



**24 Sustainability Success Stories in 2024**  
Story 13 of 24: Supply Chain and Sustainability

## **Innovating to Reduce Waste: The Swap Shop and the Item Exchange App**

UPMC employees are finding ways to reduce waste and enhance efficiency in the supply chain thanks to a new creative approach—the Swap Shop and the Item Exchange app.

Created by **Mandi Powell**, director, Clinical Operational Informatics, UPMC Shadyside, the [Swap Shop](#) emerged from a simple observation of a surplus of office furniture being discarded. She thought of platforms like Facebook Marketplace and envisioned a digital space within the UPMC Viva Engage platform where employees could list items they no longer needed or search for specific supplies.

"I saw perfectly good desk chairs being thrown away," Mandi said. "It struck me that there had to be a better way to redistribute these resources within our organization."

The process is simple. Employees can post their unwanted office supplies and furniture, or post about an item they are seeking. They then mark their location and wait for replies. Next, a request is placed to UPMC Moving and Storage to have the item moved to the specific department. This initiative not only curbs unnecessary spending on new items but also promotes a culture of reuse and sustainability.

Similarly, **Jamie Marton**, Unit Director of Surgical Services at UPMC McKeesport, came up with the idea for the item exchange and worked with **Chris Mensah**, Improvement Specialist at the UPMC Wolff Center, to create the [Item Exchange App](#), which addresses specific needs for surgical and laboratory equipment.

Noticing that some laboratories at UPMC already had an informal network for swapping unused supplies, Chris formalized the process with an application that allows users to post available equipment and track items that are no longer used at a facility but could be used at another one. His efforts are helping to minimize waste and maximize resource utilization. The app can be used not only by sterile processing locations but also by surgical teams.

"I wanted to create a centralized platform where departments across UPMC could easily exchange surgical instruments," Chris said. "By doing so, we not only save on procurement costs but also contribute to sustainability efforts by reducing our environmental footprint."

Currently, the app is in the pinned bar on the Swap Shop Viva Engage page. There are plans to make the app even more accessible in the future.

These initiatives are also being recognized for their environmental impact, and UPMC is actively tracking the amount of waste diverted from landfills through these efforts. Looking ahead, the [UPMC Center for Sustainability](#) is supporting plans to expand the reach and functionality of these programs. "We're excited about the potential to scale these initiatives," Mandi said.

By empowering and supporting employees like Mandi, Jamie, and Chris to rethink traditional practices, UPMC is helping set a new standard for sustainability within the healthcare industry.



To learn more about the swap shop, visit the UPMC Swap Shop Viva Engage page and the [Sustainable UPMC Viva Engage page](#).