue to breathe, please!

A Deep Love of Nature



TW: When did you really start to feel committed to the desire to DO something and make a difference in the world?

I have always loved nature. My favourite place in the world is our family cottage, which is on a lake and in an area with lots of trees. I think that has always affected me.

In terms of really waking up to wanting to save trees, I do remember a day in 1990 when I was in my early 20s, before the days when Green was something that was on everyone's mind, when my sister told me about an Earth Day event that she had attended. I had never heard of Earth Day and was very curious about it. That same day I heard a couple other things related to saving the planet and it really got me thinking. At that moment, I realized that being aware and responsible for how we treat the Earth's resources is something that requires serious attention and focus. I decided right then and there that I was going to be part of that shift. It really resonated with me and felt right.

This realization overlapped my other realization, which was that I needed to take care of myself and fuel my body with clean and nutritious food. That gave me a clearer mind, and helped me to really wake up and become aligned with making the good of the planet the focus of my activities.

The Straw That Broke the Forestry Industry's Back



TW: Do you remember when the idea to turn straw into paper popped into your world?

In 1991, I started the curbside blue box recycling program in Winnipeg, Canada. Each month we would divert thousands of pounds paper and sell them to paper mills for recycling. My work in this area raised my awareness of just how much paper we use, often once, and then discard. Several years later, in 1998, while I was driving through rural Manitoba past vast amounts of straw fibre grown by farmers, it occurred to me that this fibre should be used to make paper instead of cutting down trees.

TW: Tell us a bit about this paper and what's great about it?



Step Forward Paper™ is the first 8.5" X 11", 80% tree-free paper sheet made from wheat straw waste and bleached using an Elemental Chlorine-Free sequence (ECF).

The paper is FSC certified by the Rainforest Alliance . It's ideal for use in home, office, and commercial printing. The customer appeal of this product is its **price, performance and environmental attributes**.

I'd like to emphasize that Step Forward Paper™ is a win-win for everyone involved: **farmers receive extra income, trees are saved, the carbon footprint is low and Canadians have access to an affordable paper of excellent quality, and the opportunity to be involved in a new paper paradigm shift.**

The reality is that although we live in a digital age, we continue to use paper as much as we ever have. **The paperless office is a myth and people still like reading books in the traditional paper format.** Finding an alternative paper source makes so much sense. We are saving trees from being cut down by using wheat straw instead of forest fibre. Wheat straw is abundantly available and a waste product of agriculture that can be turned into a new revenue stream for farmers.

Overcoming Obstacles Along the Way



TW: Did you have any idea the kinds of obstacles you would have to overcome to make it happen?

I knew from the start that this was going to be a very challenging long-term project. Throughout the course of development, people have told us that what we are trying to

achieve is not possible. Having faced some of that sort of opposition and skepticism before, for example when I was developing the blue box program in my home town of Winnipeg, I knew how to maneuver through that and keep focused on my goal.

My healthy lifestyle, which includes a raw vegan plant-based diet and daily exercise, provides me ample energy for the ambiguity and demands of a start-up, entrepreneurial environment.

Instead of being discouraged by obstacles, I view the inevitable things that come up as challenges to be expected along the road to the our end goal to save trees. That's all I know, I'm here to save trees and help the farmers! I tend to focus on solutions to whatever situation I encounter, which is an easier and more efficient lens to have than one framed with a problematic outlook.

Good Food & Fitness Kept Me Going

TW: You spend a lot of time alone, traveling on a ridiculous international schedule and persisting in some pretty uncomfortable circumstances where so many other people would have given up. What kept you going when things were difficult?



One thing for sure is that I fuel myself with the best food that I can find wherever I am. I visit local food markets wherever I am in the world to find the best and freshest fruits and vegetables. I also travel with food like chia and hemp hearts, so I always have nourishing foods with me.

Exercise is another huge source of energy for me. I started running a couple years ago and now I run almost everyday. It really helps to clear my mind, reduce stress and adjust to time differences when I'm travelling.

I keep my commitments, and I trust my intuition. I know that I'm committed to saving trees, and I trust that tree-free paper is one way that I can help do that. So, that vision and knowing really keeps me going, because, well, it just feels like something I'm meant to be doing. Once you find your groove of being aligned to purpose, things just flow. I'm definitely in the flow !

I surround myself with good people wherever I go. One thing I've really learned, and continue to learn, is that maintaining boundaries is critical. So I've let go of negative situations and people, and that has created space for wonderful people and opportunities. I have a lot of people cheering me on, and not just me, but the project, so that has really been helpful. You Tera, of course, are one of those people so thank you for this!!

The Next Step Forward



TW: There was a time when you saw where you are now as a far off goal. You didn't even have paper. It was just an idea. Now your paper is in National Distribution for Canada and bound for US distribution next. You've come a long way. But now tell us, what's the far off goal of where you're going from here? Of where we're going from here?

Our present main focus is the launch of Step Forward Paper at 335 Staples stores across Canada, and at Staples.ca.

Next we plan to introduce Step Forward Paper into the American market.

To build a straw-based tree-free paper mill in Manitoba, we need to have sales numbers of Step Forward Paper™ that show there is public demand for this product in Canada.

It is exciting that producing Step Forward Paper in Canada will further reduce the carbon footprint of this straw-based paper that is already low, and further reduce the selling price that is currently already competitive with paper made of recycled forest fibre.

TW: You've come along way and you did a lot of it alone or with a small group of people supporting you. Now that you're this far, and the opportunity to engage others is here, what can we do to help make it happen?

The most helpful thing that people can do to help us be successful is to buy Step Forward Paper at Staples Canada. You can also help introduce others to Step Forward Paper™ by liking our Facebook page, following us on Twitter and sharing our links with your communities!

Free samples and much more information is available on our website at www.stepforwardpaper.com

TW: Jeff, thank you. I trickle a tear or two every time I think of what you do and the passion with which you've done it. I know that when my children's children have green fields to play in and trees under which they take shade it will be in no small way thanks to your vision and determination to make things go right, to believe in something better and then to do whatever it took to make it happen.

So thank YOU! We are all very grateful.

What You Can Do To Help



As Jeff said, here are a few things you can do to get the word out there and I'm attaching this with a few of my own suggestions.

1. **Buy Step Forward Paper at [Staples Canada!](#)**
2. **Introduce others to Step Forward Paper.** Share this article or tweet and post about wheat-based paper!
3. Like the [Step Forward Facebook page](#) or Follow them on Twitter
4. **Share their links with your community.**
5. **Buy extra Step Forward Paper** and give some to your friends, business associates or school teachers and get the word out there. Both Mika and Sebastian brought a package of paper to their schools to show their communities what it is and why it's a better solution!

What's Your Favorite Tree?



Let us know below what's your favorite tree?

Jeff's favorite tree is the Acacia tree of the African Savannah! What's yours? **Tell us below and you could win one of 3 packages of Jeff's new tree-free paper!** We'll choose 3 people and announce it below in the blog post next week!

If your comment is selected, we'll send you a package of Jeff's new paper!

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