

# CLIMATE CHANGE

A CIRCULAR ECONOMY SPECIAL

R E V I E W

ISSUE 08

## REDEFINING SUCCESS

Lead through  
Sustainable  
Performance

## VALUE OF ANALYTICS

Turning data  
into action

# CIRCULAR THINKING

Albin Kaelin on how Cradle to Cradle design  
can deliver the sustainability of tomorrow





# Helping you build circular

An interview with Albin Kaelin, CEO of epeaswitzerland gmbh

**A**s an accredited general assessor for Cradle to Cradle Certified certification and the C2C Certified Material Health Certificate, epeaswitzerland is at the forefront of driving sustainable innovation across commerce. Specialists since 2009, the company has established its own Network of Trust, with brands, customers and global supply chains to create circularity in the way products are developed, and move away from linear, wasteful methods.

epeaswitzerland is independent and 100% privately owned by Albin Kaelin. *Climate Change Review* caught up with him to learn more about epeaswitzerland's important work.

**Please explain a bit more about your company and outline your development in recent years.**

**Albin Kaelin:** epeaswitzerland supports companies in different areas of activities in the development and implementation of Cradle to Cradle (C2C) design concepts. Through our experienced, globally-oriented and interdisciplinary management team, C2C projects are implemented across a whole range of industries worldwide. Companies who embrace our methods include Bauwerk Parquet. As one of Europe's leading parquet floor manufacturers, the company produces floor tiles that can be reused for up to four generations – that's 100 years, or the same time it takes an oak tree to grow. Another great example is VF Napapijri, an outdoor apparel brand that guarantees that their hydrophobic (water repellent) finishing is safe for humans and environment. They are also C2C Certified GOLD.

It is essential for the future health of our planet that companies manufacture products using safe and circular methodologies,

maintaining non-toxic, raw materials in good quality for the next generation. This can only be achieved through innovation, and the huge number of awards we have received shows that we are recognised as innovators on a global scale.

In recent years, we have built our Network of Trust with hundreds of companies and thousands of suppliers – a result of epeaswitzerland establishing strong and sustainable partnerships with all our clients.

**How does epeaswitzerland help to implement the C2C design concept to different industries worldwide?**

**AK:** The Reference Model Cradle to Cradle methodology we have created, and use in all projects, gives companies an orientation and framework to developing certain materials and products, as well as ensuring development risks and opportunities are visible. Based on the use of this tool, managers can make sound business decisions to develop products with a clear idea of what can and can't be done. We show them how they can develop their ideas in a sustainable way, to focus on the lifecycle of the product and embrace the principles of a circular economy.

**It would seem big business is still not properly tackling the issue of industrial waste. Why do you think this is?**

**AK:** We all have been educated to think in a linear way, as so many of our systems are based on linear thinking, for instance, accountancy and the concept of GDP work in a linear fashion. There is no future if we work on a "Cradle to Grave" basis, but at epeaswitzerland we are aiming to change this. Not enough industries are investing sustainable



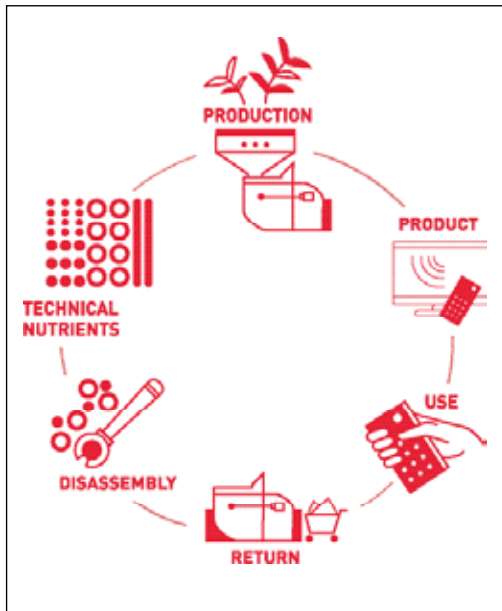


Fig.1 Technical cycle

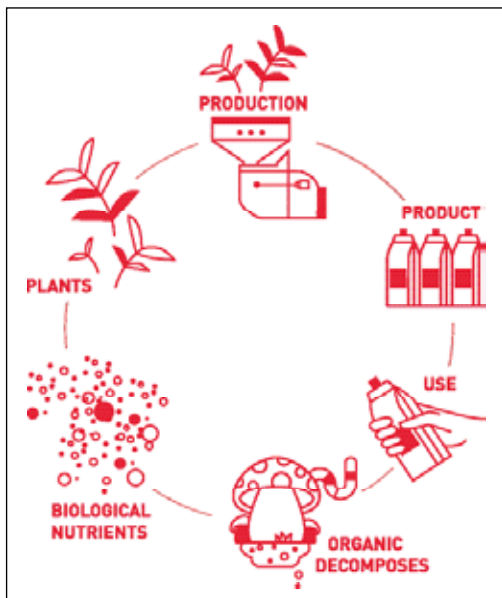


Fig.2 Biological cycle

materials, we are still sacrificing quality for quantity, and many everyday materials, especially metals in technology, are toxic when they break down and therefore damage the environment. What we need is a Cradle to Cradle mindset, that takes into consideration how materials can be recycled, or what happens to them at the end of their lifecycle. Shipping waste off to third countries and burying it, where it pollutes the environment must end. We need solutions, and this is what epeaswitzerland specialises in.

epeaswitzerland was founded to support businesses to innovate, to become safe and embrace a circular economy. It is a different way of thinking; this is why it

is so challenging. We need leaders who can prove that a new way of thinking can work.

**Cradle to Cradle Certified certification is recognised as a preferred standard for responsible purchasing decisions. What are the main reasons behind this?**

**AK:** Cradle to Cradle has been established for over 30 years, and C2C certification for 13 years. It is the only concept, and certification scheme, designed for material health-circularity, materials and products. It is a substantial reference in the marketplace across all industries, because organisations and companies need a methodology to follow and implement.

**Now you've been established over 30 years, do you ever reflect on your reasons for starting the company?**

**AK:** Yes, and I believe it's a relevant story. I'm actually left-handed, but unfortunately at school I was forced to write with my right. I asked why, but I didn't get a clear answer. However, this experience taught me not to accept anything which doesn't make sense to me. It inspired me to shape my life so that it makes sense for me and for the community. In doing this, I feel I am able to take clear responsibility for my actions.

And now I work to enable innovators to develop new production concepts that don't generate unnecessary waste, but instead become "nutrients" for other products. By showing new ways to better the old system. I feel I am contributing to a better future, and assuming responsibility for the challenges that the world faces in protecting the environment and humanity.

**And what motivates you to keep going? Do all the awards you have won help?**

**AK:** To be honest, this is a real challenge because trying to transform linear systems into circular systems is demanding. The hardest part is maintaining a work-life balance, but you can achieve this with family, friends, staying active, and ultimately believing in the dream: to protect the environment for the next generation.

Awards are always nice to get and give a signal of outstanding performance and leadership. They provide a level of independent credibility. For the company, and for me as CEO, it gives a timely push and boosts the company image. From this we can profit accordingly by securing additional business

**Where do you see your company in 5-10 years?**

**AK:** I think with our expertise, the level of innovation and the unique nature of the products we create with our clients, we will be in significant demand. One of the main reasons is the legislation within the EU's New Green Deal, which means we can support companies for their next steps towards a prosperous future.

*Turn the page for more from Albin Kaelin and news of his forthcoming book.*



“  
We show companies how they can embrace the principles of the circular economy

Albin Kaelin, CEO,  
epeaswitzerland gmbh

# A book for the businesses of tomorrow

Launching in Spring 2024, Albin Kaelin's ground-breaking new book 'From Rebel to Radical Innovator' is set to inspire big business in tackling the plastic problem

In line with his transformative work as CEO of epeaswitzerland gmbh, Albin Kaelin has announced the release of his new book, *From Rebel to Radical Innovator: Leading the Transformation through Circularity*. Set to launch in Spring 2024, Kaelin's ground-breaking book promises to revolutionise the manufacturing industry and ignite a movement towards a safe and circular future.

With a focus on mindset change, *From Rebel to Radical Innovator* delves into compelling case studies from prominent brands, industry leaders, supply chain experts, retailers, and dynamic start-ups. The book explores successful strategies for closing the production loop and presents practical methodologies and tools essential for embracing circularity – the adoption of future viability practices, reintegration of resources into the supply chain, and take-back systems for the reuse/recycling of materials.

Readers will discover a comprehensive guide that covers design workshops, educational insights, scientific perspectives, certification frameworks, and management approaches. *From Rebel to Radical Innovator* serves as a thought-provoking ideas hub for industry leaders, designers, students, and stakeholders eager to challenge conventional thinking and embrace innovative solutions. Kaelin's timely book will be a valuable resource for those seeking a fresh perspective on tackling the problems caused by plastic and other materials. It encourages readers to think outside the box and empowers them to drive positive change within their organisations.

*Climate Change Review* asked Albin about how he might help those who embrace his book, and the circular methodologies within.

## What would your first piece of advice be to an entrepreneur looking to embrace circularity?

We need to get away from linear ways of thinking, and confront how so many of the materials we use across industry are unsustainable and even toxic. As I touched on in the previous pages, Cradle to Grave business practices are at the heart of our global environmental challenges. So, my first piece of advice to an entrepreneur: change your mindset, reassess what defines true value, and your customers will follow.

And this isn't just idealistic thinking, legislation is also driving change, with the EU's "New Green Deal" forcing companies to transform into circular businesses, so if you don't embrace new methods, you will get left behind. Again, to echo the previous pages, be courageous. Trying



to transform linear systems into circular ones is risky and demanding – it is a real challenge. Our production methods and systems need to be transformed. We need a new way of thinking, and this is best achieved through strong and innovative partner networks. Time is running out and a paradigm shift is needed fast. We still hear the phrase today, “time is money”, we must get away from this way of thinking. Our futures depends on how we manage our resources for future generations.

## How can a company continue to embrace the lessons of circularity while also seeking scale?

The circular economy will soon become legislation in Europe, and maybe globally, so achieving scale in this way will be non-negotiable. But I believe you can get ahead by embracing Cradle to Cradle (C2C) design principles, that have been around for over 30 years. Cradle to Cradle Certified certification – owned by the not-for-profit Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute is the only certification scheme designed for circularity.

Our experience of C2C innovation can make a huge difference to your company: we know how to help you scale up your business in a sustainable way and have demonstrated this for many companies. We have helped them orientate their production systems, we offer guidance and tools how to implement new systems, on how to balance risk, confront challenges and seize opportunities.

We can help you develop “circular accounting”, and new management techniques, with our Cradle to Cradle Toolbox. Ultimately, we can help you develop new products in 12 months using a new concept that we have designed to speed up the process: Supply Chain Domino Knowledge Transformation. And it works, it has been proven on multiple projects to help businesses innovate, and to help them scale.

## Further information

[www.epeaswitzerland.com](http://www.epeaswitzerland.com)

[www.c2ccertified.org](http://www.c2ccertified.org)

*Cradle to Cradle® is a trademark of MBDC LLC*

*Cradle to Cradle Certified® is a registered trademark of the C2CPII*

“  
Time is  
running  
out, a  
paradigm  
shift is  
needed fast