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# Customer or Patient Innovation of the Year

**AB InBev**



Green Mining Initiative – Intelligent  
Reverse Logistics

## Green Mining Initiative — Intelligent Reverse Logistics



In Brazil, recycling systems have long been underdeveloped, with municipal programs recycling only 2% of waste, leading to overwhelmed landfills and environmental degradation. The informal waste sector, largely composed of marginalized workers, lacked proper infrastructure, support and visibility. This left a vast number of recyclable materials untapped. Urban areas — especially those with high glass consumption, like neighborhoods with bars and restaurants — contributed significantly to this waste crisis. Still, the process of efficiently collecting and returning this waste to the production cycle was absent.

Postconsumer glass bottle collection was largely inefficient, unregulated and costly for companies like AB InBev that aimed to meet ambitious sustainability goals. The multinational beverage company headquartered in Belgium set a target to have 100% of their products in packaging that is either returnable or made from recycled materials by 2025. However, without proper tracking, transparency or logistics to recover materials from high-waste areas, this goal seemed challenging.

The state of waste collection also lacked the technology to map out waste hotspots, collect data on waste volumes or ensure compliance with environmental regulations. Moreover, there was little opportunity for former waste pickers to find stable, dignified employment in the recycling sector, further exacerbating social inequalities. AB InBev recognized this gap and set out to revolutionize waste management by introducing Green Mining, which efficiently addresses these challenges while simultaneously providing uplifting social change and environmental sustainability.

The Green Mining program's intelligent reverse logistics software uses sales data and blockchain technology to optimize waste collection, creating a transparent and traceable supply chain. By applying urban mining principles, Green Mining disrupts traditional recycling methods, turning postconsumer packaging into valuable resources while reducing the need for raw materials.

AB InBev's innovative approach integrates waste collection with customer operations, turning waste into resources while meeting circular economy goals, thus increasing customer satisfaction and retention and driving social and environmental impact, strengthening long-term partnerships with clients. Moreover, Green Mining places a significant emphasis on social responsibility, creating dignified jobs for former waste pickers — workers who have historically operated in unsafe, informal environments.

## Benefits

- The Green Mining pilot launched in 2018, meeting its KPIs by cutting AB InBev's costs, complying with Brazil's environmental rules and employing former waste pickers, achieving more than 75% recycling rates. Since then, AB InBev has collected more than 2 million kilograms of glass bottles for reuse and prevented 330,000 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- The Green Mining program currently operates in major cities across Brazil and has the capacity to scale to other regions.
- The innovation boosts AB InBev's eco-friendly reputation, had a transformative effect on its supply chain and increased customer loyalty by involving partners in its sustainability mission, leading to stronger partnerships and a positive brand image.



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