

The Great Simplification

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[00:00:00] **Wes Carter:** As we transition packaging to mimic nature, first and foremost, it will help alleviate the waste crisis. But I also believe because packaging is ubiquitous, it is a potent symbol of what our values are as human beings. The packaging says we don't value life. We don't value nature. We're a throwaway society.

[00:00:21] But as we shift to more sustainable packaging, it's also a shift in saying we value life and acknowledging how important the natural world is for abundance, for happiness, for all the things that humans desire. So this transition is spiritual in nature and can be seen through that lens.

[00:00:45] **Nate Hagens:** Today I'm joined by Wes Carter, one of the leading voices, if not the leading voice in the movement towards sustainable packaging. We talk not only about the state and logistics of the packaging industry, but also about his personal journey driving ecological reform within it. Wes Carter is the third generation leader of Atlantic Packaging, which is the largest privately held and most technical packaging company in North America, supporting major consumer product packaging needs across virtually every manufacturing vertical.

[00:01:20] Today as President of Atlantic Packaging, Wes is the driving force behind the company's sustainability initiatives and its commitment to making real and lasting change. He is also the founder of a new Earth Project, which is a strategic collaboration between outdoor enthusiasts and global packaging suppliers.

[00:01:41] Their mission is to rid the world's oceans, lakes, and rivers of plastic pollution. In this episode, Wes and I explore the inescapable role of packaging in

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modern life and what it takes to make that reality less destructive to our planet. While Wes and I don't agree on everything, and I rarely do agree with any guest completely, we meet at a critical shared belief that human systems must ultimately prioritize ambient service to life.

[00:02:12] Wes has brought that principle into the heart of an industry that touches nearly everything we consume. Please welcome Wes Carter. Wes Carter, welcome to the show.

[00:02:25] **Wes Carter:** Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

[00:02:28] **Nate Hagens:** it's good to see you again. I am excited for this conversation. Why? Because I have no idea where it's gonna go.

[00:02:38] there are some topics I want to cover. specifically you are, the third generation president of Atlantic Packaging, which is the largest privately held packaging company in North America. and you and Atlantic are leading the integration of the packaging industry with the idea of stewardship.

[00:03:00] For the natural world. So let's just start there. Can you say a bit about why there is increasing public awareness and urgency, the way that our society packages goods?

[00:03:13] **Wes Carter:** Sure. Yeah. I mean, as you said, we're an 80-year-old privately held packaging company, and we support the packaging needs of the largest consumer products companies and retail brands in the world.

[00:03:25] in pretty much every industry vertical. We service the food industry, the beverage industry, the building products industry, the e-commerce industry. So it's companies like Proctor and Gamble, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Amazon Williams, Sonoma, I mean, oh yeah. BMW Volvo. Like, it's such a wide swath of companies.

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[00:03:45] BMW has a packaging. Yeah, you think about all the components, that go into their cars, like, you know, most of the automotive plants are assembly plants, and then they have tier one and tier two suppliers that typically are in the same geography that are making windshield wipers or brake assemblies or drive trains, and those things are being shipped into an assembly plant.

[00:04:07] So oftentimes a lot of our customers will be the tier one and tier two suppliers that are shipping these components into the assembly plants.

[00:04:15] **Nate Hagens:** If I interrupt every question I ask you, we're gonna be here for six hours knowing you and I, so please continue on, on, on the increased, issue of, plastics and packaging.

[00:04:26] **Wes Carter:** Yeah, and I mean, I'll, start out by saying, you know, today, sustainability is, a part of my DNA, I mean, it is. The thing that drives me more than any other single thing, is to be an organization that is supporting, what I. Call the, a sustainable revolution in the supply chain. But that is not where I started, you know, when I first started my career almost 25 years ago now, sustainability wasn't even on my radar, you know?

[00:04:54] I was just a, young kid outta college who was joining his family's company and learning how to sell packaging. and, I learned a lot. My father was an incredible entrepreneur, that really took our business from a small little regional company to, a large national player over his 50 year career.

[00:05:11] And I love the organization and I love the people. and that was what originally attracted me to join the organization. but I've always been a lifelong outdoor person. You know, I grew up, on the coast of North Carolina as a surfer and a fisherman. I was an Eagle Scout as a kid, and when I got outta school, I worked in the outdoor industry in Park City, Utah.

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[00:05:31] So I've just always loved the outdoors. And how this really began for me was, you know, about 10 years ago, when I, you know, my career had matured. I was, I'd been doing this a little while. I was pretty good at it. I, you know, understood how to service customers. I knew what our company was all about.

[00:05:48] but I was on a surfing trip. It's to Southeast Asia, actually, with my brother and some friends of mine, and the plastic pollution that I was witnessing was, radical. And I was in arguably the most beautiful place on the planet I'd ever been is Surfers Paradise, the Awa Islands. And I'm looking around in the lineup and there's plastic everywhere, and most of it is packaging.

[00:06:09] And there was just this moment where I was like, man, th this is all coming from the supply chain that we're a part of. Like a lot of the pollution that I'm witnessing isn't all packaging that we sell, but this is a, function of the supply chain not functioning properly. Like th this is a, this is a.

[00:06:28] Direct evidence of an illness, you know, that's kind of how I saw it. And so when I got home from that trip, I like to say it wasn't a strike of lightning. It wasn't like that in that moment. Everything changed, but it really began a dialogue for me, an internal dialogue about like, what, is my career really gonna be about?

[00:06:46] And ultimately, what is my life really gonna be about? And we already had an organization that was highly technical. You know, my dad had really led our organization to be a highly sophisticated packaging company that was focused on packaging efficiency. That was our value proposition since the mid nineties, is helping company drive out cost and reduce damage through innovation.

[00:07:10] You know, sophisticated products, sophisticated packaging equipment, marrying those two things together. So. We already had this sort of useless model that was our primary value proposition. It's how we cut our teeth at places like Coca-Cola. but what we weren't doing, and really I didn't see anybody in our

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industry doing much, was really paying attention to what happened to these products after we sold them.

[00:07:34] You know, it was once we sold a product, it's no longer our responsibility. It's somebody else's responsibility. And. Witnessing all that plastic pollution, not just in Indonesia, but I was seeing it too in the marshes of, Charleston, South Carolina where I like to fish. And when I would go home and surf off the coasts of Riceville Beach and get outta the water and see plastic bags and plastic bottles on the beach, you know, it's like there's an opportunity for an organization like us to really have an impact.

[00:08:03] And first of all, we have to acknowledge that if we are. Creating or selling materials that have an opportunity to end up as pollution, then my belief is that we have an inherent responsibility to make sure that doesn't happen. You know, and that is not what I was hearing out there in the public sphere.

[00:08:20] It was like, oh, broken waste infrastructure, or it's a litter problem. Like really pushing this plastic pollution crisis on individual human behavior, which to me is ridiculous. I mean, it is the responsibility of industry. To provide products and materials that are healthy for humans and for the natural world, which are, you know, completely integrated.

[00:08:45] I mean, planetary health and human health are very integrated With a lag. With a lag, exactly. And so, you know, the, it's been a journey for me for sure, and I can talk more about how it all evolved, but ultimately the catalyzer for me was that trip and, witnessing the impact our industry was having because up until that point, you know, we were only innovating in the direction of speed efficiency.

[00:09:18] Cost, convenience like that, and not just the packaging industry. I think I can, you can argue almost since the industrial revolution, the altar that industry

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has worshiped at, has been the altar of cost, convenience, and comfort. We have, we decided that's what humanity needed. We need to be more comfortable.

[00:09:36] That'll make us happy. Well, the plastic pollution crisis, climate change, all of the environmental degradation that we are witnessing in today's world is a result of innovating in the wrong direction. Well, I say the wrong direction. Cost and convenience and comfort aren't necessarily bad things. They're just terrible masters, you know, and so today, to me, sustainability is really the acknowledgement that we are nature.

[00:10:03] Not something separate from it. And we as intelligent beings on this planet, have a responsibility and a privilege to steward life. Like life is sacred. And so if we acknowledge that undeniable fact, then. A sustainable revolution in packaging is just a pivot to begin to innovate products in the direction of life, in the direction of health.

[00:10:31] And I, believe, you know, that is what we are trying to do at Atlantic and with the New Earth Project, is acknowledging a fundamental truth of reality. That life is sacred and that the natural world is integral. The health of the natural world is integral to our own health, and we need to create products that harmonize with the natural world, that mimic nature, not our antagonistic to it.

[00:10:56] **Nate Hagens:** So I have a ton of questions. I'm gonna, I'm gonna skip right ahead, because this is what is on my mind at the moment after hearing what you just said. What percent roughly of a product? Like a, bottle of Coca-Cola? a plastic bottle of Coca-Cola is the packaging.

[00:11:16] **Wes Carter:** Oh. What percentage is the packaging to the total product itself?

[00:11:19] To the total

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[00:11:20] **Nate Hagens:** cost of the product?

[00:11:22] **Wes Carter:** you know, it's, so variable, right? I mean, you know, like, but ultimately I think the thing to understand is all of this plastic packaging, we'll use single use plastic packaging. You know, like ultimately the reason it's ubiquitous is 'cause it's so cheap. There is no cheaper way to deliver a product to an individual consumer in most cases.

[00:11:47] And so if all we care about is convenience and cheap, that's what you get. And I don't, believe that all plastics are bad. What I believe is that myopically saying plastic in every application is preferable because it's the least expensive is super problematic.

[00:12:10] **Nate Hagens:** Well, here, was where I was going with that question.

[00:12:13] If, we tripled the cost of packaging to enable some. Biodegradable things made from bamboo or coconut shells or whatever technology there would be. Do, does that technology exist today to make the PLAs the what, we're currently using plastics for that would be healthier for the environment. And the only, the hurdle is, cost to the bottom line of, either the consumers or the corporations that use it.

[00:12:48] **Wes Carter:** Yes. I mean there, there's multiple factors that we have to acknowledge. certainly one thing I remind people of is plastics. There have been. Hundreds of billions of dollars over the last 40 or 50 years invested in the development of plastics. And so in a lot of these nature-based feed stocks outside of paper products, there's been \$2 invested in Right.

[00:13:13] You know, over the last two years. I mean, you know, this is a very new thing of trying to make plastics from hemp or from seaweed or from mycelium. And so they have no scale. You just said to make

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[00:13:25] **Nate Hagens:** plastics from hemp, did you mean packaging or did you mean plastics?

[00:13:28] **Wes Carter:** Both. Yeah, I mean he, you know, there, you know, we're, there, there's opportunities to make, a lot of materials from things like hemp and seaweed and mycelium and lignin from fiber.

[00:13:40] I mean, and we're working on a lot of those things. So yes, cost is a big barrier, but, you know, probably before that is just functionality, you know, so like, the time it takes to innovate a new packaging material that can give you the performance that you get from plastic, is the first barrier, you know, and then you have cost.

[00:14:03] Now, fortunately. There is a lot of legislation, EPR legislation, is what you're hearing more and more about. there's about 10 states that have implemented EPR schemes. What is EPR? It stands for Extended Producer Responsibility. It basically says that the producers, which are really the brands, that are delivering products to you, are responsible for the packaging and the cost of the disposal of that packaging.

[00:14:34] That's new. I mean, today in most places, all of that lands on the taxpayer. The brands aren't responsible for the disposal of the packaging that ends up as trash or recyclables at your house. EPR says, no, we're gonna push those costs back on the brands themselves. And it really, it's a fee structure. it's really a tax.

[00:14:57] and the more difficult the product is to recycle or compost the higher the fees are typically. And so the fees are scaled based on the difficulty the end of life, you know, scenarios. And it does a couple of things. The funding from EPR in a perfect world funds, investments in, recycling infrastructure and more sophisticated recycling and expanding composting as an example.

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[00:15:24] But it also levels the playing field. It takes these really cheap. Plastic products and adds attacks to 'em so that the alternative nature-based materials have a fighting chance of getting into the marketplace. So EPR philosophically I really agree with. in practice it's, a bear to implement when you're talking about the entire materials economy.

[00:15:46] **Nate Hagens:** So break it down, for the viewers. there's a distinction between industrial. Packaging and in, and, direct to consumer packaging, right? Correct, And then there's also, like, there's the United States and there's Europe, but then there's Asia. And you were just talking about when you were, surfing.

[00:16:09] To my knowledge, I was in India and my friend just got back from Vietnam. They just burn their plastic. there's not even any recycling. So how did the, how, do, how does what's happening in North America differ from other places in the world with respect to the, industrial and direct to consumer packaging?

[00:16:27] **Wes Carter:** Traditionally at Atlantic, for most of my career, and certainly for most of my father's career, we primarily sold B2B packaging, or what I call logistical packaging. We're selling packaging to big companies that are shipping to other big companies, and it's, you know, full pallet loads or what we call unit loads of product.

[00:16:46] That was the ti primary packaging. It's things like stretch film and shrink bundling film and corner boards and corrugated boxes, like everything that would go into a unit load. But with the advent of e-commerce, you know, there's so much more direct to consumer packaging where a lot of the direct to consumer has moved from a retail store to your doorstep.

[00:17:09] And so the amount of packaging going to people's homes today is far greater than it's ever been in. Human history. which back to your initial question,

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like this whole sustainable revolution, COVID, actually there was a real silver lining for the packaging industry if you're focused on sustainability, because everyone went home for two years and it just happened to be at a time with the evolution of technology where you could order anything you needed to your house from your phone.

[00:17:37] So the amount of packaging that went to every single person, not just in North America, but all over the world's houses, was exponential and regular. People started asking questions like, why do I need all this packaging and what is recyclable and what isn't? You know, and I mentioned earlier, like this for me wasn't a strike, a lightning moment.

[00:17:57] A few years after that trip to Indonesia was during the first year of COVID, and I'm driving through my neighborhood. Every trash can. Every blue bin is overflowing with packaging and a lot of what people are putting in the blue bin is not recyclable. And I'm sitting there watching that. I'm like, there's just massive confusion.

[00:18:15] But that glut of packaging created awareness with regular people and that. Created demand for sustainable packaging in a huge way. Like, and we've been riding that wave. but to answer your question that you just asked, as far as like in, in North America, in, in the United States, and we, have pretty good waste infrastructure.

[00:18:38] It's far from perfect and we need a lot of reform, but compared to India or Southeast Asia, it's significant, you know? And so one of the reasons, like in the e-commerce space, we've really championed paper packaging or what we call fiber-based packaging to replace things like bubble wrap and inflatable air pillows and foam.

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[00:19:01] First of all, protective packaging in a parcel is not terribly technical. You know, you're just protecting a product from damage during shipping. And if we can go from plastic to paper. Every blue bin in America can recycle paper. And so we already have the built-in infrastructure for circularity. So that's one huge advantage that we have in the United States and in Europe is we recycle paper really well, and we know how to make paper at scale.

[00:19:26] There's huge demand for it. We have the feed stocks, the nature-based feed stocks, working forests are something that we know how to do really well in North America. So, you know, I don't believe paper is the end all, be all greatest feed stock, but boy, we, sure do have the ability to scale paper and to evolve paper packaging today.

[00:19:49] and given that the infrastructure already exists for the recycling piece, it's a huge advantage, when you're trying to make big, you know, industry-wide change.

[00:19:58] **Nate Hagens:** Give us some stats on, recycling. I mean, a lot of people have, their views of sustainable futures, predicated on. Circular economies and, recycling.

[00:20:13] My, my understanding is from a material basis, we recycle around 8%, of our, waste globally. Now you said paper is probably more than that, but like, what is the, current state of recycling and maybe you could, highlight a few different categories.

[00:20:31] **Wes Carter:** So that 8% or 9% number is talking about plastic, you know?

[00:20:36] Okay. and so eight to 9% of plastics get recycled. and that's true. Now there's certain categories of plastics that get recycled at a lot higher rate than

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others. the hardest to recycle plastics by far. Are flexible plastics like wrappers, rigid plastics, like coke bottles and you know, milk jugs and things like that.

[00:20:59] They're three dimensional. So when they're going down a conveyor at a sorting facility, which is where all your blue bins go, is to these recycling centers where they're basically sorting facilities. The three dimensional rigid stuff is actually pretty easy to sort. And so it has a higher recycling rate.

[00:21:14] The flexible stuff is really hard to sort, because it lays flat on the conveyor, it falls between the screens. It's hard for the visions, systems that are identifying the packaging to pick it up. And then a lot of that flexible packaging is also, protecting food. And so because it's protecting food, it has lots of barrier properties built into the structures to add shelf life.

[00:21:40] Well. It adds shelf life, but it makes it really hard to recycle, even if you can sort it, because it's got a lot of different polymers in it. And so more polymers means very difficult to recycle. So, you know, the idea that we're gonna recycle our way out of the plastics crisis is crazy. we're never gonna do it.

[00:21:59] Now. Recycling is important and we need it, and we need highly. Technically advanced recycling, you know, and that exists. I mean, robotics, high speed conveyors, vision, artificial intelligence. I've got friends in the recycling business that are building a hundred million dollar recycling centers that look like, you know, you're walking into nasa.

[00:22:21] I mean, and that's what we need, you know, because the more efficiently we can sort, the, lower the costs are and the cleaner the waste is because what you need for recycling is clean waste streams, which means you need clean sorting. So that's plastic now paper, you know, much higher recycling rate, you know, depends on what reports you look at, but my sense is it's.

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[00:22:44] Right around 60%, 62, 65. There's some people that say it's higher than that, but I think 60 is a pretty good number. And so compared to plastics, wow, it's a lot, higher. And honestly, that's without a lot of effort. One of the reasons that we recycle paper really well is 'cause there's, there is a demand for the recyclable paper, like paper mills that make paper, want that paper back to put it back into recycled sheets.

[00:23:13] So there is a financial incentive for paper companies to get that back. And that's why a lot of people don't realize this. Most of the recycling centers in the United States are owned by paper companies. So your blue bin goes to a recycling center that is likely owned by a paper company because they're mainly interested in the paper, the fiber.

[00:23:32] Now they'll sell the aluminum cans and they'll sell the milk jugs and things like that on the open market. But you know, that, that waste infrastructure is, far from perfect, but compared to a lot of other areas of the globe, you know, we do have, you know, more robust waste infrastructure and that, helps,

[00:23:53] **Nate Hagens:** isn't recycling, just putting a bandaid on a larger over consumptive problem.

[00:23:59] I mean, your entire industry packaging is downstream from. The decision to grow and have more throughput and more consumption and more things. So to be sustainable, you really mean more sustainable than we are today. So you're just kind of assuming that the rest of society carries on the way we do. And you wanna make the packaging component the most regenerative, most biodegradable, most sustainable, most recycled, better for in service of life as possible.

[00:24:33] Given that umbrella overview. Is that a fair statement?

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[00:24:37] **Wes Carter:** There's, fairness in that statement, but I think there is a greater narrative. I mean, a society that is obsessed with overconsumption is a spiritual issue that is a spiritual crisis. You know, and, I'll get a little esoteric, but what that tells me is that there's, a place inside of us that we are trying to feed that is, that we continue to consume, you know, like we don't feel like we have what we need, and we're always looking for more and more. If I have more, I'll do better. I'll feel better, I'll be better. And, for anybody that's been walking the spiritual path, you figure out pretty quickly that is not where fulfillment comes from over consumption. but it is the world that we live in today. So, I mean, it's really twofold, I believe, as we transition packaging to more biomimicry to, to, to mimic nature.

[00:25:30] First and foremost, it will help alleviate the waste crisis. It will. And the timeline for doing that is relatively quickly. If we have a concerted effort. I mean, if you've noticed even since COVID over the last few years, a lot less plastic is showing up at your house from companies like Amazon. You know, more and more paper packaging is showing up 'cause they are responding to consumer demand for more sustainable materials.

[00:25:56] But I also believe as a culture. Because packaging is ubiquitous and it touches everyone every day. it is a potent symbol of what our values are as human beings and our values today are the packaging says we don't value life. We don't value nature. We're a throwaway society. Like that's what our packaging says today in many cases.

[00:26:23] But as we shift to more sustainable packaging, I think there's an argument that it's also a shift in consciousness. That it is a shift in saying, we value life. Life is what's fundamental. And we're making conscious decisions to make shifts to the materials that we use, acknowledging how important the natural world is and how critical it is, for abundance, for happiness, for all the things that humans desire.

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[00:26:52] So I do believe that this transition is spiritual in nature and can be seen through that lens. It's certainly the lens that I see it through

[00:27:00] **Nate Hagens:** and as a human being, you see it that way, which is why we're friends and why I asked you on the show. But as the president of a packaging company that responds to the Amazons and Coca-Colas of the world, they, their.

[00:27:16] Boards of directors and their shareholders optimize for profits. And profits right now are based on incorrect, in my opinion. And you'd probably agree prices, which like you said, promote, convenience and cost and efficiency. So wearing your CEO hat, are you actually trying to, impact this larger conversation or is it all just about the, best, inputs to, to make things more biomimicry and, more sustainable in the material side?

[00:27:49] **Wes Carter:** No. the packaging development, the sustainability piece is a catalyzer to me. it's like a, it's like the first step, you know, in a much larger conversation about what it ultimately means to be a human. And what, you know, industry is the most visible representation of human evolution. Like human evolution is visible.

[00:28:15] I think the word innovation and evolution can almost be interchangeable. You know? And so what I, and like I said before, this shift and something as simple and as common as packaging can be the beginning of a much greater discussion about what should our industry serve ultimately? And you know, like it's easy to point fingers at industry, but ultimately industry has been responding to what the public has asked for.

[00:28:44] Yeah. The public has now people say, oh, the public didn't ask for plastic pollution. Of course not. But they did ask for convenience. They did ask for low cost. And you know, an industry responded to that. And so ultimately we need

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people. Everybody to say we, we value life and we want healthy products and we want, we don't want plastic in our, waterways and we don't want toxic chemicals in our environments.

[00:29:12] Like that is the big shift. And then I think we have a much greater conversation about the, new earth industry, this new world that we want to build. What will it be in service to?

[00:29:24] **Nate Hagens:** And are you trying to, accelerate and advocate for that story, as president of your organization?

[00:29:30] **Wes Carter:** Absolutely. It is.

[00:29:32] It is the thing that drives me more than any other single thing because I believe it's achievable. I truly believe it's achievable 'cause we're doing it. Our company is doing it. We have integrated these principles and this philosophy, around the sacredness of life and the overwhelmingly obvious fact that abundance in life comes from health.

[00:29:54] And we as an organization have a responsibility to integrate that fundamental truth in everything that we do. And so when I talk about health as a fundamental principle of Atlantic, we have the most comprehensive health and wellness program ever devised by a company. We spend millions of dollar on the health and wellness, program for our employees.

[00:30:15] We also think about health when we think about. Supplier partnerships. we don't change partners every single year. We build long-term strategic healthy partnerships that are win-win. Our suppliers are all dear friends of mine, you know, healthy relationships. It's also the kind of relationships we want with our customers.

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[00:30:37] Enterprise level relationships that are built on trust, that are built on shared value. And then finally, the products that we bring to market healthy products, healthy for the planet, healthy for people, healthy for industry. And so I've integrated, or we have integrated health as a fundamental principle of our organization and it's changed everything.

[00:30:59] **Nate Hagens:** So I have a lot of follow-ups to that. Wes. The first one is, healthy products for the planet. You mean healthier than the alternative? Because the healthiest for the planet would be no plastics at all. right. Well, you know. I don't

[00:31:15] **Wes Carter:** believe that we are meant to live like other animals. You know, like we obviously are unique to every other living thing.

[00:31:25] We have the ability to create outside the bounds of nature that is a God-given gift, made in the image of God. I think that actually means creators and so. You know, I think that we, and, when we are creating new things, whether it's music or a painting or new packaging, there's nothing more exhilarating.

[00:31:48] I think you get, most people would say they feel the most alive when they're creating, and I think that's because we are tapping into what we actually are, which are creators. So I don't think we're meant to not consume anything and live like other animals in this sort of perfect harmony with nature. I think we've been given the gift to be able to create, but the, thing that we've done is we haven't created within the bounds of these natural laws, you know, we have to create within the laws that say life is sacred.

[00:32:24] And nature is, there is divinity in nature, you know, and there's consciousness in all of these things. And once we integrate those understandings into how we innovate, we can innovate all kinds of cool things and still have the.

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Trade and engagement with organizations and industry. It just, we're serving a new master.

[00:32:46] that, I believe is, super achievable in our lifetime

[00:32:50] **Nate Hagens:** if we innovate to the best of our abilities, but it's still lower down in the power structure than GDP and maximizing profits with the wrong prices. It's doomed to fail. So we're going to need either different cultural aspirations or, and or more correct prices that include the externalities in the prices.

[00:33:14] Like could you imagine if there was, a three times or five times penalty for things that, are not biodegradable, that are left in the natural world, in the oceans or in the waterways? Your, company would be, have huge demand instantly because people would want solutions. But right now we're not willing as a culture to pay those extra costs.

[00:33:40] I mean, have you looked at data at all? Is there data or what's your speculation That if people truly knew the plastic crisis, and the fact that the technosphere outweighs all living things on earth and that plastic will soon outweigh fish in the oceans that are already outweighs all the, living animals on earth, on land.

[00:34:03] If people really understood with endocrine disruptors and everything, would they be willing to say, oh, I just bought this thing that was \$40 from Amazon, a book that came in the box, but the book itself was wrapped in some plastic. I would be willing to pay \$42 for that. Because the biodegradable packaging that wherever it gets left or discarded or recycled, it's either fully used or it fully biodegraded and it's not a negative impact on the world.

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[00:34:32] Do you think our population would, choose such a thing? Or could they choose such a thing in the future?

[00:34:37] **Wes Carter:** I absolutely do. 'cause I think it's important to remember that the reason that plastics are cheap is because there's been billions and billions of dollars invested in optimizing the supply chain for plastics.

[00:34:50] **Nate Hagens:** The reason they're cheap is they're a byproduct of a barrel of crude oil and natural gas, which, you know, we're not using for transportation. They have to use it for something.

[00:35:00] **Wes Carter:** Well, and they've also been incredibly subsidized too. So again. I do think that regulation and government have a role to play here.

[00:35:09] And like I mentioned earlier, EPR, like we have to be, we have to have an on-ramp for these new materials and you know, we can't have a situation where every new material has a huge premium and actually a. I actually believe it's the responsibility of industry as well to help scale these things. So as an example, you know, we, we launched a, venture firm, new Earth Ventures about a year ago because we saw that a lot of the new exciting materials, nature-based feedstock materials that were being developed were not coming from a lot of the traditional, packaging supply chain.

[00:35:44] They were coming from small technology companies with young people that were really fired up about bringing this new technology to market. And they needed an organization like Atlantic to really help them scale their technology. And we have the ability to do diligence this stuff almost just by looking at it because we understand the industry so well.

[00:36:04] So we are embracing technologies that we know can scale. And so, like as an example, we're working with one company that is creating plastics from

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seaweed. and I told them initially, I was like, when you guys perfect a pellet. That will run through a traditional plastic extruder, call me because before that, you don't have anything because if you can't run it through all this existing infrastructure, it'll never scale.

[00:36:32] Well, about eight months ago, nine months ago, I got a call from the CEO. Hey, we've done it. She sent me pictures and I'm like, okay, you guys are running through existing extruders now. Your material is scalable. Now let's look at all the other areas where there's costs that we can drive out. And we've had a lot of success in bringing some of these materials, whether it's seaweed film.

[00:36:53] we created a, we, worked with a company outta California to create a cold chain shipping cooler where the foam is backyard compostable and made from shrimp shells and food waste. When we first brought it to market, it won a bunch of awards. It won Time Magazine, sustainable Innovation of the year in 2023, but it was at a huge price premium.

[00:37:13] But we worked for two years to optimize the manufacturing process and about 90 days ago Got it to price parity with EPS coolers, with traditional foam coolers. And we've picked up a hundred new customers over the last four months. So like, these things can scale. It just takes time and energy and effort and investment, you know?

[00:37:33] And so the good news is we have demand. People all over the world are saying, we want sustainable materials. We wanna buy products that don't pollute the planet. So it's the responsibility of industry with the help of governments to create on-ramps so that consumers don't have to pay huge premiums. I don't think that's the right argument, that in order to create a transition, everyone's gonna have to pay a lot more.

[00:38:00] We're proving that's not true.

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[00:38:01] **Nate Hagens:** So, This is a, transpartisan podcast because I think the, problems of overshoot and nons sustainability, and climate change, and everything is, Across the aisle. we're all part of it, but climate change is not, favored with our current administration.

[00:38:28] as, you're aware. But is the plastic crisis, is our current government paying attention to the issues you're, raising here?

[00:38:36] **Wes Carter:** They absolutely are. And, one of the reasons I think that the plastic pollution, the waste crisis is something that we can all really rally behind is there is no propoltion stint constituency.

[00:38:49] There's no one out there going, let's put more plastic in the ocean.

[00:38:52] **Nate Hagens:** Well, I mean, you could argue that fossil companies and the chemical companies, DuPont, et cetera, are saying that at least implicitly No.

[00:39:03] **Wes Carter:** No. Well. The reality is, those companies, the plastic pollution crisis is the worst thing for them.

[00:39:11] I mean, if, the petrochemical industry could snap their fingers and there not be a plastic pollution crisis, you damn right, they would do it in a heartbeat. 'cause it is not good optics for them. Yeah. You know, now there's a lot of discussions over who's responsible for the crisis and there, you get into some debate, but nobody is in favor of the crisis.

[00:39:31] You know, there's a lot of Right, you know, competing, perspectives on how to solve it. One area where the waste crisis is gaining a lot of traction with the current administration is within the Maha movement because the chronic health epidemic and the waste crisis are super interrelated. You know, one of the mandates in the Maha order is about.

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[00:39:56] Toxicity, you know, and we know that the waste crisis and chemical migration from certain types of packaging is a big part of, of a lot of these issues. and certainly, you know, food supply and things like that as well. But like when you look at the chronic health epidemic, you know, food and the things that we drink, the packaging that carries all that stuff is an integral part of that system and all of it has to be looked at.

[00:40:25] And so, Folks like Secretary Kennedy, who actually spoke at Atlantic Packaging a few weeks ago at the Chemicals of Concern Conference, has expressed, real interest in, solving the waste crisis. And we are talking to Democrats, we are talking to Republicans and independents, and I get overwhelming agreement that this is something that we can all get together on.

[00:40:53] This can be a real bipartisan win. The other place it can be a big win is between countries that may not like each other a lot, because believe it or not, China doesn't like the plastic pollution crisis either. You know, so it's, it could be an issue that the United States and China, the United States and India, the United States and the European Union, we could all come together on the plastic pollution crisis and try to save it.

[00:41:19] And I don't think you would have a lot of descent, at least in the fact that we need to solve this problem.

[00:41:24] **Nate Hagens:** Well, I've had, I think you're aware, I've had Jeremy Grantham on twice and I've had maybe 10 episodes on plastic and endocrine disrupting chemicals. And it does seem to be a bipartisan, nonpartisan issue, and especially with endocrine disrupting chemicals and the fact that we have some amount of microplastics in our brains and in our guts, it seems to be a huge current issue.

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[00:41:49] So let me ask you this, you're. Seem to be an optimistic, fellow. Wes. I am.

[00:41:58] **Wes Carter:** I am. I'm very bullish on all of this. I, really think we can solve this problem, and I think as we do it, it will bring great joy to humanity.

[00:42:07] **Nate Hagens:** So paint me a picture 20 years from now, if everything goes, the stars are aligned and assuming some of the other, risk trajectories in, in our current, metris, assume those away for the moment.

[00:42:22] What is, what has the plastic been packaging industry look like in 20 years, in a wildly successful trajectory according to your vision?

[00:42:32] **Wes Carter:** So I think you would see in. I think this is the place we'll get to first with e-commerce direct to your house shipments. All of the packaging would be super optimized where, we would have, and some of this technology is already available where you actually don't have a tremendous amount of packaging in a lot of these boxes because all of the, parcels are being made on demand, like they're right sizing for the product itself to minimize the level of packaging.

[00:43:04] That would be one thing using technology to minimize the amount of packaging. And then the packaging that is used would all be from nature-based feed stocks ethically sourced, like sustainable forests and would all be 100% recyclable. That's for your parcel shipments, non-food. Then what I would, what I think is.

[00:43:27] Arguably an even bigger, thing to celebrate. If we can get there, would be food packaging would all be compostable because the reality is recycling, food packaging is always gonna be difficult because you, especially when you talk

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about things like raw protein, chicken, pork, beef, all that stuff is contaminated because it's got bacteria on it.

[00:43:51] when you're packaging raw protein, you've also got produce, you know, fruits, vegetables that have similar, maybe not quite as aggressive, but similar issues as well. And so you've got hard to recycle flexible packaging that has covered in microbes that are not healthy for humans. So what, I see is.

[00:44:10] All of that packaging over time is home compostable. Then when you unwrap your raw chicken and throw it on the grill, the film, the tray, everything just goes into your compost. And I, a lot of people I know have, you know, home composting units now, you know, I've got a mill, it's a, and, it's, it looks like a trash can and it, dries out and dehydrates all of our food scraps and then we take it and dump it into our compost pile outside and use it for our garden.

[00:44:39] I think that'll become a lot more commonplace.

[00:44:42] **Nate Hagens:** And, the tech is on the horizon for that to happen. Like you buy chicken and, the tray and all the stuff, you just throw it in the compost.

[00:44:49] **Wes Carter:** Absolutely the trays in particular, right now there are a half a dozen companies that are making trays made from starch like potato starch that are fully compostable.

[00:45:00] The film's a little more difficult, 'cause again, the film in many cases has barrier properties that prevents like oxygen, you know, and moisture vapor transition rates and things like that. And so those things are more difficult. but ultimately. I would see parcel packaging would be primarily, fiber-based, highly recyclable, minimal.

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[00:45:23] And then food packaging would be overwhelmingly compostable packaging. I think you would see a lot more reusables too, especially in things like dish soap and shampoo and stuff that you're just gonna use over and over again, and having a significant container in your house that's easier to refill and probably some really innovative refill options that do make it more convenient for people.

[00:45:47] I, I see all those as super achievable. and, it just takes ingenuity.

[00:45:53] **Nate Hagens:** So let me, building on that, if that future, arrives in 20 years, what portion of that came from. consciousness shift of individual humans. Call them consumers. I prefer humans. What percent from innovation, and industry. And what percent From government or equal parts?

[00:46:15] All three. What, is your guess?

[00:46:16] **Wes Carter:** Well, the number one driver by far is. Human demand. I won't say I usually say consumer demand, but I'm with you. I don't love that word either, but humans demanding it and believe it or not, like that threshold we've already crossed, if you 18 to 34 year olds today have more buying power than the baby boomers.

[00:46:37] That demographic in every single survey over the last two or three years, they value sustainability by like 85%. If you're a retail brand, that's everybody. If 85% of the largest buying demographic in the country is asking for one thing, you are going to pivot to that one thing. And so. That's why I like doing podcasts like this.

[00:46:59] That's why we have a huge social media presence. That's why we're engaging with athletes and musicians. We are working to get the most influential people with the largest audiences in our culture to say we want sustainability. Nature-based materials are awesome. They're fun, they're exciting. It's an

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acknowledgement of the beauty of this planet and how lucky we are to be here living on this beautiful earth.

[00:47:22] Like we need people out there preaching this. Because when, you know, we have advocates, people like Kelly Slater and Travis Rice, when folks like that are out there saying, this is important. They've got a huge audience. And that audience listens and goes, yeah, it is important. And then they start shopping with brands that are integrating these materials as a part of their brand.

[00:47:47] And that's what we say today. Packaging today is a brand attribute. You know, as an, as a brand, your. Customers are judging you ethically on how you are packaging your products and the, e-commerce space in particular, but really across the supply chain, companies are recognizing that. And so for, so the demand leads to innovation in the right direction.

[00:48:11] And then we need government to step in and say, this is a great phenomenon. We see it and they need to talk to folks like me and others. What do you as industry need to accelerate this? And I'll give you one good example and then I'll take a breath. Like for a big company that wants to transition away from plastic packaging to a fiber-based alternative, in most cases, that requires all new capital packaging equipment.

[00:48:37] I'll use an example. If you're a beverage company and you're using a six pack ring, that plastic six pack ring that's been choking turtles since I was a kid, okay. We have a fiber-based alternative that's fully curbside recyclable. If it ends up in the ocean, it breaks down because it's just made of paper.

[00:48:53] The problem isn't the cost of the material. It's a little bit more expensive. You know, a six pack ring is a half a penny. Our fishbone beverage carrier is four or 5 cents. Most of the beverage companies can get over that cost.

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That's, you know, they can pass some of it on. What they can't get over is we've got.

[00:49:10] You know, a 20 facilities across the country, bottling facilities, and we have to buy all new packaging equipment. And that's a hundred million dollar investment, right? But the, government, the federal government could say we're gonna create a 30% tax credit for any packaging equipment, new packaging equipment to run sustainable materials.

[00:49:29] If they did that, there would be tremendous investment by industry in making the switch, because industry wants to do it. The barrier is often the capital equipment.

[00:49:40] **Nate Hagens:** What did you say? The, the four or 5 cent eq, equivalent was made out of fish. Something fishbone. Yeah. So, but if, we do, if we hypothetically were to get rid of all the plastics and the super polluting things, does there then become a, scaling limit on the alternatives like potato, starch and fishbone?

[00:50:02] Yeah, I mean,

[00:50:02] **Wes Carter:** potentially. I mean, we certainly have to cons consider that, that, you know, That's why like actually yesterday I was with the Forestry service talking about sustainably managed forests and we did some social media interviews that I'm gonna share with our customers and suppliers.

[00:50:19] 'cause our industry needs to better understand the forestry industry, you know, and, working forests are critical for this new economy that we're trying to create. again, I mentioned seaweed earlier. One of the reasons I really love seaweed as a feed stock is it does not take up arid land. So we don't have to grow it.

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[00:50:38] Yeah. Well we do have to grow it, but we grow it in the ocean. Yeah. It grows. Eight times faster than trees. It doesn't require pesticides. Everywhere it grows, it is enhancing the marine environment. And everywhere you have a sustainable, seaweed farm is a defacto marine protected area because you can't fish there.

[00:50:58] So like, it's kind of this incredible feed stock that enhances marine environments, grows really fast, doesn't require pesticides, and, there's hundreds of species of, seaweed. So what if we spent, you know, billions of dollars over the next, you know, 10 years really investing in how we can create feed stocks from seaweed.

[00:51:20] We got a lot of ocean. There's a lot of places to grow. Seaweed, you know, we got a lot of coastline. So those are the kind of questions that we have to be asking ourselves. and it's why I don't like a lot of feed stocks that are made from things like corn, right? You know, I don't think corn's a good feed stock for plastics.

[00:51:35] Because it requires arid land. Most of it's genetically modified, right? Covered in pesticides. It's, not the right way to go.

[00:51:42] **Nate Hagens:** So let me, briefly turn to what might be considered, packaging public enemy number one, which is single use plastic. Correct. I would agree with that. Why is single use plastic still so difficult to recycle effectively?

[00:51:57] And is there any realistic path forward, to somewhat closing the loop on, that category?

[00:52:03] **Wes Carter:** Yes and no. I mean, there are a lot of single use plastic packaging items that just need to go away. They're not necessary that we've got great alternatives and they're just not necessary. There's a lot of single use plastic

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items though that, you know, are pretty ubiquitous and there's not a lot of great alternatives.

[00:52:23] And the alternatives are super expensive and, you know, so, like I mentioned before, like three dimensional rigid plastics are pretty easy to recycle if you have the right technology. the interestingly enough, like there are 10 states in the United States that have bottle bills, which is basically like a deposit return system where it's like the old days, like you pick up a can or a bottle and you get a nickel for it or a dime for it.

[00:52:50] Every state that has a bottle bill where they put a value on the bottle, the return has the highest recycling rates in the country. If you look at the 50 states and the recycling rates, the top 10. All have bottle bills. Because it, you know, you create a financial incentive for someone to pick up that litter.

[00:53:09] So I, I think that's a really good solution. Now there's a lot of nuance. I mean, there's a lot of costs that go into implementing a bottle bill and you know, whether the beverage companies cover that cost or the retailers cover that cost or governments cover that cost. Those are big debates, but I think we have systems out there for certain types of plastic that we can create better circularity.

[00:53:28] **Nate Hagens:** It seems that Europe is ahead of the United States on, this and, other plastics issues. Is that fair?

[00:53:35] **Wes Carter:** Absolutely fair. They use a, stick approach over there, which is like, you're required to sort a lot of your recyclables at your, curbside. You know, you got a glass bin and a plastic bin and a paper bin and a food scrap bin, and if you do it wrong, they find you.

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[00:53:54] so it's a real stick approach, but it does work. and I think some of that is worth considering in this country. I mean, we're more of a don't tread on me culture. Yeah. and I don't like a lot of government oversight.

[00:54:07] **Nate Hagens:** And we like carrots too, if they're, comfortable and convenient.

[00:54:12] **Wes Carter:** Yeah.

[00:54:13] And, that's, why I like the idea of bottle bills because it's just basically saying, Hey, we're gonna pay you if you return this stuff. and again, like if you go to places like Vermont where they have bottle bills and they have, you know, a really impressive, waste infrastructure, you know, you don't see trash on the highways, you know, you don't see trash in the communities.

[00:54:33] I mean, there are ways to do it with a carrot, but like most things in life, it probably is gonna take carrots and sticks. Both.

[00:54:40] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah. Seriously. the, combination of those two, so, Atlantic Packaging. Your company has become an industry leader in pushing forward, more ecologically oriented, packaging and stories about, more sustainable futures, largely because of your efforts, Wes.

[00:55:03] so how does your love for nature and your commitment to being in service of life, as you've said, drive your leadership of Atlantic Packaging?

[00:55:13] **Wes Carter:** Yeah, I mean, it's, an integral part of, everything I am and, how I acknowledge myself in the greater tapestry of life. You know, this is a deeply spiritual thing for me.

[00:55:29] and the, realization about what Atlantic could do as an organization, that the greater good that we could serve, When I saw that, I leaned in really

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heavily and, The beautiful thing about my journey is the more I leaned in, the more effort I put towards it. The more passion I brought to it, the more awesome people showed up.

[00:56:00] I, you know, this mission really resonated with people and the level of talent that I have around me today is beyond anything I could have ever fathomed. I also work with tons of people that I adore. I absolutely adore. I mean, they bring their a game every single day, and it's so much fun because we really, we, know that we're making an impact on the world, you know, and, we talk a lot about legacy.

[00:56:30] I mean, one, if, you could define one thing that all humans all over the planet since the beginning of time have in common, I would make an argument, is that all people love their children. that is not cultural. every culture in since the beginning of time loves their children. And this is what that is this is about the love of our children and the world. We are leaving them. And when you frame it like that to me. Why wouldn't everybody jump on board? We, should care intimately about the world that we are leaving our children and our children's children and well beyond that. And to me, what I see is we are at an inflection point in our world.

[00:57:17] We are going through a global awakening around the divinity that is exists within nature about the sacredness of life and our role in the tapestry of life. And we have a real opportunity to wake up right now and begin to innovate in that direction. And I actually think we can create this more beautiful world that my author friend Charles Eisenstein says all the time, the more beautiful world that our hearts know is possible, it's not gonna be delivered to us.

[00:57:50] We need to create that world and we're designed to create, that's what we are as creators. We just have to have a North star. And to me, healthy life is that North Star and it is in service to future generations. Generations yet unborn.

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[00:58:08] **Nate Hagens:** So this is something I thought about actually the first time when you and I talked, a few months back, between.

[00:58:17] US and a regenerative culture and a better future than the default is what I refer to as the economic Superorganism, which is a global culture, optimizing for profits tethered to energy and ecosystem impact. Where corporations and governments are, riding shotgun on, the economic Superorganism. You run a private.

[00:58:43] Company. Atlantic Packaging is privately held rather than public. Meaning that you don't have the financial responsibilities to shareholders in the conventional way that an IBM or Walmart or Home Depot might. So how does this give you an advantage and more flexibility when trying out new packaging innovations and systems that are better for humanity and the planet and the millions of dollars you spent on the health and wellbeing of your employees, et cetera?

[00:59:11] **Wes Carter:** There's no doubt that being privately held gives me a level of flexibility. that is hugely advantageous, especially in the early parts of this, because I had to make a lot of decisions that did not make sense on paper. however. It is a fundamental truth of business that the companies that innovate the best, typically do the best.

[00:59:36] And we have a culture of being highly innovative. And I know a lot of publicly traded companies that have huge r and d budgets. Because they understand that like, if we're the company that brings the best products to market that meet the needs and demands of customers, we will succeed. You know, and I mean, you can look at the electric car, you know, as a really good example, like electric cars.

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[01:00:02] Today I drive one. It's awesome. I don't want a gas car. My electric car performs way better than a gas car, you know? And so like we, if we have a North star that we're innovating towards, we can make products that are awesome. And that's not just privately held companies, that's any company, but certainly as a privately held company, it gave us a lot of advantages and continues to, and it allows us to be more long-term thinkers.

[01:00:30] But the other piece of this is the, game has changed a lot because of social media and media in general. Industry can't really hide anymore. You know, like the, everyday, regular people have great insight into who the bad actors are and have great insight into what, which companies are producing good products, healthy products, and which ones aren't.

[01:00:58] And the. The media revolution. Social media gives industry an accountability factor that is at a level it's never had before, and it's still pretty new. But that is changing things a lot. I mean, people know that there's gonna be a TikTok video, by some kid that's got a million followers talking down about their product because it showed up wrapped in single use plastic.

[01:01:28] That is a big differentiator because the, industries are gonna serve consumer demand.

[01:01:34] **Nate Hagens:** So what you're saying is even though there's not a physical, externality price on some of these products imposed, there is a defacto indirect social externality imposed.

[01:01:49] **Wes Carter:** Huge. And that is growing exponentially.

[01:01:52] And it's, by the way, and it's not political either, you know, especially if you look at people under 40, doesn't matter what state they live in, it doesn't matter if they're Republicans or Democrats. Young people really. 'cause they grew

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up with this mess, you know? And I employ a lot of young people. I employ a lot of people under the ages of 40, and they're all over the political spectrum.

[01:02:14] But boy, they harmonize around this and we can't do it without that. Like if industry continues to serve the same masters of cost, convenience, and comfort, you know, then this won't work. The reason that I feel so positive about it is because the world is waking up and I actually credit the COVID era more than anything else.

[01:02:36] Those few years Drew. Lights on a lot of areas of our world that were messed up, you know? And I think that's what you're seeing right now is the aftermath of everybody going, wow, look under the covers. We got it. We got a mess here. And so, again, we're, pivoting in a, direction and we're innovating in that direction.

[01:03:00] and I also think as we have success, and I'm watching this, a lot of public companies, a lot of our customers that are public companies, a lot of our suppliers that are public companies are going, man, what you guys are doing is awesome. Can we partner with you guys? Can we innovate with you guys?

[01:03:16] I'm even getting calls from direct competitors. Saying, Hey, I know we're competitors, but man, what you guys are doing is really changing our industries. There's gotta be ways we can collaborate. And there absolutely are. I mean, how cool is that? That like I have direct competitors and we can find an agreement field on helping to advance this new technology.

[01:03:38] 'cause we need more people buying it and Atlantic can't sell all of it. we're not a one-stop shop for the world. So aligning ourselves with like-minded companies, even if we're their competitors, is a pretty amazing phenomenon that I never saw happening in my career. But it's happening.

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[01:03:55] **Nate Hagens:** Well, it would have to happen if we're in service of life.

[01:03:58] correct. So, let me ask you this, you earlier, painted a picture of 20 years from now, kind of the best case on, the packaging and, you gave some examples. What would be a few, areas of legislation right now that the United States government or the state governments could enact that would help the accelerate the innovation towards, reduction of single use plastics, very minimal, plastics in direct to consumer and those that would be compostable and, you know, the chicken trays that you throw in into your backyard.

[01:04:40] what would be some things that the government could do to help you, and your competitors and the industry and the consumers of these things?

[01:04:48] **Wes Carter:** Yeah, there's, there, there's several things. one I mentioned earlier, we need an incentive. Even if it's just for four or five years to help industry invest in the capital equipment to make these transitions.

[01:05:02] Okay. You know, the nice thing about making investments in capital equipment to run these materials is also every time you buy a new piece of equipment, because of the way technology works, it's gonna be more energy efficient, it's gonna run faster, it's gonna produce less waste. I mean, new equipment, you know, with the way that evolution of technology has gone, gives you a lot of advantages beyond just being able to run this more sustainable material.

[01:05:25] But that's a big one. The other one that's far and away is a. Is my hot button issue, and I talk to a lot of people in DC about it. We need radical recycling reform in this country. There's actually an act that was drafted by my friends at the recycling partnership, that's circulating around Congress right now called the Circle Act that is about a 30% tax credit for new recycling equipment, whether that's by a municipality, a recycling center, or a company like Atlantic.

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[01:05:53] Like, you know, three years ago we invested in recycling equipment, because there's a certain type of plastic packaging that we sell quite a lot of, and we felt like we were the right people to recycle it. So we, pioneered some programs with some of our big beverage customers where after they use this material, we collect it and recycle it.

[01:06:10] Well, like you want more companies like Atlantic who aren't really in the recycling business. Traditionally, I never thought I'd be in the recycling business. It just made too much sense. But you want to incent. Companies like Atlantic and other companies to buy recycling equipment to create closed loops between businesses.

[01:06:27] And we want every recycling center in America to look like an Amazon distribution center. You wanna walk in there and it be high speed robots, vision, artificial intelligent, because the more efficiently we can sort materials and the cleaner those materials are, the more likely we can make solid quality new products from those materials.

[01:06:49] And it's the biggest no brainer that there is because the demand for recyclables by the supply chain is humongous. We've got \$30 billion that we're burying in the ground every year. That would be amazing. Feed stocks that, that companies absolutely want. We just have this broken, you know, discombobulated, no standards, you know, recycling system that needs a total overhaul.

[01:07:14] So that's one. And then the other piece is. We need to expand industrial composting and make that as ubiquitous as curbside recycling. Where I live in Charleston, we actually have an industrial composting site, right here in the county. And the interesting thing is private industry has just grown up around that.

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[01:07:33] So we have a company here locally compost. Now you put your scraps in it and every Monday they pick up the black bin and you know, it's a pay service. But, but you know, private industry creates jobs, you know, it's great. But that's just because we have industrial composting here and all that is, land.

[01:07:49] It's not big equipment. You need a tractor and, you know, 10 acres of land. I mean, so that's something that we could really scale to. so yeah, those are a few things. I also think these alternative material companies that are bringing products to market from, like seaweed and mycelium and hemp, those people need a lot of help.

[01:08:06] They probably should pay no taxes.

[01:08:08] **Nate Hagens:** So a. I have a lot of more questions on plastics, energy, sustainable supply chains, et cetera. But in our personal conversations in the past, you've told me about your own, personal and spiritual journey that led you to this place. And I hope you don't mind sharing that a little bit publicly.

[01:08:35] so I'll just ask you, how did your personal healing and spiritual journey transform how, you lead, in this business at Atlantic? It was

[01:08:45] **Wes Carter:** fundamental. I mean, you know, plain and simple, and I'm not, shy about it, you know, like, the, personal work, was integral to the awakening, around all of these perspectives.

[01:09:02] and I don't know, about eight or 10 years ago, I was just in a dark place. I was in a dark place. I didn't know who I was. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I was working in a company, I was pretty good at it. but I didn't really have much of a purpose and I was pretty depressed and.

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[01:09:25] There, but there was this thing inside of me that just kept telling me, there, there's, more. There's more here. There's more to life. And so, I've always been an infinitely curious person, and I like to say, if you wanna walk the spiritual path, curiosity is a really good quality to have. 'cause that curiosity led me down a lot of different roads and I studied, a lot of spiritual traditions.

[01:09:48] some, you know, that are pretty primary to the world and others that aren't. and then ultimately, it led me to, to plant medicine, to psychedelic plant medicine. And that work fundamentally changed everything about me. you know, I, think in the early, work, I liked a lot. I used to say, up until the point that I found medicine, the only spiritual question I was asking was.

[01:10:14] Is there a God? Well, I got that question answered real fast. and so, the question after, is there a God when you get the yes, there absolutely is a God, the next question is, well, what is God? And so that, that question has taken me in a lot of different directions, and I don't think it's one that you'll actually ever answer, but working with these medicines, I was able to heal myself in profound ways.

[01:10:39] I mean, I was able to heal myself with the help and support of a lot of incredible teachers, in fundamental ways, you know, that, healed things that I didn't even know were broken. But, over time, what primarily healed was my mind. And my mind as what I started to realize is for most of my life, my mind had been in service to fear.

[01:10:59] You know, like fear, create borders, create walls, protect, Sometimes that was real obvious and sometimes it was real subtle, but ultimately, like my mind was just obsessed with protection and it's really hard to be creative from that place. but what the medicine really helped do was heal my mind.

[01:11:18] As my mind started to calm down and not be so obsessed with protection, it started for looking for something else to serve, and I like to believe

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what it began to serve was my heart. And I began to understand that human beings are a part of a beautiful cosmic story and we're this incredible spiritual beings having this human experience.

[01:11:42] And I started to awaken to the divinity that was all around me. I just started seeing how conscious these plants were and how intelligent they were, and not just the psychedelic plants. I just started seeing how. Radically intelligent nature was, it's perfect. You wanna talk about circularity, closed loops, nature is perfect.

[01:12:05] And the math that exists in nature is so radical and so elegant. I think Einstein even said at the end of his life that he had no doubt that God exists because the math that governs the universe is way too elegant. You know? And, I, and, those were the things I was witnessing. And so then as I, as the personal healing really began to take root, you know, I started to understand that this business that I was in, this work that I was doing, there was a way for me to integrate.

[01:12:37] This healing not only inside of me, but in an outward way. Like I could reflect this healing in the work that I was doing and in a real, tangible way. And all of a sudden it wasn't all esoteric, you know? Woo. It was like, no, like there's a real tangible way that you can take this awakening to the sacredness of life and the consciousness that you're, witnessing all around you and integrate that into what you're doing and create beauty, you know?

[01:13:10] And that realization and journey has been radical for me and beautiful. And it's given my life purpose that I never imagined possible. And as I mentioned before, the greatest gift, it has brought the most beautiful people into my life. Because when you are in a vibration of health and healing. People respond to it and people wanna be a part of it, and they want to heal and then they wanna bring their best game.

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[01:13:39] And it also became very egalitarian. Like I started to realize that each one of us is holding incredible gifts. And as we heal, those gifts begin to bloom and emerge. And I started witnessing this happening all around me and inside of me. And then all of the people in my life, we started harmonizing, you know, harmonizing our gifts.

[01:13:58] And there it wasn't hierarchical and it wasn't, there was no jealousy. It was just everybody being in all of each other's gifts and working toward a common good, a legacy good. And it's created a level of joy in my life. That's hard to put into words.

[01:14:14] **Nate Hagens:** So you are, a president of a, major company and it's, unlikely, to hear this story from those sorts of people.

[01:14:25] And maybe that makes you the best sort of spokesperson, for that sort of a healing journey. So what would you like to share with people, who are generally skeptical of these approaches, of healing psychedelics, plant medicine, et cetera?

[01:14:41] **Wes Carter:** I don't know that there's anything that I can say that can change anybody's mind necessarily.

[01:14:48] All I can tell you is that this work changed my life in profound ways and every perspective that comes out of me and everything that I do in the world that is positive and good is a direct derivative of this. And if. Some people don't agree with that. That's okay. I'm not a, I'm not, a salesperson for plant medicine, even though sometimes I wish that I was.

[01:15:19] I mean, yes. Do I believe this is a path that can liberate humans in the way that it liberated me? You bet. And, people who are ready. there's, a lot of

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great opportunities to integrate this work into your life. But again, you know, I, don't know that it's my job to, to be out there pushing it on people.

[01:15:39] and there are many paths. I mean, that's the, one of the, you know, the beautiful things about. The, our planet and about humanity is the diversity. I mean, I think Jerry Garcia said it. There's so many roads, you know? And, this just happened to be the road that really worked for me, and it was damn efficient.

[01:15:58] **Nate Hagens:** And, is, if I might ask, are, you talking mushrooms or ayahuasca or what, are you talking about?

[01:16:04] **Wes Carter:** I've worked with, many different medicines. but the medicine that really changed my life was iboga, which is a tree. It's the, root bark of a tree that grows in West Africa.

[01:16:17] You hear a lot today on the news about ibogaine, which is actually a derivative of iboga. It's, one of the alkaloids that come from that plant. But I work with the actual plant itself, which has a lot more than just that one alkaloid. but you know, the, as you're seeing, the world's waking up to the miraculous, you know, nature of these plants.

[01:16:41] And I don't believe that God. Put any plant on this planet that's bad. They're not bad plants there. These are allies that are our birthright and you know, I get that. It's scary. It was scary for me a lot. A lot, for a long time. But a lot of the spiritual path is about integrating fear. It says it in the Bible.

[01:17:03] Although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. I mean that's not about not being scared. It's about like, I'm gonna walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I'm gonna be scared, but I'm gonna trust. And that's what this word taught me how to do, was trust that we are all children of God and we are protected and we are here to learn and evolve.

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[01:17:24] And I believe we are in an massive learning right now.

[01:17:28] **Nate Hagens:** So how do you, think about the relationship? Between personal healing and systemic change on the planet. I mean, ibogaine or Iboga plant. what little I know about it has to do with healing addictions. You could argue, and you, it wouldn't be that hard to defend that our entire culture is addicted to comfort, convenience, status.

[01:17:54] We're, in addictive culture and social media and algorithms and 24 7 access to stimulation are, not helping. But how do you see the, the personal healing as a microcosm for, systemic change?

[01:18:08] **Wes Carter:** Well, you know, I, like to say that sustainability ultimately is just an outer reflection of an inner commitment to health and wellbeing.

[01:18:17] Like if we want to heal the planet, we need healthy humans. Healthy humans will innately know how to heal the planet because as I mentioned before, one of the things that's really hard to describe to people in words until you've experienced it is deep spiritual and emotional healing has a profound impact on your inner.

[01:18:40] Being like a profound impact. And as you do this healing, the things that used to bother you, the mental chatter, the obsessions, the addictive tendencies, whether it's alcohol or your cell phone, it really works to remedy those things. And when, you get out of that constant obsessive mind chatter, like Bob Marley said, emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can sit, can, what is it?

[01:19:10] None. None. But ourselves can set us free. Like that. That was what he was talking about is, that liberating from that mind chatter and, medicine helps a

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lot with that. And so as your mind calms down all the gifts that. Are within, you begin to emerge. And so like that's what happened for me.

[01:19:30] Like all of a sudden, like all these things that I'm super passionate about and I'm like, oh gosh, I can integrate these passions into what I do every day. And I'm not, I'm just not in my head like I used to be. And so I ultimately think, like you talk about how we save the world, we need everybody living their dharma.

[01:19:47] Everyone has one. Every single human being on this planet has immense God-given gifts, immense. And the thing that blocks us from those gifts is this fear-based mindset, these shackles that, that, that permeate our mind. And the reason to do spiritual and emotional healing is to break the bondage of fear and allow the essence of what you are to emerge.

[01:20:14] And it's beautiful. And then you harmonize with other people doing the same work. And that is what will save this planet. Hu integrated, awake human beings, living their dharma, harmonizing together for the common good will save this planet. And we have to have enlightened leaders. We've gotta have enlightened leaders.

[01:20:36] We gotta have people that understand this in positions of power. and that's where I hope we can go.

[01:20:43] **Nate Hagens:** So. What kind of transformational work would you recommend, to other leaders so they can better lead in this changing world?

[01:20:51] **Wes Carter:** First of all, have a teacher. We all need teachers, all of us. It keeps us humble.

[01:20:57] You know, and whether that is a spiritual advisor or a life coach, a therapist, have a teacher. I've got like 12, you know, and I've got a whole network

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of teachers and they all help me understand myself. And I rely on them for their perspectives too. Because if there's one thing I've realized, I do not know everything.

[01:21:21] And I teachers hold us accountable. They keep us humble. That's another thing. We need humble leaders. it's very difficult to find someone who's got a consistent, dedicated practice of working with teachers who have an ego and who are arrogant. I, rarely see it. I see it a lot with people who don't.

[01:21:39] And so, and, the other piece is consistency. You know, like it's not enough. Just say, well, yeah, I got a therapist. I see that person every few months when I'm having a problem. Nah, man, it has to be, this work has to be a part of your daily routine. It's like lifting weights. You wanna get strong, can't lift once a month list two or three days a week.

[01:21:57] It's the same thing with this. This is about mental and emotional strength. You have to prioritize it. I prioritize it. It's, a huge part of my life. 'cause all of the good in my life is a derivative of that consistency. So that's one of them. And then you need to have at least one spiritual tradition that you go deep on.

[01:22:15] And I don't, it doesn't matter what that is. It can be plant medicine, it can be Christianity, it can be Buddhism, it can be Judaism, you know, it can be, the red Road path, you know, like any of these, but you need to go deep on one. And then all these other ones you can sprinkle in. For me, I went deep on the Iboga tradition, but boy, I practice Buddhist meditation.

[01:22:37] I love a lot of the Hindu text. I read Romy, Rumi and Hafi on a regular basis. I love the teachings of Christ. I'm doing a class right now with a rabbi, like, so I'm, sprinkling all these traditions and all of them are ultimately saying the same thing. If you get to the real deep, and that's the other thing, like we're killing each other over these religions that are all at their root saying the same thing.

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[01:23:03] At least that's been my experience. So again, have a good teacher or a couple and choose one spiritual tradition that really speaks to you. Go deep on that one. And then if you're interested in other ones, just incorporate those and they'll be super additive. They'll be super additive. And then I guess the final thing I would say is take really good care of your body.

[01:23:24] Your body is the sacred vessel, and if you're not healthy, your body's not healthy, then this is a really hard thing to do. You know? spend a lot of time outside. Sunlight, nature, good water, clean food. Like if you, and that's in the Bible too. Like, you know, the container is sacred, you know, take care of your container.

[01:23:46] And I think it's also a really good parallel for packaging, you know, like, you know, we need sacred containers for packaging. You know, that's what I'm trying to innovate is sacred containers that, are acknowledging life.

[01:23:59] **Nate Hagens:** Thank you. I, agree with you on the, religions and, the core messages is all the same.

[01:24:07] Do you have any additional advice, for the listeners of this program, especially young humans who are, you know, growing up and, becoming aware of the oceans and the plastics and the biodiversity and, climate and our polarization and all the things. What, do you tell the young people? You said you have a lot of young people that work at Atlantic.

[01:24:29] Use your voice,

[01:24:31] **Wes Carter:** use your voice.

[01:24:32] because it's powerful and you know, and, you have to fall in love with life too. Like fall in love. Your life. I'll get emotional when I say it, but like, love your

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life. And if you don't love your life, ask why. 'cause it's a gift. It's an absolute gift and I'm 47 years old, or almost 47, and I can tell you, man, I was 20 a week ago, man, it goes fast.

[01:24:57] You know, like this whole human experience is a blink, you know? And if we're suffering through it, like, you know, and I get a lot of people have really difficult situations and I, have great sympathy for that. You know, a lot of us also suffered needlessly. And there's a lot of help out there today.

[01:25:14] There's a lot of help out there today, and there's beautiful, you know, techniques and technology and spiritual traditions that can support you living your very best life, you know? And so as for young people like. Figure out what your passion is. That's the thing I tell people. Mainly we, our culture's so messed up.

[01:25:33] I mean, we create these like infrastructures and we tell kids, you have to operate inside of this box. You gotta get straight A's in high school, you gotta go to a good college. You know, you'll probably drink a lot in college too, but that's okay. You know, that's part of the initiation of being an adult.

[01:25:49] Then you gotta get out and you gotta get a nine to five job and you know, you need to have two and a half kids and have a house in a neighborhood. And, like that is so uncondusive to human happiness for so many people. And so, like I say, throw all that away. If that makes you happy, go for it. And a lot of people, maybe it does and that's the route they should go.

[01:26:08] But ultimately, like as a young person, tap into what you love. Whatever you love is what you are meant to do. And if you can create a career, if you love to write, do that for your career. If you love music, do that for your career. If you love art, do that for your career. If you think you're, you enjoy being a salesperson and you love talking to people, get a sales job and sell something you really care

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about and believe in, because people who find a career doing something that they love.

[01:26:38] Will love their career, and they'll do a great job and they'll probably make good money doing it, you know? But so much of us get taught, so many of us get talked into doing things that we're miserable doing because we think that's the way it's supposed to be. And it's all just matrix, cultural BS that doesn't matter.

[01:26:57] Like you, there's a lot of ways to make a living, and there's a lot of ways to make a living that will give you great joy and happiness. And the other thing is, money isn't everything. You know, there's a lot more to life, but I don't know, I don't have any great secrets other than follow your passion, use your voice, and be healthy.

[01:27:15] Those would be my three.

[01:27:17] **Nate Hagens:** What do you, I, ask these questions of all my guests. Wes, what do you care most about in the world? Peace. Peace, man.

[01:27:25] **Wes Carter:** Harmony. Peace and harmony. Man, I, truly believe that we can create a beautiful world. I really do. I see it happening in pockets all around me. I see it happening in communities all around me.

[01:27:40] We've gotta get back down to the essence of what we actually are. And I believe what we actually are is love, you know? And like I said earlier, one thing that harmonizes all people is love for their children. Let's start there. Let's start with love for our children. Okay? Let's all agree that we love our children.

[01:28:00] And then let's build a world based on that. You know? And we need leaders talking about this kind of stuff. We need leaders. We need spiritually enlightened leaders that are, having these discussions in the public sphere. You

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know, we can't be afraid to have these discussions. And yeah, I, again, I have great.

[01:28:17] Hope for humanity. I, just, I don't believe we're supposed to end in destruction. I believe we're supposed to wake up, create the more beautiful world, liberate ourselves and revel in it, revel in the work, revel in creating this more beautiful world. And for me, I see a real pathway to do it. I see a real pathway to do it.

[01:28:38] And, acknowledging the sacredness of life is fundamental.

[01:28:43] **Nate Hagens:** So in the same way that COVID woke people up to, all the packaging that they were getting writ large, these last 10 or 20 years are a wake up call for our species. it's a rite of passage for our entire species. Look at what we have wrought.

[01:29:00] and now people like you are rolling their sleeves up and doing their part.

[01:29:04] **Wes Carter:** Yeah, I mean, what got us here was we, confused happiness with comfort. Somewhere along the line, and it probably came from a world that was really uncomfortable. We just overcorrected, you know, we overcorrected and we began to worship comfort and we convinced ourselves that comfort is where happiness comes from.

[01:29:24] And it's not, you know, growth requires friction. You know, the hardest things in my life have had the greatest gifts and everything that I enjoy doing the most are things I've actually struggled at. Struggled at learning to play the guitar, struggled at learning to serve, struggled at learning to lift weights to get strong.

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[01:29:43] But those are also the things I love the most. You know, like we need struggle like that. That's how we grow. Yeah. And so we've created this world that, that is not acknowledging that. And it doesn't mean everything has to be hard, but we, wanna have our priorities in the right place. And, we want to have our innovative, creative spirit in the right place.

[01:30:03] And humans are amazing. When we work together, what we can build and create is unfathomable. You know, we just need to serve the right master and it's not comfort.

[01:30:12] **Nate Hagens:** And it may not be GDP, tethered to, energy tethered to ecosystem impact, at least the way it's, it is now. So if you could wave a magic wand, Wes, and there was no personal recourse to you, or your business or reputation or anything, what is one thing you would do to improve human and planetary futures?

[01:30:32] **Wes Carter:** Oh, well, that's easy, abundant, clean energy. I mean, abundant free clean energy. I think that solves everything. I mean, you know. Energy is the thing that, that, that is, is such a struggle. Like, you know, our world runs on energy and we just don't have great options for abundant clean energy.

[01:30:55] **Nate Hagens:** If we didn't change the incentive structure, abundant clean energy, we would strip the earth bare like locust if everything was so cheap.

[01:31:03] Unless we change our value systems or the incentive structure. If I had a abundant clean energy, cheap energy, I would order all kinds of things irrespective of their, plastic packaging. I mean, I wouldn't, but I think the average person would.

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[01:31:19] **Wes Carter:** I think when you look at all the problems in the world and you know, all the issues that industries created, it can really go back to a problem of energy.

[01:31:29] And I do think that, you know, a culture. We are going to evolve. We need energy. That's just fundamental. Like, we're not gonna live in a world where we don't have energy. I agree. And clean energy is better than dirty energy. And that's why I'm really intrigued on a lot of these new technologies. You know, fusion technology, things e even modular nuclear as maybe a, stepping stone where you have dense clean energy.

[01:31:55] and there's, a lot of places around the world that are implementing that, you know, and, there's places in Europe that are, that, that have a much cleaner, greener grids than we do. so I think some of that technology's already here, but you said one thing. I think clean energy probably has to be coupled with about 25 or 30 other things to be sure that we don't have the scenario that you articulated.

[01:32:15] But, that was the first thing that popped into my mind. you know, world peace. Maybe that would be, probably should be up there too.

[01:32:23] **Nate Hagens:** So, before I let you go, I, wanna make sure that you give the best advice, to the listeners. Beyond making better consumption decisions, are there ways that individuals that are paying attention to the plastics crisis and what you've outlined here can push for transformative change in the way we produce and consume packaging beyond their, individual, purchasing decisions?

[01:32:49] **Wes Carter:** Yeah, I mean, that is a big one. I mean, you know, like be a conscious consumer. I mean, you know, really consider the companies that you're spending your money with. You know, and I mean, 'cause that, that ultimately is going to have the biggest impact, you know, the supply chain will respond to what consumers want.

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[01:33:08] and so to me that's pretty fundamental. And, you know, do the things in your life that, you know, you know, are more responsible. Like, you know, reuse when you can, you know, be conscious about recycling, you know, also pick up litter. Like, that's one of the things I never used to do, but I do a lot now everywhere I go, if I see litter, I pick it up and throw it away.

[01:33:30] I mean, little things like that can go a long way. I think the other piece that I would really encourage, especially people that have resources and means is to invest in conservation. You know, today of all the philanthropic dollars in the world, only 3% goes to conservation. I mean, it is an abysmally low number.

[01:33:50] And we also need industry, investing in conservation because industry has the biggest impact and it's abysmally low. The money that comes from industry to conservation and, individual people can help too. I mean, every dollar matters, but we need to be finding, you know, conserving wild places. We need to be, you know, creating ecosystems that are healthy for biodiversity, for plants and animals.

[01:34:14] We need to understand that like all of these are sentient beings that, you know, like us eradicating them out of our. I And blindness is the greatest sin and conservation is the remedy.

[01:34:28] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah. thank you for that. I fully agree. If you were to come back on this show, Wes, in, in nine months or a year from now, what is one topic that you are particularly passionate about that is relevant to human futures that you would be willing to take a deep dive on?

[01:34:47] Because I'm guessing we didn't cover all the topics that you're passionate about and are relevant to human futures.

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[01:34:53] **Wes Carter:** Well, like, like I said, I, love the conservation conversation and I love the con. I love the conversation about Indus industry's role in conservation. Okay. I think the other, and I'll, throw out two.

[01:35:04] I, do think enlightened leadership is really, a topic that we need to discuss and how do we create infrastructure in our culture to support leaders. you know, like one I was blessed of with working in some groups here in Charleston with other business leaders, for many years of my younger career.

[01:35:25] And that was so additive for me. You know, like coaching and spiritual mentorship for leaders, that is a critically important thing because we need enlightened leaders and everyone is capable of having these spiritual awakenings. It's just not taught, you know, it's not part of our curriculum and it's a deeply internal work and I think for the most part, the west just doesn't understand it.

[01:35:49] And so, medicine is one avenue to awakening that pathway. and, I would love to discuss what creating. Infrastructure schools, support systems for spiritual leadership. You know, and I don't mean just spiritual leadership as preachers and pastors, I mean spiritual leaderships in medicine, in industry, in, in all these different areas of our world.

[01:36:16] I think that's fundamental.

[01:36:17] **Nate Hagens:** We've parsed all the important, tapestry of emotions and qualities of our ancestral environment into dollars. And so I think we, do seek status and respect and community, but right now in our system, we just value dollars and, wealth. And I think what you're describing is we're widening that out to include other things, health and wellbeing and respect and skills and peace and all those things.

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[01:36:48] So I do think I agree with you, we need enlightened leadership to kind of pave the way towards a wider aspirations for our culture and our species.

[01:36:56] **Wes Carter:** Yeah, and I'll say one more thing too because I, wanna be sure that I articulate this, like profit is not. A bad thing. It's just a bad master. Yeah. Like what I like to say.

[01:37:07] At Atlantic, we have to be profitable. If we're not profitable, all of this goes away. I can't do any of this work if we're not profitable. But profit we're not in the business of optimizing profit. That is not the purpose of our business. Our purpose as a business is to serve the greater good and profit supports that purpose.

[01:37:25] And I think. Every business in every industry can adopt that. Hey, we need healthy profit. But that is not our purpose. Our purpose is to serve the greater good. And depending on what type of company you are, that greater good can be a very wide swath. I mean, there's lots of greater goods for us in the packaging business is primarily solving this waste crisis, but there's a lot of other greater goods that need to be solved too.

[01:37:48] And if we could just get businesses to awaken to the fact that actually will bring us a lot more profit, ultimately when we're serving the greater good, and it will make us feel like really good humans like that we're contributing to a better world instead of just the bottom line.

[01:38:02] **Nate Hagens:** It's a lot more fun too.

[01:38:04] Thank you for your leadership, in this, and I'm really keen to see what, what unfolds with Atlantic in your work in, the coming years. thank you Wes Carter for your time and for your continued work, in service of the greater good.

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[01:38:19] **Wes Carter:** Thanks, Nate. I really appreciate it. Enjoy talking to

[01:38:21] **Nate Hagens:** you. If you enjoyed or learned from this episode of The Great Simplification, please follow us on your favorite podcast platform.

[01:38:29] You can also visit The Great Simplification dot com for references and show notes from today's conversation. And to connect with fellow listeners of this podcast, check out our Discord channel. This show is hosted by me, Nate Hagens, edited by No Troublemakers Media, and produced by Misty Stinnett, Leslie Balu, Brady Hayan, and Lizzie Sirianni.