

Mr Green Africa - Recyclates as cheap as Virgin Plastics with Keiran Smith

Key Learnings



Reliable Markets First, Tools Second

The core failure of many NGO initiatives working with informal waste collectors has been providing tools without establishing a consistent market. Without a consistent, reliable, transparent market, no matter what tools are provided, they won't last and won't be effective. The primary value proposition for informal sector suppliers is market stability and predictability; creating a steady, reliable market where they can sell consistently.

Mission-Aligned Brand as Ideal Customer Profile

Navigating volatile markets and creating stable demand requires strategic customers. The ideal partners are brand owners who make promises to their stakeholders and value the traceability and social impact of the supply chain. Working with these pioneers enables a true win-win and provides the commercial stability to scale operations and justify significant capacity investments.

Price Competitiveness Enables Product-Market Fit

Charging a premium over virgin material prices is not viable for recycled plastics in emerging markets. The key breakthrough is achieving quality and efficiency that allows pricing at par or slight discount to virgin alternatives. This creates a no-brainer value proposition and eliminates dependency on regulation or corporate sustainability commitments that can be revised. When recycled material becomes the economically rational choice regardless of impact goals, real product-market fit emerges.

Achieve Highest Valuation in Country of Origin

To truly share value across the chain, the recycling process must be completed locally. The strategic imperative is to focus on local validation, producing plastic waste from the feedstock into the highest possible value. This ensures that the commodity's value is captured domestically, which is essential for sharing value across the value chain and building a self-sufficient circular economy.

Listen to the full episode here:

<https://circularity.fm/mr-green-africa-recyclates-as-cheap-as-virgin-plastics/>