

Breitling Rewind: Repair as a Heritage Business Model

Key Learnings

Build a business model where value appreciates, not depreciates

Most circular business models start from a problem: products lose value over time. In the watch industry, the opposite can happen. Iconic timepieces have increased in value by five to eight times over two decades. **Instead of fighting depreciation, the business model is built on longevity: the longer a product lasts, the more value it generates.** For any manufacturer whose products are durable and retain demand, this reframes circularity from a cost problem into a value opportunity.

Treat circularity as a driver of value creation

Breitling frames circularity along three dimensions: systemic perspective, supply chain integration, and value creation. The third is the most distinctive. **It positions circularity not as something the company does because it has to, but because it creates commercial and brand value.** For companies still framing circularity as a cost line or a regulatory response, this offers a different starting point: what revenue or brand equity does circularity generate?

Design today for how a product will be received decades from now

How will products launched today be perceived by future owners 50 or 100 years from now? This directly shapes product development: what materials are chosen, what traceability standards are embedded, what values are built in. **Sustainability choices made today become part of the product's future story and market value.** For companies with long product lifetimes, current sustainability investments are not just costs but inputs into future value.

Overcome short-term pressure to unlock compounding value

The main barrier to long-term product value is fiscal-year thinking. Companies optimize for short-term metrics and rarely invest in assets that pay off over decades. **Compounding effects in product value require time, and the pressure to deliver quarterly results works directly against it.** The barrier is often not technical but organizational: how the company measures success and over what time horizon.

Use heritage as the mechanism that connects culture to commerce

At Breitling, the Heritage department is not an archive. It sits within marketing but works across product development, sales, and ICT, operating as custodian of the brand DNA. This cross-functional role allows a smooth transition from storytelling to commercial execution. **The Rewind program is a product of this setup: 90% of the current collection is inspired by products of the past, so restoring vintage pieces directly reinforces demand for current production.** Heritage is not a side project, but rather what makes long-term value creation operational.

Listen to the full episode here:

<https://circularity.fm/episode/breitling-rewind-repair-as-a-heritage-business-model/>

