

### WHY REUSE?

Reuse systems are gaining momentum in Canada. Their appeal rests on the many benefits they potentially offer. Reuse **reduces waste** sent for disposal; can offer **cost savings**; and **drives down energy and resource use** by displacing the need to manufacture new items from raw materials. Reuse includes both refill and return systems. Return involves a business-run system where containers are returned, washed and reused for the same purpose. Refill refers to consumer-owned and managed containers, such as bring-your-own programs.

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## Aelen – Soapstand – CLEANING PRODUCTS



### PARTNERS

Retail outlets, institutions, and apartment buildings. There is an emerging partnership with **ShareWares** to provide station users with reusable containers in case they forget to bring their own. Other partners including the **Share Reuse Repair Initiative**, **Closed Loop Partners**, **Sitra** and **One Earth** are helping grow awareness.



### PILOT LOCATIONS

Vancouver (grocery stores and academic institutions), Boston (apartments), Oakland (grocery stores)



### SECTOR

Automated retail



### PRODUCT CATEGORY

Cleaning Products



### THE COMPANY

**Aelen** is a Vancouver-based company founded in 2017 that manufactures and sells refill stations for personal care and cleaning products under the name Soapstand. They are also currently working on a beverage version. The business tends to a variety of customers, including institutions, retailers, real estate companies and zero-waste entrepreneurs. The plug-and-play stations are available for buying or leasing, can dispense four different liquids and allow for a customized look and branding. Their upcoming beverage station can offer the user a deep level of personalization and can have up to dozens of drink combinations.

To date there are **28 soapstands** in use

Two key differentiators for customers are the **convenience** of the Soapstand and that refills are **30% less expensive** than packaged alternatives.

A Soapstand hosted at Famous Foods, a local Vancouver grocer, has served over **5,000 customers** to date and mitigated over 11,000 single-use plastic containers.



A strategically located Soapstand station averages around **12L a day of product** sold and to highs of up to **30L a day**.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- All that's needed to accommodate a Soapstand at establishments are a Wifi connection, power outlet and five square feet of floor space. The rest of the product (in 20L pails) are kept inside the station.
- Aelen sells Soapstands refill stations and charges a small monthly software upkeep fee. For the buyer (whether a zero-waste entrepreneur, brand, or host location), Soapstand offers

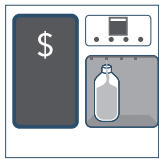
the opportunity to create an additional revenue stream while eliminating plastic waste. Should the operating business be different than the host, the revenue would be shared. The exact amount is dependent on each operator and includes factors such as total service package or whether the host would pay a monthly fee in exchange for a higher portion of the revenue share.

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS: BEVERAGE AND CLEANING PRODUCTS



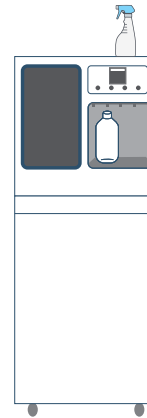
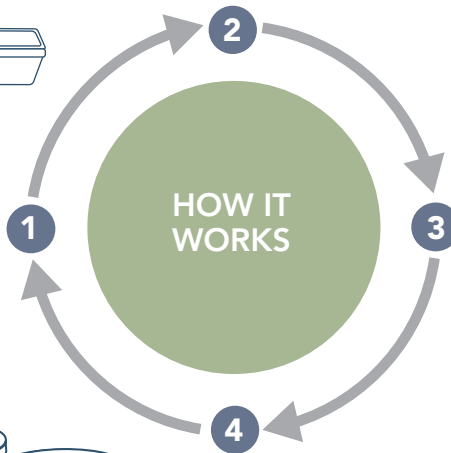
### Collection & Reverse Logistics:

Customers bring, use, and clean their own container for the purchased product.



### Purchase & Use:

Stores, buildings or institutions purchase or lease a refillable Soapstand station. Customers select and pay for the product and quantity they wish to purchase through the touchscreen.



### Maintenance:

Daily light cleaning of the touchscreen, dispensing nozzle, and catch tray is recommended and can be done by building staff. Deep cleaning, including the internal working, should be scheduled depending on the environment and use. Instructions are provided with the station.



### Refilling and/or restocking:

Buyers of the Soapstands (retailers or property managers) stock and restock the Soapstand station by sourcing 19L pails of product from the product supplier and replacing the empty container. Retail customers bring their own containers (jar, bottle, tupperware) to purchase products from Soapstand.



## FROM SOLUTION TO PRACTICE

- The purchase or leasing of the station can be a source of revenue. Buyers of the Soapstands can choose the product sold as well as the price set, and are therefore fully in control of the margin that can be made on the soap sales.

- User adoption** is a key success factor, and their experience should be the primary focus during implementation:
  - The location of the stand should be selected with user convenience and traffic in mind.
  - Dispensing amounts are 500ml, 1.5L or can be customized to allow for more convenient, smaller amounts such as an amount needed for one laundry cycle or cleaning round
  - The looks of the station can be customized to increase appeal to users
- Soapstand** stations can dispense a broad diversity of soaps and detergents, however all SKU's need to be tested for viscosity in advance. Customers may choose the brands they want to sell, or Soapstand can provide a list of options.
- Apartment buildings and commercial spaces in the US use the stations to obtain points under sustainability certification schemes such as **GRESB**.



## POLICY CONTEXT

- Vancouver's ambition to become a Zero Waste city by 2040 is laid out in its long-term strategic waste plan. The plan encourages new business models to start and scale and existing businesses to adopt new approaches to waste prevention, reduction and diversion.
- The federal government's **Action Plan on Zero Plastic Waste** supports innovation funding and regulations that set in motion a rethink of plastics packaging use.
- In select Canadian Provinces, producers of packaged products are responsible for recovering their packaging through extended producer responsibility frameworks, costs that can be avoided by switching to reusable packaging.

See **Reuse Policy Tracker** hosted by Upstream for more policy examples from Canada/US.

## OTHER COMPANIES TO CHECK OUT

**Generation Conscious**, winner of the 2023 **Resusies** for most innovative reuse company for consumer-packaged goods, partners with universities to provide packaging-free, biodegradable laundry soap sheets through dispensing stations. Many local zero-waste retail stores have detergent dispensaries as well as bulk refill options for dry foods. To find one near you, check **Let's Go Zero Waste**.