

Joining the Circle Activity

Circular economy models offer opportunities to businesses across all sectors. The models can improve efficiencies, reduce waste, improve product design and strengthen brand.

This activity is designed to help you identify circular opportunities within an existing business, using the 9 strategies discussed.

Read through the business description in cards below. Then, as a group, work your way through the 4 Circular Economy Accelerator worksheets.

Choose 1 member of the group to note down ideas and thoughts, focus on the opportunities and challenges.

As these are fictional businesses, feel free to think creatively. Circular economy is about system changes, be innovative and consider the long-term opportunities and impacts.

Circular Strategies





Y-Relived

Y-Relived is a postal packaging manufacturing firm. From their base in Oban they manufacture a range of products for the postal/delivery sector.

To date, the company has focused on developing their products from UK sourced 100% recycled content, that is fully recyclable. The company use cardboard and polyethylene terephthalate (PET).

The unit in Oban is made up of an office, manufacturing facility and warehouse. Y-Relived employ 20 people and have streamlined manufacturing using bespoke machinery and software.

Y-Relived market is predominately B2B sales to online retailers. Their customers are retailers who want to make the right choice when it comes to delivering their products. The retailers can buy Y-Relived products as a one off, or set up a monthly/quarterly regular order.

The company use their sustainable approach to design and manufacture in their brand, promoting the recycled content. Y-Relived are aware that they cannot guarantee that the product will be recycled at end of life.

In 2019 Y-Relived trialled a survey their retailers to get a better understanding of recycling rates. However, they found that the retailers could not provide any data on what happened to the packaging when it reached the end customer.

Covid-19 saw a surge in business for Y-Relived, as online sales increase so did demand for packaging solutions. The business struggled to access the volumes of recycled cardboard required to meet demand. Staying true to brand, they had to turn away several new customers. The only alternative would be to source virgin materials from China.

A member of the Y-Relived design team recently pitched a new idea to the management team, a range of products (envelopes, parcels and wrapping) that are harder wearing than their current lines, but still made from recycled and recyclable content. The design would allow customers to use the product more than once. Management rejected the idea. The additional cost of materials and manufacturing meant the product would retail at a much higher price. Management felt that the customer would not be interested in paying more for the same product, it would be too challenging for their retail customers to use re-use packaging.

Y-Relived were recently approached by Sundaland, a large online retail distribution company with 17 fulfilment centres in the UK. Sundaland are interested in the Y-Relived approach to creating sustainable packaging solutions and are keen to conduct a trial using their products in one of their Scottish fulfilment centres. Y-Relived are very interested in this opportunity, but are cautious given recent availability issues and price fluctuations within their supply chains.