CUSTOMER-CENTRIC GROWTH

A Playbook for Scaling Repair and Resale in Fashion

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BRITISH FASHION COUNCIL





Innovate CLARASYS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UK fashion and textile industry is at a critical inflection point where the traditional linear model is no longer tenable. For the modern fashion leader, circular business models (CBMs), particularly repair and resale, are no longer a peripheral concern but a significant commercial and strategic imperative. This playbook makes the case that CBMs represent a critical pathway to business resilience, a powerful engine for customer loyalty, and an essential lever for achieving net zero ambitions.

Our research with industry pioneers reveals a clear consensus: the greatest barriers to scaling are not a lack of ambition, but a lack of awareness, convenience, and a clear value proposition for the customer. Brands that succeed will be those that obsessively focus on removing customer friction and framing circular services as a core driver of brand loyalty and lifetime value.

This report moves beyond theory to offer a practical framework based on insights from industry pioneers. Our key recommendations for executive leaders are:

Image Credit: Di Petsa

Build circular service for both existing & new customers: Recognise that circular models can serve different segments simultaneously. Create repair services for your loyal, existing customers who value quality and longevity. Develop resale as a dual-purpose engine: to engage existing customers and to acquire new, aspirational customers with a more accessible, trustworthy entry point to your brand.

Brand authentically: The external messaging must be authentic to your brand ethos. This means educating customers on the benefits that will resonate most with them—whether that is value, quality, or finding rare items—rather than leading with a sustainability message that may not align with your core brand.

Obsess over the customer journey: Systematically identify and eliminate every point of friction in the repair and resale process. The leaders in this space are those who apply the same level of optimisation to the customer journey as they do to their supply chain, which is why many now partner with specialist third-party providers who are on the frontline of delivering these seamless, customer-obsessed experiences.

Foster meaningful partnerships: For brands choosing to work with third-party "enablers," success depends on building a truly collaborative relationship, not only a transactional one. The most effective partnerships are built on mutually beneficial outcomes, shared insights, and a commitment to continuous improvement. This approach de-risks implementation and sets the foundation for a successful, long-term circular model.

Define your commercial model & customer incentive: Make a deliberate choice about the target value exchange for your circular services. For repair, a free or subsidised service is a powerful investment in loyalty. For resale, the value proposition must be compelling for both sellers and buyers. A compelling financial incentive and trustworthy experience are critical. The goal is to align the commercial model with the desired customer behaviour, whether that is retention, acquisition, or recapturing value.

Build a business case that speaks to your stakeholders: Secure internal buy-in by creating data-driven business cases. Use pilots to "myth-bust" concerns like sales cannibalisation by proving the existence of loyalty loops. Crucially, this involves educating your key internal stakeholders on how to value these new models based on metrics like customer lifetime value (CLV) and risk mitigation.

Integrate, don't isolate: Embed circular services into the core customer journey, moving them from hidden sustainability pages to high-traffic touchpoints that you manage or sit within external platforms. Leading brands are doing this by featuring pre-loved items in mainstream marketing campaigns, including reminders in post-purchase communications, and embedding in loyalty programmes. This approach normalises circularity, ensures it is a visible and convenient option for customers and meets them wherever they are.

Balance bold vision with pragmatic execution: Leading in the circular economy requires two things: a bold, long-term vision from leadership and a pragmatic, de-risked path to get there. While the strategic commitment to circularity must be courageous, the execution should start small to scale smartly. A recurring piece of advice is to start with focused pilots to test the model, gather data, and build the internal confidence needed to scale—transforming a bold vision into a successful and resilient business reality.

1 INTRODUCTION

The conversation around sustainability in fashion is shifting. For years, the focus has been on mitigating harm—reducing waste and improving supply chain ethics. While essential, this defensive posture is no longer sufficient. The future belongs to brands that can move beyond mitigation and build new, regenerative models that truly decouple growth from its environmental, social, and economic harms. Collectively, we can shape the UK to be a pioneering force for circularity by becoming truly customer-centric, fostering a more resilient and innovative industry that serves the diverse needs of its users while delivering clear economic value.

Our objective: This report is designed as a practical guide to that future. It focuses on two of the higher priority circular business models for businesses today!: Repair and Resale. Our objective is to move beyond the "why" of circularity and provide a clear, actionable "how." We aim to equip fashion leaders—across marketing, commercial, product, digital, and sustainability departments—with the insights, frameworks, and confidence needed to launch and scale these services effectively.

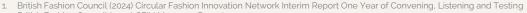
Research & development overview: To achieve this, we conducted a comprehensive R&D process grounded in real-world experience. Our methodology included deep market analysis and a series of qualitative interviews with the leaders who are actively building and scaling circular models today. Our sincere thanks go to the pioneers across the fashion ecosystem—from luxury department stores and global brands to digital-native platforms and specialist service providers—for sharing their invaluable and candid insights.

Connecting to the Institute of Positive Fashion Agenda: This work directly supports the IPF's core strategic priorities and builds on the practical learnings from its Circular Fashion Innovation Network (CFIN) programme² as well as wider initiatives. A key example is the IPF's Low Carbon Transition Programme,³

a government-funded project that supports fashion SMEs in measuring their carbon footprint and developing credible decarbonisation roadmaps. A key finding from this programme was that for most brands, materials choice is a primary carbon hotspot, making the reduction of virgin material production a critical lever for achieving net zero targets.

This creates a crucial and direct link between the circular economy and decarbonisation. By extending the life of existing products through repair and resale, brands can directly displace the need to manufacture new items, thereby avoiding the significant carbon emissions associated with raw material extraction, processing, and production. Circular models therefore go beyond being purely a sustainability initiative, they become a powerful and tangible strategy for decarbonisation.

Furthermore, building these capabilities is essential for business resilience. Circular models are a direct response to the rising tide of regulation (e.g. CSRD⁴, EPR⁵, ESPR⁶). By creating business models that are less reliant on new production, brands can mitigate future compliance risks and insulate themselves from volatile raw material supply chains, including those affected by anti-deforestation rules (EUDR)⁷.



^{2,} British Fashion Council (2025) CFIN May 2025 Report



^{3.} Institute of Positive Fashion (2025) Moving The Needle – Low Carbon Transition Programme for SMEs

^{4.} European Commission (2025) Corporate sustainability reporting

^{5.} European Commission (2025) Waste Framework Directive

^{6.} European Commission (2025) Ecodesign for sustainable products regulation

^{7.} European Commission (2025) Regulation on deforestation-free products

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

THE CIRCULAR ECOSYSTEM FOR REPAIR AND RESALE

Repair service engagement

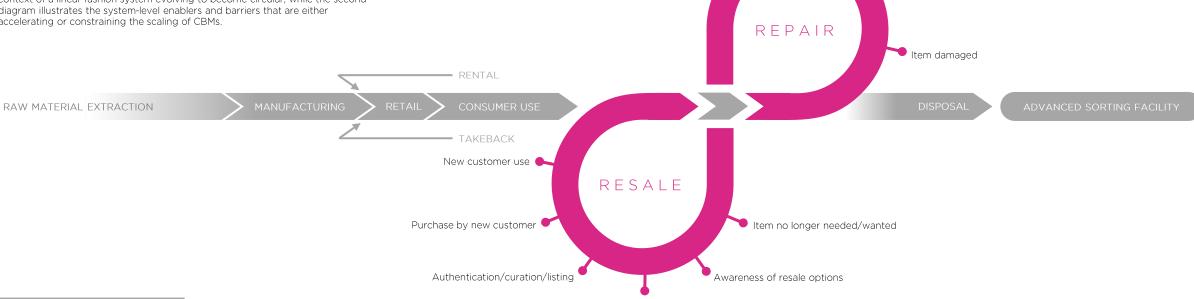
Awareness of repair option

Repair process

While this report focuses on customer-centric strategies that brands can implement, it is crucial to recognise that these actions do not occur in a vacuum. The success of any repair or resale model is deeply influenced by a wider ecosystem of enabling systems and systemic barriers.8 Optimising the customer experience is only possible when the surrounding infrastructure, policies, and technologies are aligned.

The first system diagram below illustrates the core repair and resale loops in the context of a linear fashion system evolving to become circular, while the second diagram illustrates the system-level enablers and barriers that are either accelerating or constraining the scaling of CBMs.

Figure 1: Integrating repair & resale loops into the fashion value chain Repair item returned



Extend consumer use

Resale platform engagement

^{8.} Abdelmeguid, A., Afy-Shararah, M. & Salonitis, K. Mapping of the Circular Economy Implementation Challenges in the Fashion Industry: a Fuzzy-TISM Analysis. Circ.Econ.Sust. 4, 585-617 (2024).

SYSTEM-LEVEL ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

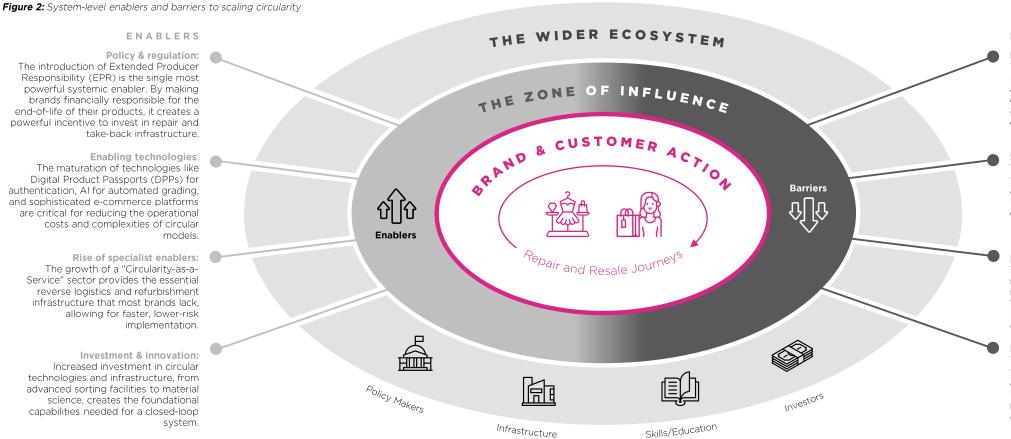
ENABLERS Policy & regulation: The introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is the single most powerful systemic enabler. By making brands financially responsible for the end-of-life of their products, it creates a powerful incentive to invest in repair and take-back infrastructure.

Enabling technologies:

The maturation of technologies like Digital Product Passports (DPPs) for authentication, Al for automated grading, and sophisticated e-commerce platforms are critical for reducing the operational costs and complexities of circular models.

> Rise of specialist enablers: The growth of a "Circularity-as-a-Service" sector provides the essential reverse logistics and refurbishment infrastructure that most brands lack, allowing for faster, lower-risk implementation.

Investment & innovation: Increased investment in circular technologies and infrastructure, from advanced sorting facilities to material science, creates the foundational capabilities needed for a closed-loop system.



BARRIERS

Infrastructure gaps:

The UK currently lacks the at-scale infrastructure for advanced textile sorting and fibre-to-fibre recycling. This limits the end-of-life options for non-rewearable garments and acts as a ceiling on true circularity.

Skills shortages:

There is a recognised skills gap in traditional crafts like tailoring and repair. as well as a need for new skills in areas like digital product management and circular logistics.

Misaligned incentives:

The dominance of a linear economic model, which prioritises volume and newness, creates systemic inertia. Without policy intervention, the financial incentives often still favour a take-makedispose system.

Lack of standardisation:

The absence of industry-wide standards for data (e.g., DPPs), material labeling, and grading creates fragmentation and inefficiency, making it harder for different parts of the ecosystem to communicate and collaborate effectively.

THE OPTIMISED REPAIR JOURNEY

Repair is the ultimate expression of a brand's commitment to quality and a powerful engine for customer loyalty. It transforms a moment of product failure into a positive brand interaction. However, the journey is often fragmented. Optimising it requires a shift in mindset: from seeing repair as a cost centre to viewing it as a critical, value-adding component of the customer experience.

Strategic choices

Before launching a repair service, brands must consider the optimal model. There is no one-size-fits-all solution; the choice depends on brand positioning, existing capabilities, and strategic goals.

- Customer persona alignment: Understanding the customer is critical. Repair services are typically set up for the existing, loyal customer. This persona values the brand, has an emotional connection to the product, and is motivated by quality and longevity. The entire experience—from booking to communication to the final result—must be shaped to be seamless, premium, and rewarding for this high-value customer segment, reinforcing their decision to invest in the brand.
- Product category focus: Strategically decide whether to launch with a focused, high-value category (e.g. outerwear, footwear), where the repair cost is easily justified against the item's original price, allowing you to prove the business case. Alternatively, consider if your brand promise necessitates a broader, more inclusive approach, as some customers expect an aftercare service to be available for any item they purchase, not just the most expensive ones.
- Operating model (In-house vs. Third-party vs. Hybrid): Heritage brands with their own factories may opt for in-house repairs to ensure maximum quality control. Most brands, however, will benefit from partnering with specialist thirdparty providers to leverage external expertise and avoid high capital investment. A third option is a hybrid (or white-label) model, where the customer experience is brand-led on the front-end (e.g., booking via the brand's website), but the operational fulfilment is handled by a trusted third-party on the back-end.

- Channel strategy (online vs. in-store): The decision to offer repair services online, in-store, or through an omnichannel approach should be informed by the target customer persona. An in-store service can create a premium, high-touch experience and drive footfall, which is often preferred by loyal, high-value customers. An online model offers maximum convenience and accessibility, especially for customers who do not live near a physical store.
- Pricing strategy (Paid vs. Free): Free repairs for manufacturing defects are often a customer expectation. Charging for repairs related to wear-and-tear can be viable, but price is a major friction point. Some brands subsidise costs or offer free repairs during promotional periods to drive uptake and loyalty. Analysis by leading brands has shown that it can be more cost-effective to repair an item under its quality promise than to replace it, providing a clear business case for a free or subsidised service.
- Service extension (repair & alterations): Beyond delivering on a quality promise, extending a repair service to include alterations engages customers in co-creation and personalisation. This can support a price premium for these value-added services and strengthen their overall business case.
- Aesthetic (invisible vs. visible): Understand your customer. One brand's
 customers want invisible repairs, unlike other brands that have built a culture
 around visible mending.



Repair item returned Repair service engagement Extend consumer use Awareness of repair option REPAIR Item damaged

THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY STAGES



The customer has a damaged item and begins looking for a solution.





The customer weighs the effort, cost, and benefit of using the brand's repair service versus replacing the item or using a local alternative.



3 SERVICE ENGAGEMENT

The customer commits to the service and initiates the repair process.





The item is repaired and returned to the customer.



5 POST-SERVICE & RE-ENGAGEMENT

The customer has received their repaired item

CUSTOMER PAIN POINTS AND BUSINESS BARRIERS

The most fundamental barrier is that customers simply do not know that an official repair service exists. Promotion is often limited, with some brands relying heavily on word-of-mouth and in-store signage. Information is often buried on websites rather than being proactively presented.

Cost is a main friction point, with a disconnect between the perceived value of the repair and its actual cost. This is compounded by a lack of trust in the quality of the outcome, especially if the service is outsourced, as brands often fail to articulate why a customer should repair with them.

High logistical and perceived effort is the biggest conversion killer. This includes the friction of clunky booking processes, the hassle of packaging an item and taking it to a post office or store, and long lead times that deter customers accustomed to instant gratification. This is often exacerbated by internal business fears of cannibalising new sales, which prevents investment in a truly seamless process.

Long lead times clash with customer expectations of instant gratification. "Radio silence" during the repair process creates anxiety. Operationally, managing a network of repair partners while ensuring consistent quality is a huge challenge.

The interaction often ends once the item is returned, missing an opportunity to build on the positive experience. Brands struggle to collect data to prove the link between repair and increased long-term spend.

BEST PRACTICES AND LEVERS

- Integrate into the customer journey: Make repair a standard part of the ownership experience. One global luxury brand successfully communicates its services during the selling process and through post-purchase emails.
- Leverage physical & digital signage: A leading department store has approved physical signage for ready-to-wear floors and is using in-store digital screens to promote services.
- **Empower in-store teams:** Train staff to be knowledgeable ambassadors who can speak to the value and process of repair.
- Prove success to gain support: Demonstrate the commercial value of pilots to gain more prominent marketing support from internal teams.

- Be transparent with pricing: Educate customers on what goes into a quote to justify the cost and build trust.
- Demonstrate expertise: Use high-quality imagery and detailed service descriptions to showcase the skill involved, aligning repair with brand values of craftsmanship and quality.
- Focus on value: Emphasise the emotional and financial value of extending a garment's life, rather than just the cost of the service.
- Build trust: Use high-quality, vetted partners and clearly communicate their expertise and the care they will take.

- Radical convenience: Offer at-home pickup and delivery services to remove the biggest friction point
- Offer a blended experience: Partner with services to offer convenient courier pick-ups, bridging the gap between digital booking and physical fulfilment.
- Seamless digital journey: Invest in a simple, intuitive online booking portal that allows customers to self-serve with ease.
- Use in-store as a hub: Use regional stores as drop-off points, even if repairs are done off-site.
- Incentivise action: Use promotions, such as a limited-time discount on repairs, to push customers over the conversion hurdle.
- Choose the right partner: Partner selection is a key strategic decision. The right partner acts as a brand extension, chosen not just on price but on their ability to deliver the target customer experience, meet quality standards, and provide the required scale, speed, and geographical coverage.
- Proactive communication: Implement a system for providing customers with status updates during the repair process to manage expectations.
- Leverage technology: Explore Digital Product Passports (DPPs) to provide repair technicians with specific product information and instructions, improving efficiency and quality.
- Quality assurance: Establish clear quality standards and vetting processes for all repair partners.

- Capture customer data: Systematically collect contact information from repair customers (with consent) to track their future spending patterns and build a robust business case for future investment.
- Feed data back to design: Create a formal process for feeding repair data back to product development teams to improve durability and tell this story to customers to improve trust.
- Integrate into loyalty programmes: Reward customers for engaging in repair through existing membership schemes to reinforce the behaviour and build a "loyalty loop".

THE OPTIMISED RESALE JOURNEY

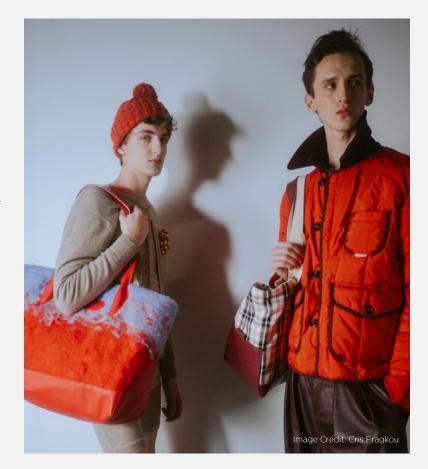
Resale is transforming from a niche into a strategic tool for brands to acquire new customers, control their brand narrative, and generate new revenue. The challenge is moving from a perception of "second-hand" to "pre-loved," offering an experience that matches the convenience and trust of buying new, and providing a value proposition that is compelling for both sellers and buyers. The Vestiaire Collective reports that 70% of consumers are encouraged to take better care of their items because of their resale value⁹, emphasising that it is an active consideration across the customer journey that brands can tap into.

Strategic choices

Before launching a resale service, a series of strategic choices must be made that will define your commercial model and the experience you offer to both sellers and buyers. There is no single right answer; the optimal approach depends on your brand's unique position, capabilities, and customer base..

- Customer persona alignment: Unlike repair, resale must serve multiple customer personas simultaneously.
 - The existing customer (the seller): This persona is motivated by recouping value from their initial purchase and making space in their wardrobe. For them, the process must be simple, fast, and offer a fair and transparent valuation.
 - The new/aspirational customer (the buyer): This is often a new customer segment for the brand, particularly in the luxury space. They are seeking a lower-cost entry point to the brand. The experience for this persona must still feel premium and trustworthy, with a heavy emphasis on authentication, quality control, and excellent customer service to successfully convert them into long-term brand loyalists.

- Product category focus: Decide whether to launch with a highly focused and curated selection—such as high-value items to prove an initial return-on-investment, or unsold stock to demonstrate how resale can recapture value—or to offer a broad, balanced portfolio that mirrors your main retail offering to meet wider customer expectations, as is often crucial for mass-market brands. Brands may find it valuable to engage with existing third-party platforms to understand their customers' behaviours to inform this. For instance, data from Vinted shows that 65% of its buyers prefer to buy fewer, more expensive items that last, rather than more, cheap fashion items. 10
- Operating model (In-house vs. Third-party vs. Hybrid): The choice of operating model is a strategic trade-off between brand control and operational investment. At one end of the spectrum, partnering with third-party or peer-to-peer (P2P) marketplaces offers a low-risk entry point to learn quickly, providing access to a large customer base and vast inventory, but with less control over brand presentation. At the other end, brand-controlled models—whether executed fully in-house or through a white-label partner who manages the backend operations—offer maximum control over brand equity and the customer experience. These models build high levels of trust but require a much heavier operational lift. WRAP has a valuable guide exploring these options for the supply (take-back) aspect of resale.⁶
- **Defining your incentive strategy:** Consider whether your goal is purely transactional or about building long-term loyalty. This will inform your choices on the payout method (direct cash vs. a brand voucher with an uplift to retain value), the level of loyalty programme integration (e.g., earning points), and the role of non-financial rewards (like community status or exclusive access) to drive deeper engagement.



⁹ Vestiaire Collective (2024) 2024 Circularity Report

¹⁰ Vinted (2024) Second-hand is Replacing New in Wardrobes Across Europe, According to Vinted's Latest Impact Report

¹¹ WRAP (2021) Retailer clothing take-back guide

New customer use RESALE Purchase by new customer Authentication/curation/listing Awareness of resale options Resale platform engagement

THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY STAGES



The customer becomes aware they can buy pre-owned items from the brand or trade in their existing items.



2 EVALUATION

The customer assesses the value proposition. The seller considers the trade-in price. The buyer considers quality, authenticity, and price.



3 SERVICE ENGAGEMENT

The customer begins the process of listing/trading in an item or purchasing a pre-owned item.



4 SERVICE FULFILMENT

The item is collected, processed, and the transaction is completed.



POST-SERVICE & RE-ENGAGEMENT

The transaction is complete. The seller has received their credit or cash, and the buyer has received their item.

CUSTOMER PAIN POINTS AND BUSINESS BARRIERS

For both potential buyers and potential sellers, the primary barrier is that they are often unaware the service exists. The resale offering is often hidden on a separate microsite, disconnected from the primary e-commerce journey.

For sellers, the most common reason to drop out is that the offered price feels too low. For buyers, the biggest concerns are counterfeit products, unclear item condition, and hygiene. The process is often perceived as time-consuming. Sellers are deterred by the risk of rejection after sending an item in, or creating a listing that will never sell. For buyers, a clunky digital experience (e.g., lack of a search function) is a major conversion killer. Buying pre-owned can also be risky without rich product information.

Reverse logistics complexity—managing the inbound collection, authentication, grading, cleaning, and photography of unique items—is the single greatest operational challenge. Inconsistent grading and slow payouts for sellers create a poor experience and erode trust.

If a brand uses a third-party marketplace, they can lose visibility of the end buyer. Brands often struggle to prove that resale is not cannibalising new sales, which can prevent further investment.

BEST PRACTICES AND LEVERS

- Holistic marketing: Use a multi-channel approach to promote the resale programme with the same energy as a new collection.
- Integrate into high-traffic channels: Promote resale where customers already are and feature the pre-loved collection prominently in the website's main navigation and on educational pages
- Guaranteed buy-back: A powerful potential lever for awareness is offering a "guaranteed buy-back" option on the product page at the point of initial purchase.
- Empower potential resellers with data: Drive awareness and motivation in potential resellers by highlighting the financial opportunity. Use marketing to showcase data on average earnings, the speed of sale for desirable items, and testimonials from successful sellers.

- Provide a clear financial incentive: Offer a simple, compelling value exchange. For example, a top-up on a gift card is a clear incentive for sellers to stay within the brand ecosystem.
- Build trust through expertise: Leverage brand authority to guarantee authenticity. For buyers, this is a major advantage over P2P platforms.
- Proactively address authenticity and hygiene: Invest in robust authentication programmes and offer guarantees. Address hygiene concerns head-on by communicating professional cleaning processes and offering a returns policy similar to new items.
- Transparent pricing: For sellers, manage expectations by providing clear explanations of how resale quotes are determined, factoring in market rates and logistics

- Simplify the first step: The initial interaction must be seamless. For trade-in, use AI or a simple search function to help customers identify their product easily.
- Automate listing: Use brand product data and AI tools to automate as much of the listing process as possible.
- In-store trade-in: Using physical stores for trade-ins offers an instant, convenient experience.
- Optimise the digital journey: Invest in a seamless e-commerce experience for second-hand that mirrors the primary site, including standard features like search and filtering.

- Partner with specialists: Leverage third-party logistics providers who have built the infrastructure to manage reverse logistics.
- Ensure prompt payout: A key benefit of one brand's partnership is that customers receive their gift card within 5 working days of authentication.
- Use technology to improve efficiency: Employ AI for initial defect identification and grading to improve consistency and reduce manual labour costs.
- Digital product passports (DPPs): In the near future, DPPs will streamline this process by providing an instant, verifiable record of a product's identity and history

- Track customer lifetime value (CLV): Collect data to analyse how resale engagement impacts overall customer lifetime value.
- Lock in value with credit: Offering a gift card/voucher is the most effective way to ensure that the value unlocked from a pre-owned item is reinvested back into the brand.
- Create a community: Differentiate through experience and foster community through in-person events and celebrating seller milestones.
- Gamify engagement to drive repeat behaviour.

 Encourage repeat participation by creating a sense of progress and recognition. This could include a customer dashboard showing their circularity stats or a tiered system that unlocks rewards for frequent participants.
- Integrate into loyalty programmes: Explore linking take-back or resale activity to core loyalty schemes to create a fully integrated circular ecosystem.

PREPARING YOUR BUSINESS

FOR A CIRCULAR FUTURE

Successfully scaling circular models requires a fundamental evolution of your business' core capabilities (see the table on Page 10). This transformation can feel uncertain and requires significant investment. To secure the necessary buy-in from senior leadership, it is essential to build a compelling and holistic business case that moves beyond direct revenue.

The most successful brands build a multifaceted case that demonstrates how circularity drives customer-centric growth (improving customer lifetime value), delivers direct financial benefits (new revenue streams, cost savings), builds long-term business resilience (mitigating regulatory and supply chain risks), and acts as an insurance policy for future success. Building a data-driven business case is crucial, using resources like the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's (EMF) 50+ metrics¹² that can be used for quantifying the value and the impact of circular business models today. This case must also be adapted to speak to all key internal stakeholders—framing the benefits in terms that matter most to the CFO, CMO, COO, and CEO.

A compelling business case for circularity

The transition to a circular economy is no longer a peripheral concern but a central driver of commercial success and long-term resilience. For fashion leaders, the data presents a clear and urgent choice: embrace circularity and reap the rewards of market leadership, or risk being left behind by a system that is rapidly becoming obsolete.

- 12 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2025) Metrics for making the case for circular business models
- United Nations Environment Programme (2023) Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain – A Global Roadmap
- Business of Fashion and McKinsey (2025) The State of Fashion 2025
- 15 ThredUp (2025) Resale Report 2025
- 16 Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2021) Circular business models: redefining growth for a thriving fashion industry

1. The risks of a linear legacy

Beyond its environmental, social and economic harms, the linear "take-make-dispose" model is also a direct financial liability, exposing businesses to value loss, climate disruption, and geopolitical shocks. The cost of inaction is stark and growing:

- Revenue leakage: \$460 billion is the value the fashion industry loses annually from a lack of recycling and garments being thrown away before the end of their usable life.¹³
- Climate & supply chain disruption: \$65 billion of apparel exports remain at risk from climate-related events like flooding and extreme heat, while 80% of retail executives expect new trade policies to disrupt their global supply chains. 15

2. The commercial opportunity of circular models

In stark contrast to these risks, the commercial opportunity is immense. The resale market is not only growing; it is fundamentally reshaping retail, offering a new, high-growth revenue stream for first-movers.

■ Explosive market growth: The US resale market grew 15 times faster than the broader clothing retail sector in 2023.¹⁴ Globally, the second-hand apparel market is projected to reach \$367 billion by 2029, growing 2.7 times faster than the overall apparel market.¹⁵

3. The need to nurture changing customer behaviours

This explosive growth is powered by a profound and permanent shift in consumer mindset. Customers are no longer passive; they are active participants who consider an item's future value at the point of its initial purchase. Brands that ignore this new purchase calculus will lose relevance.

■ Resale value drives new purchases: 47% of consumers say an item's resale value is an important factor when they are buying it new. This rises to 64% for younger generations, who also state they would focus more on the quality of a new item if they knew its resale value. 15



The conclusion is clear. The future of fashion will be circular, representing a **USD 700 billion opportunity** that could cut a third of the industry's emissions by 2030. ¹⁶ The brands that embrace this transition now are not only building a more sustainable business; they are building a more resilient, customer-centric, and ultimately, more profitable one.



The "from-to" table below serves as a strategic map, highlighting where the most significant transformations in mindset, processes, and operations will occur as you move from a linear to a circular business. This framework is designed to help leaders identify opportunities to build circularity into wider business transformations and understand which key stakeholders across the organisation need to be engaged to make the transition a success. For a detailed analysis of the business case (risks, opportunities, and stakeholders) for each transformation, please follow the link on this page to access the comprehensive version.

Capability Domain	From (Linear Capability)	To (Circular Capability)		
Customer engagement	Transactional marketing	Lifecycle relationship management: Engaging customers beyond the initial purchase with communications about care, repair, and future trade-in value.		
Strategy & governance	Financial models based on new unit sales	Circular business model governance: Developing new financial models that account for revenue from services and increased customer loyalty.		
Design & product development	Design for trend and manufacturability	Design for longevity & repairability: Creating durable products with components that are easy to repair and recycle.		
Partnership management	Vendor/supplier transactional relationships	Ecosystem & partnership management: Strategically identifying and managing a network of third-party "enablers" for services like repair, resale, and logistics.		
Supply chain & logistics	Forward-only logistics	Two-way / reverse logistics management: A complex capability for managing the inbound flow of unique items, requiring expertise in collection, triage, and routing.		
Inventory management	Managing stock of new, standardised SKUs	Multi-channel inventory management: The ability to manage and merchandise a dual inventory of new products alongside unique, individual pre-owned items.		
Data & analytics	Sales data analysis for new products	Product lifecycle & LTV analytics: The ability to track a product's journey and measure the LTV of customers who participate in circular models.		
Technology	E-commerce & POS systems for new sales	Circular technology integration: Implementing systems for authentication, grading, and managing reverse logistics, and preparing for Digital Product Passports (DPPs).		

Check out 'Building a business case for circular fashion' here

BUSINESS ROADMAP

A PHASED APPROACH TO CIRCULARITY

The transition to a circular business model is a journey of evolving capability, not a single event. This roadmap is structured as a maturity model to help brands identify where they are on their journey and what steps to take next. Rather than a rigid timeline, this model outlines three sequential stages—Starting, Scaling, and Leading—allowing a business to progress at its own pace.

Throughout this journey, three guiding principles are paramount:

- 1. Build a multifaceted business case: To win over the C-suite, the case must appeal to finance (new revenue, cost savings), marketing (customer loyalty, CLV), and leadership (risk mitigation, future-proofing against regulation)
- 2. **Prioritise ruthlessly:** Focus on one initiative at a time and execute it well. Trying to launch repair, resale, and rental all at once is a recipe for failure.
- **3. Customer-obsession is non-negotiable:** The single biggest determinant of success is a frictionless, convenient, and trustworthy customer experience. Make it as easy and desirable as buying new.



Customer-Centric Growth

A Playbook for Scaling Repair and Resale in Fashion

STARTING

Focus: Gaining insights, proving the concept, and securing internal buy-in through low-risk pilots. This stage is about learning fast and building a solid business case.

Customer centricity

- **Map the customer journey:** Use service blueprints to identify the most significant potential friction points in your proposed repair or resale journey.
- Define a simple incentive: Create a clear, compelling, and easy-to-understand offer for customers, such as a gift card with a percentage top-up for trade-ins.
- Gather initial feedback: Actively solicit feedback from the first cohort of customers to understand their experience and identify immediate areas for improvement.

Operational excellence

- Establish basic operations: Define a clear process for your pilot, whether it's
 managing a small batch of resale items or coordinating with a single repair partner.
- Utilise existing tech: Leverage your current e-commerce and CRM systems to manage the pilot. Avoid investing in bespoke technology at this stage.

Strategic alignment

- Start small to scale smartly: Launch a focused, low-risk pilot. Experts we interviewed recommended an option to start with existing inventory (e.g. returns, faulty stock) to test resale mechanics without the complexity of a full take-back scheme.
- Map your stakeholders: Identify key internal stakeholders and shape the pilot to answer their specific questions and concerns, particularly around the fear of sales cannibalisation.
- Leverage partnerships: Partner with a platform or enabler to de-risk the pilot, avoid significant upfront investment, and accelerate the learning process.

SCALING

Focus: Optimising successful pilots, integrating circularity into core business functions, and investing in dedicated capabilities to prepare for growth.

Customer centricity

- Refine the digital journey: Obsessively identify and remove friction points in the online customer experience. Invest in a seamless digital interface, clear communication, and convenient logistics.
- Integrate into the core journey: Embed your circular services directly into the primary customer journey by creating prominent entry points on your e-commerce site and in post-purchase communications.
- Scale marketing: Launch dedicated, cross-channel marketing campaigns for your circular programmes, treating them with the same importance as a new collection launch.

Operational excellence

- Optimise logistics: If demand is proven, invest in reducing logistical friction. For repair, this could mean exploring at-home pick-up services. For resale, it means streamlining the intake and grading process.
- Integrate enabling technology: Begin to integrate more advanced technology. Explore using AI for grading to improve efficiency or pilot Digital Product Passports (DPPs) on a specific product line to test engagement.

Strategic alignment

- Secure dedicated resources: Use the data and learnings from your pilot to justify a
 wider rollout and secure dedicated budget and team members to manage and
 grow the services.
- Develop a data-driven ROI model: Build a robust business case that demonstrates the ROI of your programme, focusing on metrics like increased Customer Lifetime Value (LTV) and lower Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC).

LEADING

Focus: Achieving full business integration, leveraging technology for competitive advantage, and leading the industry by exploring new circular models and influencing the wider ecosystem.

Customer centricity

- Integrate into loyalty programmes: Fully integrate circular behaviours into your main loyalty programme, making them a standard and rewarded part of the brand promise and customer relationship.
- Explore new models: Once repair and resale are mature, investigate innovative
 models like long-term rental or "product-as-a-service" to further deepen customer
 relationships and create new, diversified revenue streams.
- Lead on circularity: Your brand is now recognised as a leader, attracting talent, loyal
 customers, and investors who value your commitment to long-term resilience and a
 superior, circular customer experience.

Operational excellence

- Leverage digital product passports (DPPs): Use DPPs beyond compliance, as a
 powerful tool for customer engagement, authentication, and managing the entire
 product lifecycle.
- Create a data feedback loop: Systematically feed data from repairs and returns (e.g., common fault points) back into the product design process to create more durable and valuable products from the start.
- Explore in-house or hybrid operations: Based on data and scale, make a strategic decision on whether to bring key circular operations in-house for greater control or to develop deeper, more integrated partnerships.

Strategic alignment

- Full business integration: Embed circularity as a core component of your P&L and strategic planning, breaking down internal silos. At this stage, circular metrics should also be a standard part of business reporting. Integration also means making your circular services (e.g., repair, resale, rental) feel like a single, holistic offer embedded within the primary brand experience.
- Influence the ecosystem: Collaborate with peers, policymakers, and industry bodies
 to tackle systemic challenges like recycling infrastructure and skills shortages.

Customer-Centric Growth

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SFIFRIDGES

The Luxury Curator



The Model

Under its RESELFRIDGES banner, the luxury department store offers a curated suite of circular products and services. This includes a premium pre-loved offering for high-value items like handbags and an expert repair service for clothing and accessories, delivered through strategic partnerships with specialists like The Handbag Clinic and Sojo. These services are anchored in the fashion departments of their flagship stores, positioning circularity as an integral part of the luxury retail experience.

The Opportunity

How can a multi-brand luxury retailer offer credible, specialised circular services without the immense investment of building the capabilities in-house, while ensuring the digital and physical experience aligns with their prestigious brand identity and diverse customer base?

Best Practice and Key Insights

Selfridges' success lies in its role as a trusted curator, meticulously building a customer-centric circular experience.

- Starting with a high-value focus: By initially concentrating on a single, high-value category like handbags for pre-loved, Selfridges was able to prove the commercial viability of the model and secure internal buy-in before scaling to other categories.
- Experience-led marketing: The RESELFRIDGES tone of voice and communication strategy is intentionally playful and focuses on strengthening the relationships we have with our items. This approach aims to ensure that the circular experience is as elevated as buying new, while speaking directly to customer goals and concerns.
- Integrating the customer experience: Circular products and services are fully integrated within Selfridges' core offer across channels. In store, dedicated spaces live directly alongside first-hand offerings from premium and luxury brands, while online, touchpoints are interspersed across the website linking to a dedicated RESELFRIDGES landing page.
- Creating 'experiential retail': Selfridges leverages its physical stores to turn services into "retail theatre". By hosting live repairs and personalisation activations with renowned partners like Burberry and Barbour, functional services are transformed into engaging and memorable brand interactions that champion craftsmanship, drive footfall, and foster emotional durability.

What's Next?

An important next step for scaling repair and resale is the deeper integration of circularity into core customer loyalty programmes. For Selfridges, this could manifest through integration with their Selfridges Unlocked membership programme. Understanding how to incentivise and reward customers to translate one-off behaviours into habits represents a vital evolution for the wider industry, necessary to truly embed and incentivise sustainable behaviours. As such, there is a powerful incentive for the industry to collaborate on how best to reward circularity, ensuring it becomes a central and valued part of the modern customer relationship.



M & S The Mainstream Enabler



The Model

Under its "Plan A – Another Life" initiative, M&S offers a multi-faceted circularity programme. This includes a long-standing in-store take-back scheme with Oxfam, a new online take-back and resale service with eBay and ReSkinned, and a dedicated clothing repair service in partnership with SOJO.

The Opportunity

How can a high-volume, mainstream retailer make the economics of circularity viable for affordably stylish items and effectively engage millions of customers in new sustainable behaviours?

Best Practice and Key Insights

M&S's approach is a masterclass in building a trusted, multi-partner ecosystem to solve for scale. Rather than a single solution, they have strategically layered partnerships to meet customers where they are.

- Leveraging a legacy of trust: Their 15-year "Shwopping" partnership with Oxfam provides a foundation of customer trust and a valuable "feel-good" factor, offering a powerful non-financial incentive for in-store take-back.
- A data-driven approach: M&S is highly data-driven, using customer insights, performance data, and NPS scores to build mutual trust with partners and refine their services. This focus on data allows them to understand customer attitudes and build a robust business case for their initiatives.
- Meeting the customer everywhere: By partnering with the circular technology provider ReSkinned, M&S launched an online take-back service and sells the processed, pre-loved items through a dedicated storefront on the eBay marketplace. This multi-channel strategy allows them to recapture value from M&S items across the ecosystem, creating new customer touchpoints and experiences.
- Capitalising on quality perception: M&S has a high perception of quality as a high street brand. This is a key advantage, as it encourages customers to participate in resale with the expectation that their items will retain value and are "too good to waste," which in turn drives the volumes needed for economies of scale.

What's Next?

A key future priority for M&S is to significantly enhance customer awareness and understanding of its circularity initiatives. The ambition is to create a seamless experience where services like take-back and resale are more visible and integrated into the primary shopping journey. This represents a powerful opportunity to educate customers on the value and convenience of these options, embedding circularity into a core part of the M&S customer relationship and making it a more accessible choice.

A C S Enabling Circular Fashion for Brands and Retailers



The Model

ACS is a large-scale B2B provider of circular fashion infrastructure — offering end-to-end services for rental, resale, repair, recommerce enablement, and recycling. As the operational partner behind the scenes, ACS enables major fashion brands and retailers to adopt circular business models without needing to build the complex logistics, processing, and compliance capabilities themselves.

The Opportunity

How can brands overcome the operational challenges of reverse logistics to deliver a seamless, high-quality, and scalable circular customer experience?

Best Practice and Key Insights

- Solving customer trust barriers through hygiene innovation: ACS recognises that hygiene concerns are a major barrier for customers purchasing pre-loved items. To address this, they've invested in ozone sanitisation technology to reassure customers that garments are hygienically safe and fresh, helping shift the perception of resale from "used" to "trusted."
- Delivering quality and consistency at scale: By combining deep expertise in triage, grading, high-quality repair, stain removal, and garment finishing, ACS ensures that every item processed is restored to a high standard to maximise resale potential and brand value. This operational rigour is essential for reducing returns, building consumer trust, and ensuring that circular offerings uphold the quality customers expect from leading brands.
- Using technology to enhance the customer journey: ACS has launched an Alpowered triage and digitisation system that automates the end-to-end resale process. The technology identifies, describes, and grades garments, scrapes the web to retrieve original RRPs, applies a dynamic pricing strategy and lists on multiple channels. This streamlines operations while improving listing accuracy, speed to market, and customer trust.

What's Next?

- Unlocking mainstream adoption through scale: A core priority for ACS is significantly increasing the volume of garments processed. Achieving this scale is critical to reducing per-item processing costs, which in turn enables brand partners to offer more affordable and accessible circular options to their customers.
- Unlocking value through compliance: With EPR legislation on the horizon, ACS is positioning itself as a strategic compliance partner. Their infrastructure already supports take-back programmes, reverse logistics, sanitisation, repair, and item-level traceability all vital for helping brands meet regulatory requirements.
- Continued investment in circular technology and innovation: ACS continues to expand its technology roadmap, focusing on automation, AI, and circular data infrastructure, including DPP readiness.



DEPOP

The P2P Community Builder



The Model

Depop is a community-powered, peer-to-peer fashion marketplace, where anyone can buy, sell and discover desirable second-hand fashion. Its mission is to make fashion circular — encouraging millions more people to choose second-hand and extend the lives of clothes. While its core is resale, it also engages with sellers who upcycle or restyle their own items, as well as brand partnerships. This includes its collaboration with Dr. Martens to launch its ReSouled range — repairing and restoring worn footwear to its former glory.

The Opportunity

In a competitive P2P market, how do you acquire and retain a new generation of sellers by solving the core friction points of effort and trust, while building a brand that stands for more than just transactions?

Best Practice and Key Insights

Depop's success is built on a deep understanding of its users and a commitment to shifting culture. The key insight is that to make second-hand mainstream, you have to make it exciting, accessible and desirable. Depop's marketing intentionally focuses on style, uniqueness, and the financial opportunity of selling, making resale culturally relevant to style conscious audiences. Sustainability is positioned as a welcome benefit, not the primary driver.

- Flexible by Design: Depop supports a wide seller ecosystem from wardrobe declutterers to full-scale businesses. It segments users by "seller mindsets," tailoring the experience to different motivations. This deep understanding of different motivations means it can tailor the platform experience and develop tools that meet specific user needs.
- **Technology to Reduce Friction:** To combat the perception that listing is too time-consuming, Depop has invested in an Al-powered listing tool that automates descriptions and suggests prices from a simple photo. Further reducing the effort required to create consistent, high-quality visuals, a recent partnership with Photoroom integrates enterprise-level Al photo editing directly into the app. Sellers also benefit from listing boosts, growth insights, and streamlined tools for larger inventories.
- Creative, Non-Financial Rewards: Depop excels at building community through fun and creative incentives. It celebrates buyer and seller milestones by quantifying their positive environmental impact (e.g., litres of water saved), sharing annual "Depop Wrapped" summaries, and encouraging sustainable wardrobe refreshes via initiatives like Repop. Programs like Depop Student Ambassadors and Depop Insiders recognise the most engaged members, foster belonging and platform co-creation.

What's Next?

Depop aims to broaden its appeal across demographics and styles by expanding inventory and adapting its messaging. Increase its support for active sellers with more advanced tools, including professional-grade tools like its Selling API that sync stock, manage orders and integrate inventory on the Depop platform. Continued AI and machine learning investment will enhance the user experience, making it easier to find desirable second-hand items and displacing the demand for new clothing.



MARGARET HOWELL

The Quality-First Leader



The Model

Margaret Howell operates a dedicated repair and alterations service for its garments, which is a natural extension of the brand's core philosophy of creating high-quality, durable, and timeless products. This circular service is delivered to customers through a strategic partnership with the third-party platform, SOJO.

The Opportunity

How can a brand built on quality and longevity translate its existing ethos into a modern, convenient circular service that meets the expectations of its loyal customer base?

Best Practice and Key Insights

Margaret Howell's approach demonstrates how to authentically extend a brand's core values into circularity.

- Aligning marketing with brand ethos: For Margaret Howell, marketing is not centred on sustainability. Instead, it focuses on the brand's long-standing principles of durability, quality, and timeless design. This resonates perfectly with customers, who see their purchases as investment pieces. As a result, customers value repairs due to emotional attachment and cost efficiency, making the service feel like a natural part of owning a well-made garment.
- Selecting the right model for the journey: By partnering with a third-party provider like SOJO, Margaret Howell adopted an "off-the-shelf" solution that was quick to implement. This approach was a strategic choice to reduce barriers to entry for its customers, maximising convenience with at-home collections and deliveries without requiring a large upfront investment.
- Proving the value of awareness: Timely marketing pushes have been central to boosting engagement with the repair service, demonstrating that further integration within customer journeys is key to driving participation.

What's Next?

Expanding on the strong internal foundation and business case for its next strategic step: the exploration of a resale model that will further extend the life of garments and deepen customer relationships.

M A R G A R E T H O W E L L

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CONCLUSION

The transition from a linear to a circular fashion industry is no longer a theoretical debate; it is an active, ongoing system shift. The evidence gathered from leaders across the industry points to a clear conclusion: repair and resale are powerful commercial and strategic tools that build more resilient brands and deeper customer relationships.

Success in this new paradigm will not be defined by grand, one-off sustainability initiatives, but by a relentless obsession with the customer experience. It requires a cultural and operational shift, redefining value beyond new unit sales to embrace a long-term view of profitability and loyalty. The winning formula, as this playbook has demonstrated, is clear:

- Make it known. Integrate circularity into every customer touchpoint.
- Make it easy. Remove friction and respect your customer's time.
- Make it valuable. Offer a clear and compelling reason for customers to participate.

This playbook provides the map; the challenge for leaders is to act with conviction. The practical steps are clear: build the multifaceted business case that speaks to the entire C-suite; embrace the pragmatic execution of the 'Starting, Scaling, Leading' roadmap; and foster the meaningful partnerships that de-risk and accelerate this transition.

The brands that invest in their business capabilities and embrace this customer-centric approach will not only build more resilient and profitable businesses but will also forge the deeper, more durable customer relationships that will define market leadership in the years to come.



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BRITISH FASHION COUNCIL

CLARASYS

The Circular Fashion Innovation Network

The Circular Fashion Innovation Network (CFIN) was an industry-led programme managed by the BFC and UKFT in partnership with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to accelerate the UK towards a circular fashion ecosystem.

The network brought together industry, innovators, NGOs, academia and broader stakeholders through an action-led roadmap. CFIN's framework for change is split across six different themes, namely – Circular Business Models (CBMs), Recycling Infrastructure, Sustainable Manufacturing, Novel Technology, Diverse and Futureproof Workforce, and Green Growth.

The Advisory Board spans luxury and high street businesses, as well as representatives from UKRI, Academia and NGOs. CFIN was a key initiative within the Institute of Positive Fashion (IPF).

British Fashion Council

The British Fashion Council (BFC), formed in 1983, is a not-for-profit organisation focused on the relentless innovation, responsible growth and local and global amplification of the British fashion industry. Its mission is to champion British fashion on the world stage by pioneering world class programmes that unlock and elevate British creative talent. This is fuelled by an extraordinary diverse and inspiring community of advocates, icons, experts, and fans.

The BFC amplifies excellence in creativity and its role in the UK's cultural influence through The Fashion Awards and London Fashion Week. The BFC prepares businesses for positive change through relentless innovation with a focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEI&B), Digital Fashion and pivotal areas of the UK Circular Fashion Eco-system through the Institute of Positive Fashion (IPF). The BFC enables responsible growth through a dynamic, inclusive, and unified community that advocates for creativity, innovation and collectively supports the industry to grow and talent to gain access.

The BFC Foundation (Registered Charity Number: 11852152) was created in 2019 for charitable purposes and grant giving; attracting, developing, and retaining talent through education and business mentoring. The BFC Foundation offers support to designers through four talent prizes: BFC/Vogue Designer Fashion Fund, BFC/GQ Designer Fashion Fund, BFC NEWGEN and the BFC Fashion Trust. With the support of the BFC Colleges Council, the BFC Foundation offers BA and MA scholarships to students, as well as links with industry through design competitions and Graduate Preview Day. The Fashion Awards is the primary fundraiser for the BFC Foundation.

Clarasys

Clarasys is a fresh and exciting consultancy based in the UK and US, working across industries to solve business challenges and drive sustainable growth. We are a dynamic, pragmatic, and customer-focused consultancy, solving our clients' challenges at the pace their businesses demand.

Everything we do is about creating engaging, smartworking, and connected experiences that drive efficiency, loyalty, and growth. We help businesses collaborate, optimise workplaces, and enhance customer interactions.

Sustainability is embedded in our approach. We break complex challenges into clear, actionable steps, ensuring meaningful impact for people, the planet, and prosperity—helping organisations build resilience and drive lasting change.

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC GROWTH

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