

Tool 1.1 Circular Strategies cards

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Phase 1: Awareness

Objective of The Tool

The Circularity strategies cards aim to stimulate structured discussion, generate ideas, and quickly identify which circular strategies are most relevant and realistic for a furniture SME. The goal is not to perform a full feasibility study, but to create clarity, alignment, and a short list of actionable priorities.

How to Use the Tool

The cards can be used as individual reading cards to generate inspiration, but are best used in a workshop format in which multidisciplinary teams use cards to generate possible circular opportunities.

1. Framing the Session

The workshop begins by establishing a clear focus. Participants should agree on the context they want to examine. This may be a specific product (for example, an office chair or table), a product family, a service offering such as refurbishment or leasing, or the broader business model. A shared understanding of the scope prevents the discussion from becoming too abstract or fragmented.

At this stage, it is helpful to briefly recall the five circular strategies represented in the deck: Narrow (using fewer resources), Slow (extending product life), Close (looping materials), Regenerate (supporting renewable and safe flows), and Inform (leveraging data and digital solutions). This reminder anchors participants in the logic of circular innovation without requiring detailed theoretical explanation.

2. Opening the Creative Discussion

Before introducing the cards, participants are invited to reflect individually on the question: *How could our company become more circular?* Each person notes a few quick thoughts or observations. This warm-up encourages original thinking and helps ensure that the cards later act as catalysts rather than constraints.

The Card Deck is then distributed. Participants browse through the cards, reading titles and short descriptions. They are asked to select several cards that feel relevant to their

company, their product challenges, or their strategic ambitions. Selection should remain intuitive and exploratory. At this point, there is no need for evaluation or justification.

3. Reflecting on Relevance

The selected cards become the basis for a short group discussion. For each card, participants consider why it resonates. They may ask whether the principle is already implemented, partially addressed, or entirely absent from the current business. The purpose of this step is to surface perceptions, assumptions, and differing viewpoints across functions such as design, operations, marketing, and management.

4. Classifying Cards with the 4 × 4 Matrix

To move from exploration toward prioritization, the cards are assessed using a simple 4 × 4 matrix. The matrix introduces two dimensions: Strategic Value and Implementation Effort.

Strategic Value reflects the potential contribution of a principle to the company. Participants consider whether adopting the strategy would create limited benefit, moderate improvement, strong competitive or sustainability value, or genuinely transformational impact. The discussion may reference business potential, customer value, regulatory alignment, environmental gains, or differentiation.

Implementation Effort captures the perceived difficulty of applying the principle. Participants evaluate whether the change would be relatively easy, manageable with moderate adjustments, demanding significant investment or organizational change, or highly challenging due to technical, financial, or ecosystem constraints.

Each card is placed on the matrix according to collective judgment. The exercise deliberately favours speed over precision. The intention is to visualize priorities and tensions rather than calculate exact scores.

5. Interpreting the Matrix

Once the cards are mapped, patterns typically emerge. Principles positioned in the high-value / low-effort area often represent immediate opportunities or “quick wins.” Strategies seen as high value but difficult may require deeper analysis, investment decisions, or partnership development. Cards considered transformational yet very difficult often signal longer-term innovation directions rather than short-term actions. Low-value principles can be consciously deprioritized, reducing distraction and cognitive overload.

This step is particularly valuable for SMEs, as it balances ambition with realism and exposes differences in perception across participants.

6. Prioritizing Opportunities

Participants then identify a small number of priority directions, typically one to three initiatives. Selection should consider strategic coherence, feasibility, resource constraints, and potential impact. The emphasis is on focus rather than completeness.

7. Defining Next Steps

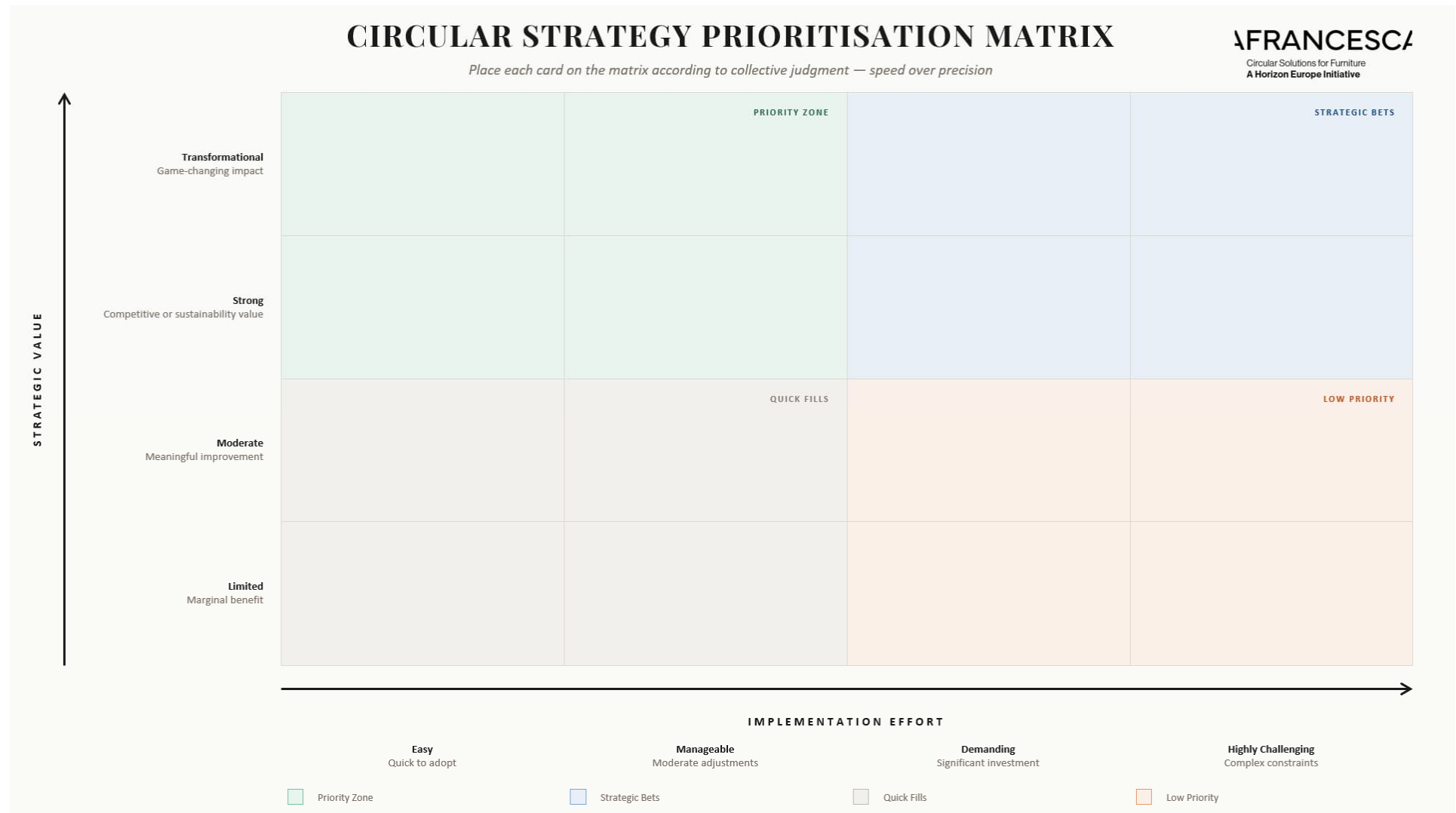
For each chosen priority, the group outlines the first practical actions. This may include a pilot project, internal investigation, supplier discussion, prototype development, or customer testing. Responsibilities, indicative timelines, and key dependencies are clarified. The aim is to translate conceptual inspiration into concrete movement.

8. Closing the Session

The workshop concludes with reflection. Participants consider whether the deck supported useful insights, which strategies triggered meaningful discussion, and where uncertainties remain. Capturing this feedback helps refine future sessions and guides follow-up activities.

Expected Outcomes

A successful workshop produces a clearer understanding of which circular principles are most relevant to the company, which represent realistic short-term opportunities, and which belong to longer-term strategic exploration. It also strengthens cross-functional alignment and provides a basis for subsequent experimentation or planning.





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