



Search Engine STRATEGIES 2008 SAN JOSE
CONFERENCE & EXPO

Save up to \$200
Register before August 1!
August 18-22, 2008 | San Jose, CA

Register today

Entrepreneur.com

It's in the Bag

You'll never catch Andy Keller answering "plastic" to the "Paper or plastic?" question at the grocery store. As a matter of fact, you won't hear him answering "paper," either.

By JJ Ramberg | [Entrepreneur Magazine](#) - January 2008

URL: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/magazine/entrepreneur/2008/january/187512.html>

"Those bags end up in a landfill," says Keller. "It's a waste of natural resources." As the founder and CEO of The ChicoBag Company, Keller, 34, has made it his mission to get others to follow his environmentally friendly example. "I want to help humanity kick the single-use bag habit," he says.

The concept for Keller's company is incredibly simple: He sells reusable shopping bags. But while he's the first to admit that this isn't a new idea, Keller says he has a twist on it that has helped his company take off: His bags are made of nylon and can be folded small enough to fit in a glove compartment, backpack or even a back pocket. "Reusable bags, like the typical canvas bag, haven't been convenient," explains Keller. "People are always forgetting them at home, so they're not around when [shoppers] need them."

Keller started the Chico, California-based business in 2005 after being laid off from his job in software sales. He had gone to a local landfill to dump some trash and was taken aback by how many plastic bags he saw in the heap. "I wanted to save some of the bags before the tractor went over them," he says. Instead, he bought a used sewing machine at a local thrift store and made a prototype for a reusable bag. Taking the sample to some local retailers, he listened to their feedback and created the ChicoBag.

The bags are now manufactured overseas and sold at stores across the country as well as through the company's [website](#). Keller, who expects sales of \$2 million to \$3 million this year, says his sales have gotten a boost from recent efforts by San Francisco officials to ban plastic checkout bags at large supermarkets. "The plastic bag problem has been in the news a lot, and it's helping raise awareness," he says.

Keller is also doing what he can to educate people about the problem with using plastic bags. He has launched a program with schools to sell the bags as fundraisers. "Having the kids sell bags instead of candy bars not only helps the school meet financial goals," says Keller, "but we also provide them with lesson plans and information to educate the students on the environment."

JJ Ramberg is the host of MSNBC's small-business program [Your Business](#) and co-founder of [GoodSearch.com](#).

Copyright © 2008 Entrepreneur.com, Inc. All rights reserved. [Privacy Policy](#)