SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS GROWTH CARDS

THINK BIG! SUPPORTING GROWTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SOUTH OSTROBOTHNIA

Euroopan unionin osarahoittama

ETELÄ-POHJANMAAN liitto

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think BIG!

OBJECTIVE AND CONTENT OF THE CARDS

- The objective of the cards is to present various circular economy solutions that promote environmental sustainability.
- You can use the cards to learn about the opportunities offered by the circular economy and to plan new business activities for your company. The cards are suitable for both contemplating the business model of a startup and developing the business of an existing company.
- Each card introduces a circular economy practice. The card describes the practice, its benefits, and provides an example of a company that applies this circular economy practice in its operations. The examples aim to highlight small and medium-sized enterprises from Southern Ostrobothnia.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Gather together with the key personnel of your company. Allocate enough time for the session, at least two hours.
- Print the cards or use the digital version of the cards..

Select three cards together:

1. Choose one card that describes a circular economy practice you are already applying in your operations.
2. Choose one card that describes a practice you should implement and that could be easily achievable.
3. Choose a "wild card": if you think without any limitations, which practice would be particularly interesting?

INSTRUCTIONS

After selecting the cards, discuss them using the following guiding questions:

1. card: Are customers aware of this service/practice? What about suppliers? Is the information visible on your website? Is there anything that needs improvement in the service?
2. card: What should be done next to start applying this practice?
3. card: What would implementing this solution mean for your other business activities? What would it require? Could it be implemented profitably? What benefits would it bring?

Based on your discussions, select 1–2 circular economy solutions to implement in your operations. Consider what concrete goals you will set for both the short and long term and how you will measure achieving these goals (e.g., within three months we will have mapped out different material options, within a year a 100% market-ready product made from recycled materials). Also, choose a responsible person and the first concrete actions to start advancing the matter.

PRODUCT AS A SERVICE

- Customers pay for the functionality or performance of a product without transferring ownership.
- Ownership and responsibility remain with the seller, and the customer is provided with usage rights or the end result.
- Examples: A company offers lighting or office furniture as a service or sells performance, such as compressed air or energy (e.g., solar panels) as a service.

BENEFITS

Longer and closer customer relationships, extended product lifespan, more users, better product maintenance, and new customers who otherwise couldn't afford to buy the product.

Company example: Maiseri Oy, Kurikka

The company offers turnkey design and construction of exhibition stands.

RENOVATION OF THE PRODUCT

- Renovating used products from the company's own range for resale.
- Examples: The company accepts its own sold products, such as clothing, furniture, jewelry, or technology, and refurbishes them for resale.

BENEFITS

Additional revenue from returned products, reduced material usage, extended product lifespan.

Company example: Kalevala Koru Oy

Kalevala Pidetty is a second-hand service for Kalevala and Lapponia jewelry, through which the company sells factory-serviced, used jewelry returned by customers. The jewelry undergoes surface treatment and parts are replaced if necessary.

TURNING SURPLUS INTO CASH FLOW

- Usable products that are about to become waste are sold at a discounted price.
- Examples: A café or restaurant sells products that are about to become waste, or surplus materials are sold to those who need them.

BENEFITS

Reduced waste, additional revenue, material efficiency.

Company example: ResQ

ResQ is an app through which restaurants can sell surplus food at a lower price. For example, the student restaurant at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences sells almost all leftover lunch food daily at a discounted price through ResQ.

RESOURCE SHARING BETWEEN COMPANIES

- Companies share resources such as raw materials, services, technology, or energy to improve resource efficiency and create added value for each other.

- Examples: Companies share a common facility, production equipment, or services. One company's waste can serve as raw material for another. Often, these companies are physically close to each other.

BENEFITS

Cost savings, efficiency, and reduced material consumption and waste.

Company example: Järviseudun Pelletti Oy, Alajärvi

Järviseudun Pelletti Oy produces wood pellets, a renewable and natural heat source. The raw material used is sawdust, a by-product from the nearby Finnlamelli Oy's operations.

ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

- The company develops a product or service that guides users towards more sustainable behavior.
- Examples: The company develops a reusable mug or an app to optimize personal energy consumption.

BENEFITS

Competitive advantage through responsibility.

Company example: HR-Living / Hakaradio Oy, Seinäjoki

HR-Living, originally founded in 1963, is a family business that imports ecological home products. Their customers are retail stores in the Nordic countries. The company encourages the use of sustainable and responsible products and a zero-waste lifestyle.

REDUCED MATERIAL USAGE

- The company minimizes the use of materials in its production or products.
- The company reduces the use of packaging materials, and considers material minimization in product design.

BENEFITS

Reduced costs and material efficiency

Company example: Lennol Oy, Jalasjärvi

Lennol has been manufacturing textiles since 1967. Material efficiency is considered already in product design. Mainly reusable bags are used for packaging. All materials are utilized as precisely as possible: for example, leftover wadding from quilts is made into craft wadding, and the cardboard tubes from fabric rolls are reused.

DIGITALIZATION OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Instead of physical products and services, a digital version is produced.
- Examples: The company offers online courses, games/books/photos in digital format, online banking services.

BENEFITS

Reduced costs, resource efficiency, and broader customer reach.

Company example: Sanmaya Oy, Seinäjoki & Toivonkide Oy, Kauhava

Online wellness services are continuously growing in popularity. Sanmaya offers online courses related to yoga and self-development. Toivonkide's remote services include solution-focused brief therapy and divorce coaching.

USING LOCAL RAW MATERIALS

- Favoring local raw materials in production.
- Examples: The company purchases the necessary raw materials as locally as possible.

BENEFITS

Economic savings in logistics, support for local businesses, better supply chain transparency.

Company example: Kyrö Distillery, Isokyrö

Kyrö Distillery produces distilled beverages in Isokyrö. Raw materials used in the drinks, such as berries and rhubarb, are collected from local residents.

MODULARITY

- The product is designed to consist of several independent parts that can be repaired and replaced.
- Examples: A company sells a sofa for which you can buy new parts, such as legs or upholstery. The product is designed so that all its parts can be replaced.

BENEFITS

Extended product lifespan, additional sales opportunities (services), reduced material usage.

Company example: Hakola Huonekalu Oy, Jurva

All fabric sofas and armchairs from Hakola Furniture Factory have completely removable upholstery. Slipcovers are also made for products that are no longer in the collection. In addition to slipcovers, replaceable parts such as legs and back cushions are available.

TRASH TO MONEY

- The company uses waste materials or parts/materials from end-of-life products in new products.
- Examples: The company makes shoe soles from old car tires or swimsuits from plastic waste.

BENEFITS

Low-cost raw materials, brand impact, and reduced waste.

Company example: Lankava Oy, Kauhava

Lankava, originally founded in 1925, sells handicraft supplies. Lankava's Eko-ontelokude is made from recycled cotton obtained from leftover scraps in the textile industry. The colors of the yarns are created from the colors of the sorted fabric scraps without additional dyeing.

SHARED USE OF PRODUCTS

- The company owns a product that consumers use together.
- Examples: A company offers a service where consumers can use a shared car or other vehicle, or rents out holiday homes.

BENEFITS

Continuous and potentially entirely new revenue stream, higher utilization rates, larger customer base.

Company example: Vaatelainaamo Tanttu, Seinäjoki

At Tanttu, customers can borrow clothes and jewelry from Finnish design brands for 1–3 weeks at a time, either as a one-time rental or regularly by becoming a member. The selection includes both everyday and festive clothing.

UPCYCLING – HIGHER VALUE PRODUCTS FROM WASTE

- The company uses waste as a material to produce higher quality or more valuable products or materials with a new purpose.
- Examples: The company makes jewelry from surplus materials, or bags from discarded seat belts.

BENEFITS

Low-cost raw materials, material efficiency, reduced waste.

Company example: Ekovilla Oy, Kuusankoski

Ekovilla is an environmentally friendly insulation material made from, among other things, household collection paper gathered from areas near production facilities. Ekovilla is manufactured in Kuusankoski, Ylistaro, and Kiiminki.

REMANUFACTURING

- The product is remanufactured or updated to be equivalent to a new product, with a warranty that is at least as comprehensive as a new one.
- Examples: The company refurbishes a phone or computer to be like new and sells it. The company retreads car tires to make them like new.

BENEFITS

Additional income, reduced material usage, reduced waste, and extended product lifespan.

Company example: Taitonetti Oy, Oulu

The company refurbishes computers and peripherals such as monitors to be like new. The company provides a 1–2-year warranty on the product. The price is significantly lower compared to new products.

REARRANGING PRODUCT COMPONENTS

- Rethinking the use of the product and the necessary parts and/or materials. Do not resell the part that the customer already has.
- Examples: Instead of selling a spray cleaner in a bottle, the company sells a tablet that the customer dissolves in water and uses in their own bottle.

BENEFITS

Reduced material usage, reduced waste, logistical benefits (lower storage and transportation costs), and lower production costs.

Company example: Sinituote Oy

Sinituote Oy is a Finnish family business internationally known for its cleaning products. The company produces cleaning tablets that customers dissolve in water in their own spray bottles, avoiding the need to sell a new plastic bottle. The production process for the cleaning tablets is carbon neutral.

RESOURCE-EFFICIENT PRODUCTION

- Utilizing by-products from one's own production processes in the company's own production.
- Examples: The company uses waste heat from production to heat facilities. The company uses waste from its own production to create new products.

BENEFITS

Resource efficiency,
reduced production costs,
reduced waste.

Company example: Mäkelä Alu Oy, Alajärvi

Mäkelä Alu Oy is a family business specializing in the extrusion of aluminum profiles. The company produces low-emission AluPure recycled aluminum, with raw materials sourced from process scrap from its own production and aluminum scrap returned to the company. By using AluPure, customer companies can significantly reduce their carbon footprint.

REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES

- The company offers repair and maintenance services for its own or other manufacturers' products.
- Examples: The company provides repair and maintenance services for its own products. The company utilizes digitalization to anticipate maintenance needs and offers remote maintenance services.

BENEFITS

Extended product lifespan, longer and closer customer relationships, additional sales opportunities, improved customer satisfaction.

Company example: Skaala IFN Oy, Ylihärmä

Skaala has been manufacturing windows and doors in Southern Ostrobothnia since the 1960s. The company's maintenance service handles the repair and maintenance of Skaala windows and doors, such as touch-up painting. Spare parts for Skaala products can also be ordered through the maintenance service.

SUSTAINABLE RAW MATERIALS

- The company uses renewable, bio-based, recycled, and easily recyclable raw materials and materials in production processes and products.
- Examples: The company makes biodegradable dishcloths instead of microfiber, or uses recycled plastic instead of virgin plastic.

BENEFITS

Resource efficiency,
reduced carbon footprint, reduced waste,
potentially lower raw material costs,
possibly reduced dependency on other operators.

Company example: Jokasafe Oy, Evijärvi

Jokasafe Oy manufactures protective gloves, some of which replace virgin plastic with 100% renewable BIOVYN™ vinyl. The raw material comes from Finnish forests, as the pine oil used is a by-product of UPM's production. Pine oil is used to produce bioethylene, which replaces crude oil-based ethylene in PVC production.

PLATFORMS FOR SHARING SURPLUS RESOURCES

- The company builds a digital platform through which businesses or consumers can share unnecessary or underutilized resources with those who need them.
- Examples: Through the platform, companies can offer their equipment for others to use, or consumers can rent or sell items such as accommodation or used goods to each other.

BENEFITS

Economic benefits
(advertising revenue, service fees)

Company example: Kiertonet / Kiertoa Oy, Seinäjoki

On Kiertonet, public organizations can sell their decommissioned assets. For buyers, Kiertonet is a channel to acquire items such as furniture and electronics in a resource-efficient manner. After the auction, the items are transferred directly from the seller to the buyer without additional storage or transportation.

MANUFACTURING AND SELLING SPARE PARTS

- The company manufactures and/or sells spare parts for its own and/or other products.

BENEFITS

Opportunity for additional sales, extended product lifespan, longer and closer customer relationships.

Company example: Esla / E. S. Lahtinen Oy, Seinäjoki

E.S. Lahtinen Oy, located in Koura village, Seinäjoki, manufactures internationally known Esla brand kicksleds, kickbikes, scooters, and walking bikes. The products are known for their long lifespan. Spare parts such as runners, wheels, baskets, and cables are available in their online store and are easy to install.