

The Circular Shift Panel from the Circular Design Summit

Key Learnings



Design Must Reconnect Across Disciplines

Circularity doesn't fit into the boundaries of industrial design, architecture, or engineering alone. Yet over the past decades, these fields have become more fragmented. Solving circular challenges requires reconnecting them. Whether it's design, production, or regulation, collaboration across disciplines is essential. Circularity is a system issue, and system issues can't be solved in silos.

To Reach the Mainstream, Design for User Value

Only a small share of consumers consistently buy green products. Many care about sustainability, but still choose based on convenience, cost, and function. That's the reality that circular solutions have to meet. If a product doesn't meet practical needs, it won't scale, no matter how sustainable it is. Brand trust also plays a role in reaching the mainstream. Most people won't verify claims, they trust names they recognise. That means sustainable messaging has to be specific, credible, and authentic. Clear language, real-world examples, and transparency are more effective than abstract claims.

Product-as-a-Service Changes Design

When you design for use instead of ownership, everything changes. Materials, formats, and lifespans shift. The goal is no longer to sell once, but to deliver value over time. Circular design benefits from modularity, return pathways, and upgradeable systems. These need to be planned and embedded from the beginning.

Integrate Regulation into the Design Process

Designers today influence more than form. They help translate regulation into action, simplify choices, and guide behaviour. Compliance can't be an afterthought; it should be included in the design conversations early. At the same time, consumers still face complexity and uncertainty. The role of designers is expanding; they are not only needed for designing products but also for designing systems.

Listen to the full episode here:

<https://circularity.fm/the-circular-shift-panel-discussion-circular-design-summit-2025/>