

Close the Gap - Refurbishing Electronics to Close the Digital Divide

Key Learnings



Value of Two-Sided Platforms

The model succeeds by solving a problem for one group (corporations needing secure e-waste disposal) to serve another (schools needing affordable tech). This creates a self-reinforcing system. Building a two-sided platform turns a waste stream into a resource stream, addressing two distinct market failures with a single, integrated solution.

Structure Multiple Revenue Streams for Resilience

Moving beyond a single funding model, Close the Gap combines device sales at below-market rates, value-recovery services for corporations, and sponsored projects. This hybrid approach balances social mission with financial sustainability by creating multiple income sources that each support the core operations while serving different customer needs.

Scale Through Regional Replication of Proven Models

The expansion strategy involves recreating the established operational model in new markets across East and Sub-Saharan Africa. This approach of systematically replicating proven hub models allows for efficient scaling while maintaining quality control and operational standards across different regions.

Establish Credibility to Secure Core Inputs

The operation initially imported refurbished goods to prove its value and quality before it could source them locally. This demonstrates that demonstrating reliable output is often a prerequisite for securing a consistent local supply in a circular model, building the trust needed for others to contribute resources.

Listen to the full episode here:

<https://circularity.fm/close-the-gap-refurbishing-electronics-to-close-the-digital-divide/>