

EXERCISE 5

UPCYCLING PROJECT

(45 MINUTES)



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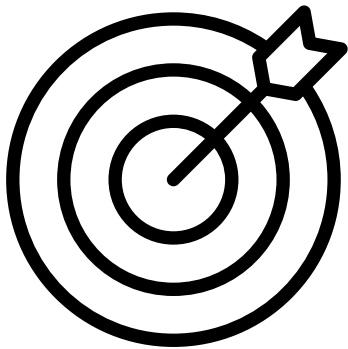


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Goal of the exercise

The goal of this exercise is to design a new product from materials that are typically considered waste, using creative resource utilization in the upcycling process. Participants will explore how a creative approach can transform waste into functional and aesthetically appealing products of higher value.

Materials needed

- Worksheets,
- flipchart,
- markers,
- recycled materials (e.g., fabrics, pallets, plastic bottles, etc.),
- computer/laptop for presentation (optional)



The facilitator explains the concept of upcycling, which is the process of turning waste or unused materials into products of higher value than the original raw materials. They discuss the difference between recycling (usually focused on processing materials back into raw resources) and upcycling, which involves creatively repurposing existing materials. Participants are encouraged to consider unconventional materials that can be transformed into something valuable or visually appealing. The aim is to create products that are both functional and visually attractive.

The facilitator asks a question to introduce participants to the topic: “Do you have any ideas for a product that could be made from materials typically thrown away?”

Facilitator’s Task:

- Divide participants into groups (3–5 people). Each group’s task will be to design a new product from available materials that are normally considered waste, such as old fabrics, pallets, plastic bottles, paper, metal components, etc. Each group should:
 - Select materials that will form the basis of their project.
 - Consider how these materials can be creatively transformed into a product of new value.
 - Design a product that is both functional and aesthetic. They may create a sketch, model, or mock-up of their project.
- Monitor the group work, asking questions to support their creativity, such as: “What functional purposes could your product serve?” or “How could you make this product more visually appealing?”
- Ask each group to carefully analyze the features of the created product. Participants should focus on:
 - Functionality – Does the product serve a specific practical purpose?
 - Aesthetics – What visual elements attract consumer attention?
 - Durability – Does the material used ensure the product’s longevity?

Exercise 5 – Upcycling Project (45 minutes)



- Groups may also discuss how their product aligns with the idea of sustainability and whether it is attractive from a consumer perspective.
- Request each group to present their product, describe the materials it is made from, and explain how waste was transformed into a new product. Participants should also highlight the advantages of their product from the perspective of functionality, aesthetics, and sustainability.
- Encourage other participants to ask questions and comment on the ideas. Ask them how they evaluate the functionality and market potential of the presented products.
- Introduce discussion elements by asking questions like: “What other unconventional materials could be used for similar projects?” or “Do you see the potential for this product to be used in everyday life?”
- Summarize key conclusions from the presentations and discussions, emphasizing the vital role of creativity in the upcycling process and the environmental and economic benefits of this approach. Also, address the challenges associated with transforming waste into value-added products.
- Encourage participants to reflect on how they can use upcycling skills in their everyday or professional lives.
- Ask a final question: “What other products can you imagine that could be created from materials considered waste?”
- To enrich the exercise, you may present examples of existing products created through upcycling, such as bags made from advertising banners or furniture made from tires.
- You could also suggest that groups design products for a specific market or consumer segment, adding an extra challenge.

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