

## COLUMBIA REUSES SHIPPING BOXES, TRACKS THEIR STORIES



RETAIL

There's no doubt recycling is good, but in many cases, reusing is even better. Aiming to keep its share of reusable boxes out of the recycling bin, [Columbia Sportswear](#) recently launched an effort to let customers request that their orders be shipped in boxes that have been used before. Consumers can already buy and sell their own used boxes on [BoxCycle](#), which we covered about a year ago, and now Columbia Sportswear is bringing the concept into the corporate domain. When online shoppers reach checkout at [Columbia.com](#), the website gives them the choice of shipping their order in a previously used cardboard box. Since the launch of the effort in August, more than 60 percent of online customers have selected the used box option, Columbia says. Perhaps even more interesting, however, is that Columbia places a sticker on the outside of each used box that includes a unique code and number. Entering that number or scanning the code via mobile phone into Columbia's "A Box Life" community site reveals a wealth of information about where that box has been. Then, before sending their reused box on its next journey, consumers are encouraged to post pictures of their own to the A Box Life Flickr group and to tweet about their box's journey by adding the hash tag [#aboxlife](#) to Twitter posts when they have something "box worthy" to share. Not only does Oregon-based Columbia's effort create a new, [eco-iconic](#) shipping option, but it also brings the concept of product life stories into the world of packaging materials. In this era of transparency and sustainability, it's not hard to imagine Columbia's example setting a new standard for mail-order retailers worldwide. One to emulate sooner rather than later!

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