

Behind the Scenes German Design Council with Bernd Müller from German Design Council

Key Learnings



Design is a Strategic Lever for Circularity

In many organisations, design is still seen as something aesthetic that comes last. But over 80% of a product's environmental impact is determined in the design phase. For circularity, design needs to play a foundational role from the start, shaping materials, functionality, and lifecycle strategies.

Collaboration Drives Circular Innovation

No single team or company can tackle circular challenges alone. Effective circular design relies on collaboration across the product lifecycle and across various roles, including design, marketing, operations, and finance. Internal cross-functional collaboration and external networks are key to accelerating pilot projects and scaling circular solutions more effectively.

Connect Circular Design with Commercial Value

Design alone is not enough. Circular solutions should be developed in tandem with viable business models. Circular innovation and business models must deliver both environmental impact and commercial value; otherwise, they will not scale or sustain.

Enable Circularity with Business Infrastructure

Repair and secondhand markets are growing fast, driven by regulation and shifting customer expectations. To stay resilient and relevant, businesses benefit from making products truly compatible with these models. This means designing for durability, modularity, and ease of disassembly, but also investing in the infrastructure, partnerships, and processes needed to support take-back, refurbishment, and resale at scale.

Listen to the full episode here:

<https://circularity.fm/behind-the-scenes-of-the-circular-design-summit-with-bernd-mueller/>