

Jason McNeil, CEO of Interwaste

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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With a career in the waste sector spanning over 20 years, Jason McNeil is currently the chief executive officer of waste management company [Interwaste](#). While his introduction to the world of waste was, as he describes it, "purely coincidental", he has a love for the industry and all its facets that ultimately contribute to environmental sustainability.



Jason McNeil, CEO, Interwaste

We go behind the mask with McNeil to find out more about his journey in the waste sector, his passion for his line of work, and his favourite trend to watch out for in 2021.

■ ***As CEO of Interwaste, could you briefly explain what your role entails?***

Jason McNeil: Some of my core functions include leading the business, integrating teams, developing and implementing strategy and ensuring we have the right resources and structures to deliver value to all stakeholders.

■ ***How did you end up working in the world of waste?***

McNeil: After spending some time travelling internationally, I returned to South Africa unsure of a career path. My introduction to the world of waste was purely coincidental with an opportunity to join a young business in waste management as a general worker. Starting out, I could not have imagined how great the opportunity was and what it would ultimately become. Very grateful for the fortuitous introduction.

■ ***It doesn't sound like the sexiest industry, but you've been in waste management for over 20 years. What do you love about your industry?***

McNeil: I disagree! The industry has developed immensely over the past 20 years to be very sexy indeed. It is characterised by many elements such as innovation, the need to conserve natural resources and reduce waste disposed of to landfill... all of which are ultimately having a positive impact on our precious ecosystems.

Some innovations of the recent past include waste to energy and cleaner production methods, as well as thought-provoking discussions around a circular economy. It is one of the few industries that provide ongoing opportunities for learning, innovation, business development and, ultimately, growth with each solution minimising our environmental footprint and enhancing sustainability.



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■ *What are you working on currently?*

McNeil: As a business, we continuously work on innovative systems and processes. We have some very exciting projects under way with the introduction of new-to-SA technology aimed at minimising disposal of waste to landfills and increasing rates of recovery and recycling.

■ *What's your favourite trend to watch out for this year in waste management?*

McNeil: South Africa has legislation which on an annual basis implements prohibitions on the disposal of certain waste types to landfill. These legislative frameworks provide the foundations and business case for generators and waste management companies to develop new processes aligned with diverting waste from landfill and for developing alternatives.

This, in conjunction with the focus around the circular economy, will positively impact environments across the globe. The trend is set to continue well into the future as population growth, urbanisation and the demand on natural resources increase, as well as standards of living improve.

■ *What excites you most about your career?*

McNeil: We are fortunate to work in such a dynamic sector. Our ability to impact the environments in which we operate, create value through innovation and that the economies in which we operate are boundless in terms of opportunities are just a few of the reasons why I love what I do.



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■ *Where and when do you have your best ideas?*

McNeil: Time to think and reflect is important and, for me, idea generation comes from time spent on an adventure motorcycle visiting remote parts of the country. The time and locations provide perspective when life gets busy.

These are however just ideas; these ideas are refined in discussions with teams and people with different backgrounds and experience. Good ideas are refined through discussion.

■ *When you're not busy working, what do you do for fun?*

McNeil: I enjoy outdoor activities, exercise, and adventures of any kind.

■ *What's your favourite meme/gif of all time?*

McNeil: Saying "living my best life" or "living the dream!".

■ ***We're well into 2021 now. Do you have any resolutions for the new year that you're striving towards?***

McNeil: Non-specific to 2021, 2020 was a humbling experience and I am grateful that we, as a business, successfully navigated the challenges presented. We need to remain positive, agile, proactive, innovative and implement opportunities identified. Above all, stay positive and be grateful.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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