



MAGNA SEATING: CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY

John Oilar's passion for nature starts in his backyard and extends to his role as a Magna sustainability advocate – and to his new position as a board member at EcoWorks, a Detroit non-profit.

“EcoWorks has a lot of initiatives, including a Youth Energy Squad made up of Detroit students who learn and lead sustainability initiatives,” said Oilar, Magna Seating vice president of engineering. “The organization also partners with companies and communities to help them become ‘net zero’ by 2050 using things like solar and wind.

“I’m going to assist them with their projects, and I’d like to bring what I learn to my company – and my personal life.”

His interest in the earth and its creatures began when he was growing up in Monticello, Indiana, and joined the local 4H club. Oilar and a friend raised and showed steers at the county fair, and won the “clean stall award.” Later, he earned an agricultural engineering degree from Purdue University.



JOHN OILAR, Magna Seating vice president of engineering

“I was interested in farming, and I wanted to ‘turn soil,” Oilar recalled. “But I ended up in the auto industry, and spent time working in Europe, where they are more eco-conscious. It resonated with me. I’ve always had this passion for decreasing my carbon footprint – and I love the outdoors.”

Today, Oilar's Northville, Michigan home features seven bird feeders, two birdhouses, a vegetable garden, and a Swedish rotating composter that handles much of his family's scraps.

Wildlife, including finches, cardinals, chickadees and ducks, are drawn to his little patch of the planet. Oilar's latest project under consideration: installing solar panels on his roof.

He also recently volunteered to serve as Magna Seating's sustainability champion, helping divisions to work on decreasing their CO2 footprint, with a long-term goal of becoming CO2 neutral. Oilar's approach in this new role is to “make sure sustainability is a priority.”

“The sustainability movement within Magna is growing,” Oilar said. “It's an opportunity for us to differentiate from our competitors and create value. But more importantly, it's the right thing to do.”



ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

When the engineers and designers at Magna Seating develop new products, sustainability is key.

"When we design something new, we always ask 'Does it have fewer components?' 'Does it take less assembly time and less energy to manufacture?' and 'Is it easier to recycle?'" said John Ölar, the vice president responsible for innovation engineering at Magna Seating.

FREEFORM™, a new seat-trim cover technique, exemplifies this approach.

"We've taken out the seams and up to 80 components, including the cord, clips, loop and wire tie downs, which cuts down on minutes to assemble, using less energy," Ölar explained. "It makes seat foam easier to recycle because it doesn't have any embedded components. In the normal cut-and-sew process, you use embedded pieces of steel and plastic. FREEFORM™ is more sustainable."



When we design something new, we always ask 'Does it have fewer components?' 'Does it take less assembly time and less energy to manufacture?' and 'Is it easier to recycle?'



He adds: "We also are considering how to make future seat-trim covers easily replaceable or something you can put in the washing machine. We've designed a product you can zip on and off. We're showing it to our customers. They are always asking, 'How is this product sustainable?' and 'How can I make a difference?' Our commitment to sustainability is what makes us future ready."



