



Understand it

Apply it

Generate quick win ideas

Check an existing concept

More detail ...

Design wheel

Explore

Create

Evaluate

Manage

Impact map

Performance dashboard

Role-based guidance

Topic-based guidance

See examples

Marketing

What's wrong with Business As Usual?

- The impacts that product and packaging design can have on brand perception and sales, from the point of view of the wider environmental and social effects, are often neglected.
- An 'eco-label' can provide a product differentiator, but excessive green claims can be perceived as negative. There is a growing phenomenon of 'eco-fatigue', which is when the market is so saturated with green claims they have no differentiating value at all.
- Making false, misleading, or meaningless eco-claims can damage your brand and in some cases fall foul of the Trade Descriptions Act.
- A popular gripe from customers is about excessive packaging; the packaging does need to protect the product from damage during transit, but well engineered packaging can allow considerable energy reduction in total transport costs.
- Company-wide consistency of purpose is essential. The Circular Economy requires cooperation across business units to look at the full end-to-end costs and impacts. This should include customer and external cost impacts.

What can I do better?

- Use a strategic analysis with People, Profit, Planet criteria in order to identify the key brand risk factors and help inform a marketing strategy. Decide the acceptable levels of risk to your brand and/or opportunities to improve the brand.
- A novel way to take account of resource risks is to use a "stakeholder" to represent key natural resources; the impacts are then captured as stakeholder impacts.
- Build awareness of the People, Profit, Planet impacts at senior marketing levels. Use tools that help assess these impact criteria, driving awareness via training and communications.
- Understand your supply chain risks, beyond the first tier of immediate suppliers. An improvement could become a USP, especially when going 'beyond compliance'.
- Don't bamboozle your customer with technical jargon.
- In terms of message, transparency and common sense are key.
- Marketing claims should stand up to scrutiny in terms of the science and data that lie behind them.

How can I do better?

- Packaging is often the first point of contact and brand experience - an ideal opportunity to not only increase trust and brand loyalty, but also to make a statement of intent in the pursuit of the circular economy. The packaging can "become the message" by embodying what it stands for.
- Packaging should be treated as an engineering art form in its own right, and not just a box to transport goods in. Consider packaging re-use - can it have another life or be used to return the old product it is replacing?
- This toolkit provides a "system model". By using it you can identify hotspots that are priorities for action and understand the wider impacts of proposed changes.
- Certain words are poorly if at all regulated, for example 'natural', so these should be used carefully so as not to mislead.
- Claims that are merely statements of legal compliance, such as "lead-free", should be avoided as these imply that the manufacturer/retailer has

somehow gone above and beyond when in fact they have merely achieved legal requirements.

- In terms of the circular economy principles, the medium (the packaging, the product, the experience) is the message. In contrast, stating for example that you are a green company on a box which is shrink wrapped in polyolefin can breed mistrust in the brand.
- Make the packaging is tamper-evident and secure, but also easy to open by hand. "Wrap-rage" is a widely recognised term, with 60,000 injuries per year in the UK alone caused from poor packaging design – not a good introduction to your brand.
- Reconsider current business models to see if a Circular Economy business model might add more value; this might include leasing or refurbishment models.
- Use the People, Profit, Planet criteria to stimulate improvements and drive innovation that supports growth and product differentiation.

How do I measure success?

- Make use of leading-edge consumer insights research to help measure marketing success at PoS. Traditional focus group methods do not capture the key insights needed.
- Look for improvements that are aligned across the People, Profit, Planet criteria and not purely driven by cost reduction; these could then help with product differentiation and growth.
- Benchmark sustainability progress using metrics and compare progress against sustainability thought leaders and competitors. Seek to identify competitive advantage arising from this progress.
- Has brand advocacy improved and is this translating into improved sales, have you deployed social media traffic measurements?
- Evaluate People, Profit, Planet success factors at the product concept stage, to avoid costly re-engineering later, and track against successive product generations.
- Track People, Profit, Planet performance KPIs in scorecards, to encourage continuous improvement.

Further reading

- See the summary of [Eco-labels](#) and [Material impacts](#).
- Futerra sustainability communication's [Green wash guide](#)
- SustainAbility's [Signed, sealed .. Delivered? White Paper](#)
- Ramon Arratia's ebook [Full product transparency](#)