

A Path to Source Reduction: Unlocking the Potential of Concentrated Formulas in Home & Personal Care

Insights from a workshop led by Closed Loop Partners' Center for the Circular Economy

CLEAN
SIMPLY.

CLEANING TABLETS
Powerful. Concentrated. Plastic Free.

30 TABLETS

CLEAN
SIMPLY.

ALL-PURPOSE
CLEANER
CONCENTRATED FORMULA

REFILL. REUSE. REPEAT.
16 FL OZ (473 ML)

CLEAN
SIMPLY.

BATHROOM
CLEANER
CONCENTRATED FORMULA

REFILL. REUSE. REPEAT.
16 FL OZ (473 ML)

CONCENTRATES CAN HELP BRANDS AND RETAILERS DO MORE WITH LESS

Every year, billions of home cleaning and personal care products are transported in large plastic bottles filled primarily with water. Concentrated solutions offer an alternative, delivering the same function with less water and packaging, whether through a laundry detergent tablet, a powdered face cleanser, a liquid concentrate designed to be diluted at home or a refill that replenishes a reusable bottle. These formats can reduce packaging at the source and transportation emissions, while offering products that are lighter, easier to store and convenient to use.

As brands and retailers look for ways to meet source reduction goals and adapt to evolving packaging requirements like California SB 54, the state's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) law, concentrates can play an increasingly important role. Yet they remain a niche offering across much of the market. When brands, retailers, innovators and industry stakeholders work together—they can collectively build consumer awareness, create intuitive product experiences and make concentrates easier to find, understand and adopt.

TURNING INDUSTRY INSIGHTS INTO COLLECTIVE ACTION

Last year, Closed Loop Partners' Center for the Circular Economy convened a closed-door, invite-only virtual workshop with a curated group of leading CPG brands. Held under the Chatham House Rule, the session fostered candid dialogue around barriers and opportunities of scaling concentrated formats in home, cleaning and personal care products across retail. **These insights—combined with ongoing conversations with major retailers—helped shape the foundation for the [Closed Loop Center's new initiative](#) to advance the uptake of concentrated formulas at retail.**



WHAT WE HEARD | BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALING CONCENTRATED FORMULAS

Priorities	Barriers	Opportunities
Category clarity	Inconsistent definitions, formats and language make concentrates difficult for consumers to recognize, compare and merchandise.	Establish shared terminology and category cues that build familiarity across products and retailers.
Value communication	Package size and upfront price can obscure cost per use, number of uses and long-term savings for customers.	Make use equivalency and cost efficiency easier for consumers to understand at the shelf and online.
Ease of use	Mixing, dosing and refilling introduce unfamiliar behaviors to customers and misuse can limit performance and environmental benefits.	Create products that are easy to use and instructions and dispensing systems that support correct use and repeat purchase.
Retail discovery	Dispersed placement, limited shelf presence and inconsistent on-shelf messaging make concentrates difficult to find.	Use coordinated merchandising and messaging to highlight convenience, portability and compact storage.
Collective learning	Different terminology and use-methods across brands can create an inconsistent customer experience, making new behaviors harder to learn and sustain.	Build a shared evidence base and playbook for the industry to accelerate learning and growth in the concentrates category.



WHAT WE HEARD | CREATING THE CONDITIONS TO SCALE CONCENTRATES AND EXPAND THEIR MARKET REACH

Consumer engagement

- **Address the say-do gap** by designing for real behavior, not just stated intent.
- **Ensure consistent messaging** across all touchpoints from shelf, packaging, digital and store employees to avoid confusion.

Scope and strategy

- **Consider your approach.** Introduce concentrates in multiple categories to maximize customer awareness, or start narrow for focused testing and simpler execution.
- **Stage multiple test approaches** across markets to learn what drives uptake.

Market selection

- **Prioritize California due to SB 54 alignment and consumer readiness**—but be aware outcomes may be *overly* favorable. Consider including a more representative and/or diverse market for broader insights.

Product focus

- **Evaluate high-turn categories** like hand soap or surface cleaners to quickly observe usage and behavior change.
- **Explore tests and trials** long enough to track repeat purchase behavior across multiple refill cycles.



WHAT WE HEARD | HOW ACTION CAN ENABLE CUSTOMER UPTAKE OF CONCENTRATES



Improving visibility and recognition: Concentrates can be difficult to recognize and compare with conventional products, particularly when formats are dispersed across categories or presented in smaller packages. Collaborative research and voluntary retail pilots could explore how merchandising and category cues can make concentrates easier for consumers to find and evaluate.



Exploring more intuitive formats: Collaborative research could identify voluntary design principles that help consumers recognize, compare and use concentrated formats across the retail environment. Best practices would be shared so companies can independently identify the best approach to source reduction and strategies for their own products.



Developing clear consumer education: Tablets, powders, liquid concentrates and refills can require different preparation, dosing and use behaviors. Clear terminology and easy-to-follow instructions reduce confusion, improve the consumer experience and help products deliver their intended performance and environmental benefits.



TURNING THE POTENTIAL OF CONCENTRATES INTO PRACTICE

The Center for the Circular Economy is establishing the first pre-competitive collaboration in the U.S. dedicated to gathering insights on how to **mainstream concentrated products for consumers**. Together, we'll explore what's possible for increasing adoption of concentrates across retailers, brands and consumers. Through collective action, we can help brands and retailers advance source reduction goals, lower carbon footprints and reduce household waste, while making concentrated, refill and reuse solutions more accessible and commonplace for consumers.

WHAT WE'LL ACCOMPLISH TOGETHER WITH OUR PARTNERS

We'll gather the evidence, learnings and partnerships needed to accelerate adoption of concentrated formats. Activities will include:

- **Build the evidence base:** Aggregate, anonymize, and synthesize consumer insights from participating stakeholders, industry research, and behavioral science to identify the key drivers and barriers influencing concentrate adoption.
- **Design a scalable activation model:** Develop an evidence-based blueprint for merchandising, communications, consumer education and retailer engagement to accelerate concentrate adoption.
- **Create publicly available resources:** Publish research and best practices that enable organizations across the sector to build upon the work.
- **Convene the ecosystem:** Create a neutral, third-party forum for pre-competitive collaboration among retailers, brands, researchers and policymakers.



BUILDING ON A FOUNDATION OF PRE-COMPETITIVE COLLABORATION

The Closed Loop Center for the Circular Economy works with brands, retailers and manufacturers to address shared materials challenges. Experience from nearly a decade of in-market activations like the Petaluma, California Reusable Cup Project and Beyond the Bag campaigns across the country inform our approach to convening the value chain, testing solutions in real-world settings and translating shared learnings into practical pathways for broader adoption.



Starbucks, The Coca-Cola Company, and PepsiCo lead brands launching city-wide reuse system in California city

Over 30 restaurants in Petaluma, California provided free reusable to-go cups to all customers, replacing single-use cups. The city offered widespread return points, marking a milestone as the first initiative of its kind in a U.S. city to make reusable cups the default option across multiple restaurants. Over the course of 12 weeks, 220,000 reusable cups were successfully returned—surpassing the environmental breakeven point.



Target, CVS Health and 160+ other retailers come together to deploy customer strategies to reduce single-use bag waste

More than 375+ storefronts were brought together across Denver, CO and Tucson, AZ to support customers in building the habit of bringing their own bag or to opting to go without one. The initiative, which implemented behavioral nudges and communications strategies, yielded 5% fewer single-use plastic bag transactions—equal to a potential elimination of 9.5M single-use bags across the two test markets.

JOIN US

Interested in partnering with us to scale concentrate solutions? Reach out to closedloopcenter@closedlooppartners.com to learn more.



About Closed Loop Partners

Closed Loop Partners is at the forefront of building the circular economy. The firm is comprised of three key businesses that create a platform for systems change: an investment group managing venture capital, private equity and catalytic capital & private credit investment strategies, Closed Loop Capital Management; an innovation center, the Closed Loop Center for the Circular Economy; and an operating group, Closed Loop Builders. Closed Loop Partners is based in New York City and is a registered B Corp.

About Closed Loop Partners' Center for the Circular Economy

The Closed Loop Center for the Circular Economy (the Closed Loop Center) is the innovation arm of Closed Loop Partners. The Closed Loop Center helps businesses solve their most pressing material challenges. We're built on the principle that a world without waste is not only an environmental necessity, it's a path to profitable growth. To learn more, visit <https://www.closedlooppartners.com/closed-loop-center/>