Value chain dialogue cards

A better future for fashion

Start talking about circular value chain transition!

Start Talking is a dialogue tool that can be used to deepen the conversation around circular value chain transitions* in the textile and fashion industry. The purpose is to incite and foster circular change through conversation. Start Talking can be used in many contexts and by different professions within the industry. It can support the conversation about circular transitions with management, between departments, partners, or colleagues. Give it a try at your next strategy session, development meeting, or company event.

The game was developed to support the work of sustainability professionals and change makers in the industry.

To facilitate the game, fundamental knowledge of circular economy and/or sustainability is advisable*.

Enjoy!

Let's spark some conversation to transform value chains!

*If you want to know more about circular economy and value chain oriented transformation go to card #2 for a brief introduction.

A circular value chain

A circular value chain is a collaboration between actors across the lifespan of a product, from raw material production through to remanufacturing. The purpose of the circular value chain is to strengthen circular economy systems to create resilience, minimize resource use and waste, and to add value for all actors. A circular value chain should build on a set of four shared principles that aim at decreasing harmful impact:

→ A product's sustainability potential must be assessed through a full lifecycle perspective, with equal attention to all phases of the product's life.

→ The biggest reduction of negative environmental impact comes from a long lifespan of the product. High economic, material, and cultural value through the entire lifecycle ensures a long lifespan of the product.

→ No single actor is stronger than the entire chain: A product's sustainability potential can only be achieved if all actors live up to their responsibility for the product and its value.

→ Increased dependency in the value chain reduces individual risk and distributes responsibility and benefits along the entire chain.

The principles are high-level guidelines for decision making in every step of the value chain, from fiber production to reuse and remanufacturing. The aim of the principles is to refocus the orientation of high-risk wasteful fast fashion value-chains to value-centered circular ecosystems and value chains.

How to play

Draw a card and start talking - it is as simple as that. But if needed you will find a few guidelines and recommendations below:

1. You can begin the game with a card of your own choosing. Draw randomly or think about the challenges and barriers your organization / business faces and choose by category*.
2. Conversation is a never-ending game - 'Start Talking' and you will spend anywhere from 20 min. to 99 years.
3. It is recommended that 2-6 people participate in the conversation, but it is possible to use the cards as reflection cards by yourself.
4. Different professional backgrounds will make the conversation richer by including different perspectives and knowledge about the value chain
5. Once you have answered the questions, bring in the interventions. They will help you stay on path and keep the circular value chain in mind.
6. To get started, head to card 5 for warm-up questions.

*See card 4 for further explanations of the cards and categories

The dialogue cards

The dialogue cards are divided into five categories, with five questions that will spark the conversation on different challenges, potentials and questions. The intervention cards will help you stay ambitious.

Introductions & instructions
Here you'll find information about circular economy, how to play the game, and ideas for how to set the scene.

Strategy – Conversation cards
In this category you will find conversation cards focusing on strategic challenges. It is often a good idea to include management in the conversation.

Value chain collaboration – Conversation cards
The last category will take you into important conversations about the value chain and the interrelations between actors, products, sales, and materials.

Continues card 5

The dialogue cards

Production – Conversation cards
This category addresses challenges in relation to production and production flow. While these conversations are important both internally and externally, it is fruitful to include suppliers and other collaborators.

Users – Conversation cards
In the category user you will face challenges around consumer behavior and collaboration. After the initial conversation it might be of interest to ask your consumer base to participate in the dialogue.

Interventions – Conversation cards
We encourage you to bring in the interventions at any given point. Place them on the table from the very beginning as a gentle reminder to think through the circular value chain, or draw a card if the conversation is going in circles or nowhere at all.

Warm up & set the scene

Start the conversation by asking

- → Do we see the problem in the current state in the industry? If no, why not?
- → Who should be part of the conversation? Are there specific stakeholders, colleagues, or collaborators who are crucial to include?
- → How do we as an organization / business / workplace react to change and uncertainty?

Remember that

- → The game is here to start the conversation, it is not about getting it right.
- → Think (and talk) about what good conversation practices mean. Constructive dialogue is created through honesty, trust, patience, and a willingness to err and own up to past mistakes.
- → It is not an interview, but a conversation. Make sure everyone gets to share experiences and thoughts along the way.
- → The conversations can be informal and fun, as a way to kickstart conversation on team day. However, *Start Talking* can also be an effective tool to initiate important changes by preselecting cards, timing the conversation, and having a knowledgeable game master who is driving the conversation forward.

How do we engage management?

Background

Despite the growing awareness of the need for more sustainable practices, sustainability managers are finding it difficult to get the proper support from management. Similarly, managers who want to implement changes can find it difficult to persuade boards and investors, as they lack persuasive business cases.

Start Talking!

- → How does our current strategy allow for circular initiatives?
- → How do we make circular economy part of our strategy?
- → Do we have a network that can help us find the right arguments and documentation?
- → What are the persuasive arguments we need towards management?

What's your next objective?

How do we communicate circular business development in an aesthetically pleasing way?

Background

In the fashion industry, visual communication plays an important role. This is also the case in decision-making processes regarding business and strategy. Therefore, getting everybody on board requires a strong focus on communicating circular economy, and the tools that are used for implementing, it in an aesthetically pleasing way.

Start Talking!

- → How do we usually communicate important decisions and new strategies?
- → Can we make circular economy attractive?
- → How do we present our next circular initiative in a more aesthetic way?
- → How does our brand identity work for circular initiatives?

What's your next challenge?

How do we secure the necessary investments in circular economy in the industry?

Background

As with all innovation processes, new ideas require trust and funding in order to launch. Sometimes in the form of capital, sometimes in the form of willingness from existing companies to spend resources on implementing innovations in their value chain.

Start Talking!

→ How do we secure investments at the moment?
→ Do we know someone who is already doing it?
→ Can we rethink our own cost structure to support experimental approaches towards circularity?

What's your move from here?

What is our role in rethinking economic growth within planetary boundaries?

Background

Circular economy aims at reorienting industrial production away from extractive and exploitative systems that cause irreparable damage to our planet's ability to regenerate and regain balance. To do that, every company needs to address their role in a new economy within planetary boundaries.

Start Talking!

→ How familiar are we with the planetary boundaries framework?
→ Who in our network can help us?
→ Who do we need to collaborate with to change our impact?

What´s your next card?

How do we integrate circular economy into our entire business model?

Background

Often, circular economy begins with sourcing recycled materials. To harness the potential of a circular transition, both economically and environmentally, circular thinking should be part of every company decision and of the entire business model.

Start Talking!

→ Does the way we organize our work allow for circular initiatives?
→ How could repair, resale, and redesign become a valuable part of our business model?
→ How do we strengthen circular development on fiber level, material level, product level, and company level?

How about we dive into the next topic?

How do we make pricing purpose-driven?

Background

Pricing is a strategic tool for placing a product in the market indicating its position between a fast fashion product or a luxury item. And pricing can play a decisive role in the users' relationship with the product, as we tend to take better care of more expensive items.

Start Talking!

- → What are our current criteria for pricing, and what purpose do they serve?
- → Could transparent pricing that shows the true cost of our products help communicate our efforts to produce products with a long lifespan?
- → Does our financial strategy allow for a fairer economic distribution across the value chain?
- → How do we ensure economic stability and fair pricing at the same time?

Curious about what's coming up next?

How might we support new circular business models?

Background

New circular business models that try to use less material per product (narrowing resource loops), extend product life (slowing resource loops), and reuse materials (closing resource loops) are necessary. Often they require testing in order to be successful.

Start Talking!

→ Do we have the courage, the desire, and the abilities to try out new circular ways?
→ What problems in the existing model would we like to fix?
→ Where can we find more information about circular partnerships?
→ What could we change about our model tomorrow to make it more circular?

What's your next course of action?

How do we strengthen local production and value chains?

Background

Circular economy requires transformations in business models and strategies. In the fashion industry, visual communication plays an important role. This is also the case in decision-making processes regarding business and strategy. Therefore, getting everybody on board requires a strong focus on communicating circular economy and the tools that are used for implementing it in an aesthetically pleasing way.

Start Talking!

- → How do we usually communicate important decisions and new strategies?
- → Can we make circular economy attractive?
- → How do we present our next circular initiative in a more aesthetic way?
- → How does our brand identity work for circular initiatives?

What's your next course of action?

How do we strengthen local production & value chains?

Background

Local production and suppliers offer a host of benefits in terms of both social and environmental sustainability. They can make transparency and traceability easier, and foster new collaborations. But working with local value chains can also require some changes in production flows.

Start Talking!

→ Have we mapped our current suppliers in terms of distance?
→ Have we researched if local suppliers are available?
→ Can we collaborate with local suppliers to prepare them to become suppliers for us?

Keep talking! Choose a new card

How can we increase the overall share of alternative fibers?

Background

Alternative fibers such as flax, kapok, plant-based leather, or recycled natural fibers can offer an opportunity to reduce reliance on conventionally grown or non-renewable resources.

Start Talking!

→ Does our material or fiber strategy prioritize fibers that are suitable for a circular economy?

→ Where can we introduce new fibers without compromising the quality of our product?

Time to unveil the next piece of the puzzle

How might we make mapping production & supply chains more accessible?

Background

A big step towards reducing pollution and waste in the value chain is to understand and manage all the different steps in the supply chain. Mapping is the foundation for change and collaboration.

Start Talking!

→ What type of information do we need?
→ Who can supply the needed information?
→ How to gather the information?
→ How do we streamline the handling/mapping of the information?

Ready to reveal what's next

How can we develop new criteria for circular design?

Background

A significant share of a product's potential lifespan and impact is decided in the design process. Choice of materials and suppliers, durability, repairability, and recyclability can be translated into a set of criteria to follow in the design process.

Start Talking!

→ What is the focus of our current design criteria or design approach?
→ Who can help us develop them?
→ How do we make them stick?

Let's see what the next card holds

What new goals & criteria for success do we need?

Background

Circular business models aim at reducing the material output, while maintaining a stable economic foundation. In order to motivate and measure the efforts of the company and employees, new criteria and goals that reflect the circular ambitions are needed.

Start Talking!

- → How do we measure success, when we produce less?
- → How can we communicate our success to investors in a language they understand, when our goals change?
- → What could be a new way of talking about success?
- → How do we develop KPIs that support financial success and decreasing material and resource use?

Ready to reveal what's next

How do we nurture smart users?

Background

The choices of the people who buy and use our products have a significantly influence on the overall impact of the product and the potential of a circular value chain. Helping them make the right choices is key to ensuring the success of the value chain.

Start Talking!

→ Does our communication with customers encourage quality and care?
→ What educational campaigns and/or initiatives can we implement to raise awareness about the environmental and social impacts of clothing choices?
→ What tools or platforms can we develop to provide consumers with information about the circularity of products and their supply chains?

Let's open the door to the next conversation

How do we involve users in securing a long lifespan of products?

Background

Extending the lifespan of clothes is one of the most effective ways to improve its environmental performance and minimizing waste and emissions associated with textile products. Therefore, reducing a company's impact relies on its users.

Start Talking!

→ Where can we support our users' desire to choose quality products and help to keep the products for longer, even after the point of sale?
→ How can we work with designers and manufacturers to create products that prioritize durability, repairability, and timeless style?
→ What initiatives can we launch to make it easier and more appealing for users to engage in circular fashion practices, such as repair, or online resale platforms?

Let's dive into the next topic!

How do we support the transition from consumers to users?

Background

A key step in rethinking the relationship with the people who buy and wear our clothes, is to think of them as users, not consumers. They have a significant impact on the process, and by considering them as users, we can actively include them in the design process.

Start Talking!

→ How do we think of the people who wear our clothes, and how do we address them in the right way?

→ What strategies can we employ to engage users in co-creation processes, seeking their input and feedback on product design and features?

Let's keep the conversation going, what's next?

How might we increase our knowledge of our users?

Background

Few fashion companies have formal structures in their development process for new products, where user feedback is integrated. Gathering knowledge and experiences from users is crucial in developing a robust circular value chain.

Start Talking!

→ How can we create forums for our users to share their experiences with wearing our products?
→ How can we improve our understanding of how our products are used?

Time to move on to the next card!

How can users be included in industry networks & decision-making?

Background

If users do not handle products in a way that ensures a long life span, the product's circular potential is not realized. Getting users of textile products involved in strengthening circular value chains is crucial. Therefore creating forums for conversations with users is important, not only for individual companies, but on an industry level.

Start Talking!

→ Do we currently collaborate with consumer organizations or user initiatives?
→ Should we invite public opinion leaders?
→ Which consumer associations or organizations should we engage with?

Ready to explore what's behind the next card?

How might we design our product & choose materials to foster circular interaction with our customers?

Background

Material choices and design decisions are crucial for supporting a circular economy. By focusing on sustainable materials and designs that encourage reuse, repair, and recycling, companies can create products that actively engage customers in circular practices.

Start Talking!

→ How can we select materials that are durable, recyclable, and sustainable to encourage a longer product lifecycle?
→ What design features can we incorporate to make our products easier to repair and recycle?
→ How can we involve our customers in the material selection and design process to ensure the products meet their needs and support circularity?
→ What incentives can we offer to customers who participate in recycling or returning products at the end of their lifecycle?

Ready to explore what's behind the next card?

What will it take to implement a new management ethic that supports value chain-oriented circular transition?

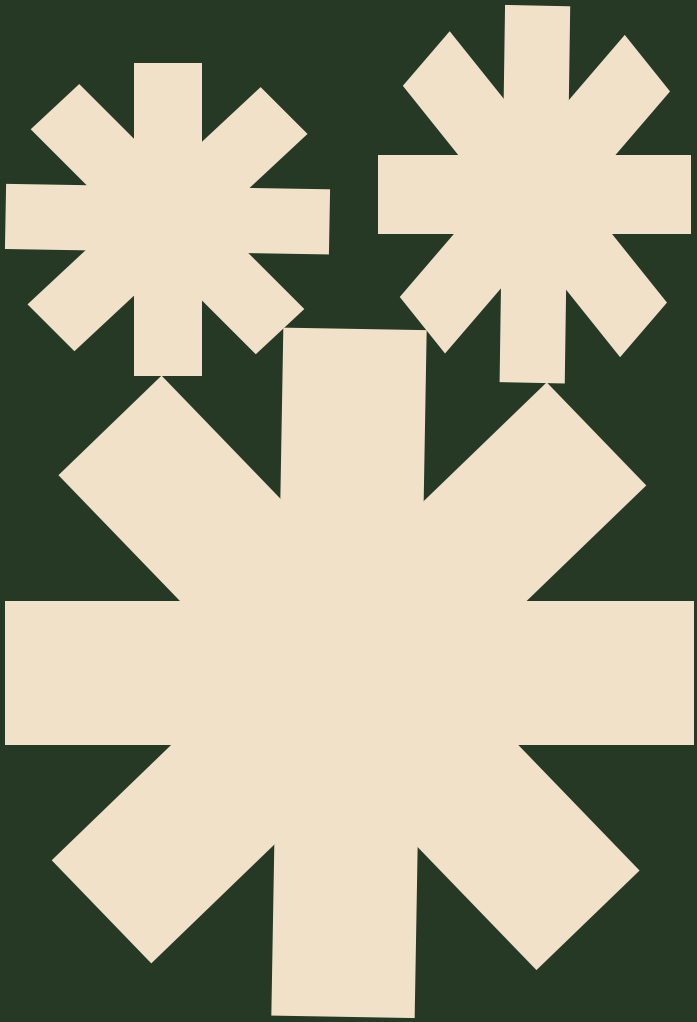
Background

Success in managing fashion and textile companies is often measured by growth, market expansion, and increased production. The traditional growth ethic emphasizes competition and a “every company for itself” mentality. To implement a value chain orientation and benefit from a circular economy, a new ethical framework is needed.

Start Talking!

→ How do we measure our success at the moment?
→ What could be a new way of valuing collaboration across the value chain?
→ How can global frameworks on human rights and ethical trade practices support our values?
→ Can we make environmental impact a part of our mission?

What’s the next item on your agenda?



How might we support each other's efforts on responsibility?

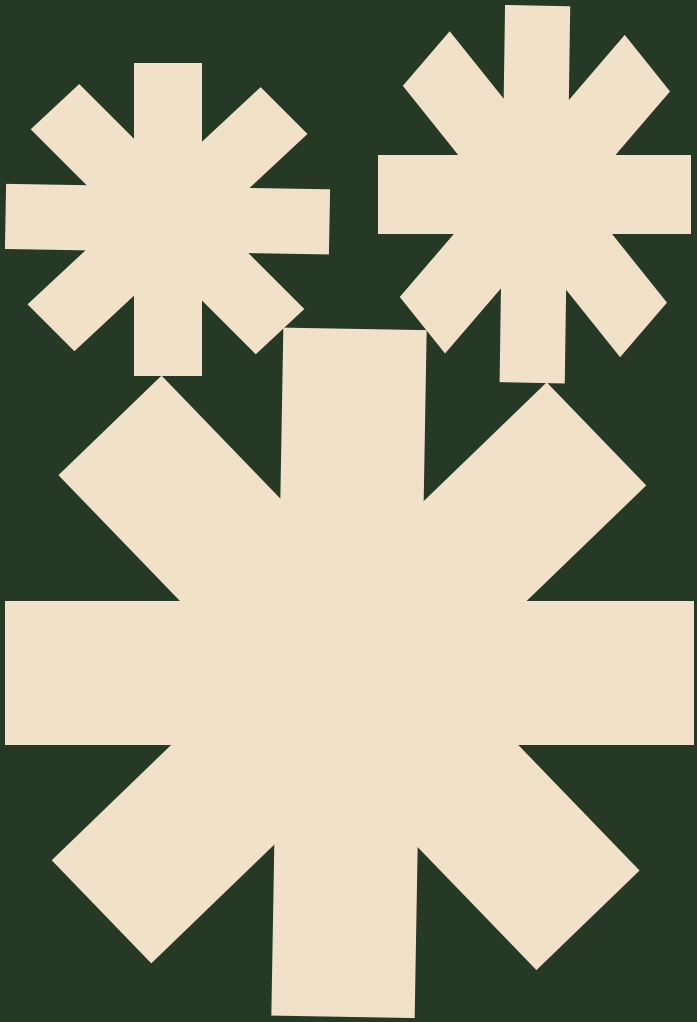
Background

Taking responsibility for your actions as a company is becoming increasingly important, and regulation and certifications are playing a major role as tools in the transition towards fairer and more sustainable practices. Collaboration across the value chain is necessary to provide the needed information, and being a company that can support other companies in reaching their sustainability goals can be an advantage.

Start Talking!

→ Which tools do we need to strengthen collaboration?
→ How do we use collaboration to strengthen each other's circular initiatives across the value chain?
→ Do we know what the major risks are to all actors in the value chain?
→ Is there something we can do to minimize that?

Shall we uncover the next part of our dialogue?



How do we make space for networks across value chains?

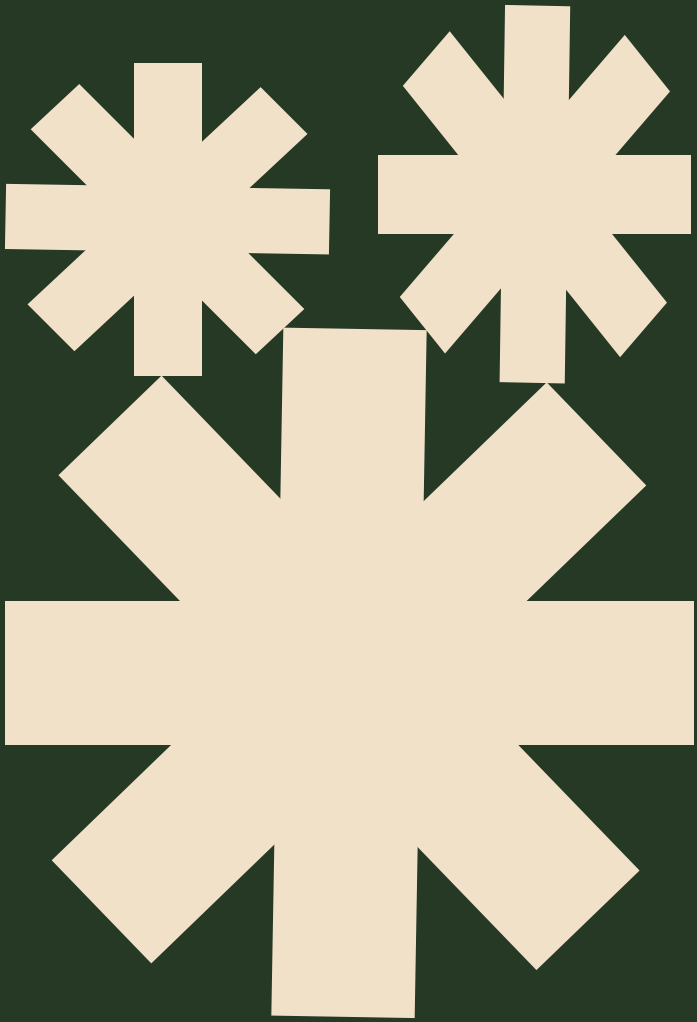
Background

Freeing up resources and time to participate in networks can be difficult for many companies. But networks formal as well as informal, are one of the most important tools for sharing know-ledge and getting new ideas to strengthen circular value chains.

Start Talking!

→ Can we make informal network activities a way of strengthening our business as well as our circular economy knowledge?
→ What networks are we currently part of?
→ How could they be used for sharing knowledge and experience in collaboration and circular economy?

What's waiting for us on the next card?



How do we increase the knowledge of circular solutions throughout the entire value chain?

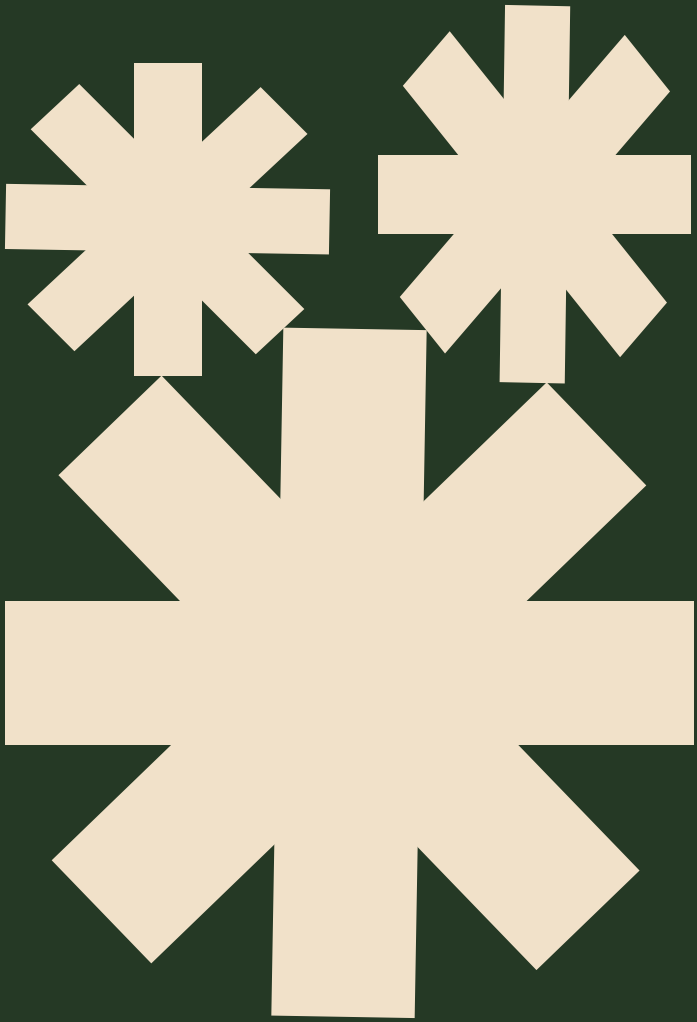
Background

Circular economy is a systems change and requires new solutions across the value chain. Often, knowledge of potential solutions and innovations is not shared among all actors, and this lack of information hinders progress.

Start Talking!

- → Where are the places or occasions for exchanging knowledge?
- → What communication platforms or networks can we establish or improve to ensure that important information reaches all relevant stakeholders?
- → How can we ensure that all actors have access to the necessary resources and tools to implement circular solutions?
- → Which specific areas need more attention, and what strategies can we employ to quickly and effectively close these knowledge gaps?

Let's flip the next card



How might we engage our customers & users to actively participate in the circular economy?

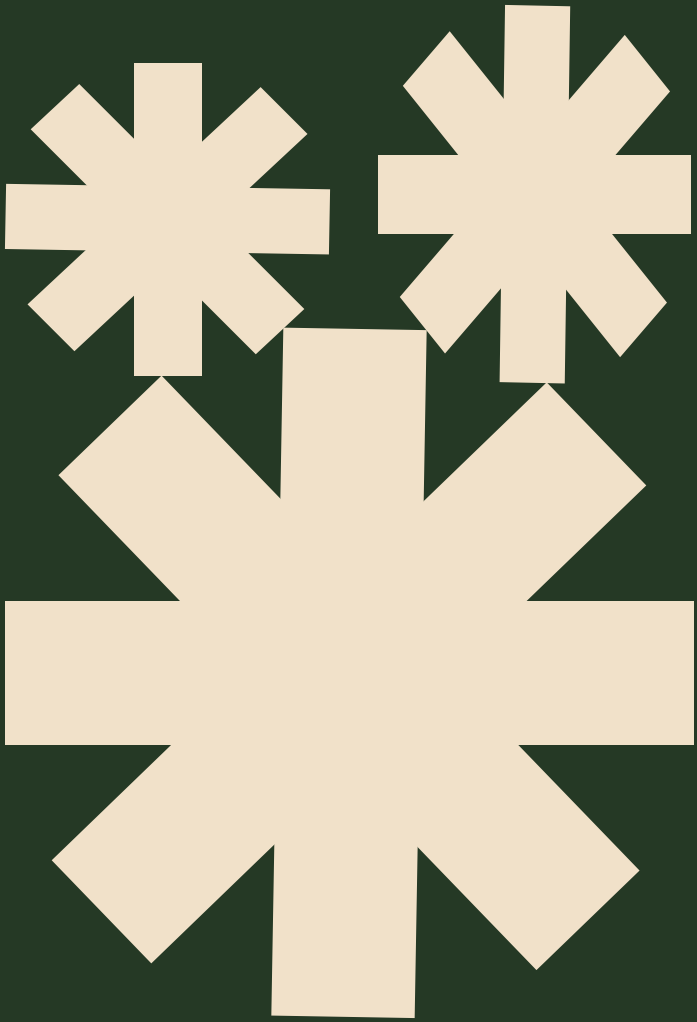
Background

Customer and user involvement is crucial for the success of circular initiatives. Educating and motivating our partners, both customers and user, to participate in recycling, returning used products, and supporting sustainable practices can significantly enhance the effectiveness of a circular economy.

Start Talking!

- → What educational campaigns that inform customers and user about the benefits of circular economy can we support?
- → How can we collaborate with customers to co-create circular solutions and innovations?
- → How do we ensure that we have taken steps to strengthen circular economy internally before we engage external partners?

Ready to reveal what's next



How can we leverage technology to enhance circular practices in our value chain?

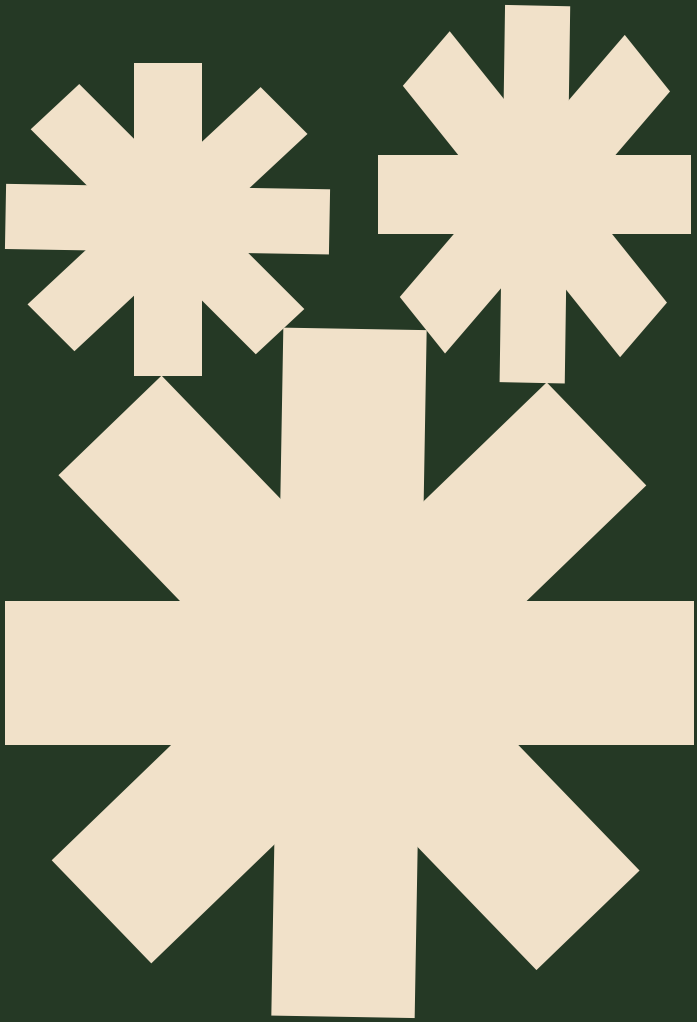
Background

Technological advancements offer new opportunities for implementing circular practices. From improving recycling processes to using blockchain for supply chain transparency, technology can play a pivotal role in creating a more sustainable and circular value chain.

Start Talking!

- → What current technologies can we adopt to improve our circular practices?
- → How can we use data analytics to track and optimize the lifecycle of our products?
- → What role can blockchain technology play in enhancing supply chain transparency and traceability?
- → How can we integrate new technologies to support recycling and waste reduction efforts?

Let's see what the next card holds



Hold up!
Have you considered that, the sustainability potential of a product should be assessed from a lifecycle perspective, with equal attention to all phases of the product's life?

Curious about what's coming up next?

Hold up!
Have you considered that the biggest reduction in negative environmental impact comes from a long product lifespan?

Time to unveil the next piece of the puzzle

Hold up!
Have you considered that no single actor is stronger than the entire chain: A product's sustainability potential can only be achieved if all actors live up to their responsibility for the product and its value?

Shall we uncover the next part of our dialogue?

Hold up!
Have you considered that increased dependency in the value chain reduces individual risk and distributes responsibility and benefits across the entire chain?

Time to move on to the next card!

Want to learn more?
Go to www.ddc.dk
or follow the link!

In futurum Danish Design Center