

Direct-to-Consumer: Whirlpool Corp's Certified Refurb Strategy

Key Learnings

Interview Across the Organization to Map Opportunities

Circular business models touch multiple functions, and opportunities are often invisible from a single vantage point.

Interviewing stakeholders across functions and pairing that with consumer insights reveals where existing systems can support circular initiatives. Taking a broad approach prevents premature commitment to one initiative and surfaces opportunities that match internal capabilities and customer priorities.

Accept Break-Even When Sustainability Metrics Advance

For-profit corporations typically require positive returns to approve new initiatives. **However, if a project breaks even while making a step forward on emissions, waste, or circularity metrics, that counts as a win.** Monetizable business cases with incremental gains remain a top priority, but break-even is acceptable when sustainability metrics move forward. This is because profit often happens in longer timeframes, when productivity gains and economies of scale are achieved.

Frame Refurbishment as Channel Growth to Win Sales Support

Sales teams focused on commercial growth are more likely to support circular initiatives than those pitched on sustainability alone. **Positioning refurbishment as a lever of growth for owned channels, especially as a real differentiator because no trade partner will have the product, aligns circular strategy with sales objectives.** Understanding the quality, information, and profitability case turns sales into advocates who help unlock operational barriers.

Treat Past Roadblocks as Clues, Not Dead Ends

Organizations often dismiss circular initiatives because previous attempts failed. **When exploring why something didn't work before, the roadblock is usually not a fundamental barrier but a clue to what needs to change.** Past failures become a guide for execution rather than evidence the concept cannot work.

Quality Enables Refurbishment to Pay Off Multiple Times

Refurbishment depends on products that can sustain extended life. **Products built for durability create the opportunity for second and third life cycles, meaning quality can pay off twice or eventually three times.** Companies without quality products face an entry barrier to refurbishment programs.

Listen to the full episode here:

<https://circularity.fm/episode/direct-to-consumer-whirlpool-corps-certified-refurb-strategy/>

