

Circular Design: Rethinking Products

Key Learnings

Less Materials Mean Less Investment, Not Added Cost

Companies view circular design as an additional burden that increases cost. Reducing components and materials creates savings by decreasing tooling and simplifying production. Nike redesigned their shoe from 50 components to 5 through knitting, eliminating cutting dies while programmable machines enabled design changes without new tooling. **Communicating that less means less investment transforms circular design into a business advantage.**



Make Design Processes Transparent To Gain Alignment

Designers think associatively through visual reasoning that remains internal and difficult for others to follow. This creates friction when departments need clear arguments for decisions. **Documenting processes through mind maps, usage analyses, and material rationale** makes decisions understandable across marketing, production, purchasing, and sales. **Transparency prevents good solutions from failing due to communication gaps.**

Curiosity And Expertise Drive Unconventional Solutions

Rethinking requires enthusiasm, conviction, and deep curiosity about materials, manufacturing, and assembly methods. **Broader technical knowledge combined with fascination for the best solution** enables exploration of unconventional approaches like adapting automotive knitting for footwear. **This exploration delivers innovation alongside circularity** as breakthrough solutions often reduce material use simultaneously.

Challenge Over-Engineered Standards For Material Efficiency

Safety regulations often require excessive material use, such as temporary structures withstanding fifty-year storms when permanent elements cannot. These standards create barriers by mandating quantities that contradict environmental goals. **Partnering with research institutions to establish new standards** can **reduce material requirements by forty percent while maintaining safety**, making circular products economically viable.

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