Climate-Neutral Buildings – A Business Model for Change

A challenge by Gaia-X Deutschland Community

By 2045, 21.6 million buildings in Germany are to become climate-neutral – a challenge requiring innovation, collaboration, and the integration of processes and data. The goal is to reduce energy consumption, CO_2 emissions, and costs while improving living comfort and property values.

Preliminary projects have laid the groundwork for a sustainable, efficient, and data-sovereign ecosystem. This ecosystem is based on GAIA-X Dataspaces, AI-powered automation, and data-driven collaboration.

The next step is to develop a business model to quickly turn this potential into practical solutions.

How can we build a digital platform that connects stakeholders, optimizes processes, reduces costs, and accelerates modernization?

Short-term solutions could include leveraging funding programs and introducing “blended financing” models that combine public-private partnerships, impact investments, and thematic bonds. These models could help mitigate risks and scale the platform more rapidly.

All stakeholders – from planners to operators – as well as impact investors and funders are invited to co-develop innovative approaches and tackle this transformative challenge together.

Efficient return of used devices

A challenge by DHL

In a world where resource scarcity and e-waste are becoming critical challenges, the return of used devices is a crucial step for a circular economy to work. However, currently few devices are returned to manufacturers or recyclers. Instead, they end up in drawers, containers or unsorted collection points, making their recycling uneconomical.

Without a systematic return model, the potential for recycling devices and components remains largely untapped. This not only means the loss of valuable resources, but also missed business opportunities, particularly in the areas of logistics and recycling.

How could we develop a solution that makes it possible to efficiently increase the return of used devices while making it economically attractive?

The goal of this challenge is to increase the number of devices that find their way back to manufacturers and remanufacturers to extend their useful life and promote the sustainable use of resources. At the same time, logistics providers like DHL could use this potential to develop new business opportunities.

Possible solutions include digital platforms that provide end users with clear return processes, incentive models for returns such as vouchers or discounts, and standardised processes for sorting and recycling devices. The integration of logistics service providers for simple returns by parcel could also significantly increase the rate of returns.

We invite manufacturers, logistics companies and other innovators to work together to strengthen the circular economy and shape a sustainable future through innovative recycling solutions.

Unlocking the Twin Transformation with AI

A challenge by CSCP

In a world marked by economic uncertainty, businesses must integrate sustainability and innovation to remain competitive. The sheer volume of data across digital and environmental domains often leaves decision-makers unable to identify high-impact opportunities for sustainable growth. Without actionable insights, companies struggle to transform sustainability from a cost center into a driver of innovation and profitability.

How might we design an AI-based assistant to empower decision-makers in identifying leverage points that align sustainability goals with profitable innovation?

The goal of this challenge is to accelerate the twin transformation of becoming both competitive and sustainable, driving growth while reducing environmental impact.

Solutions could include AI-powered strategic tools, data visualization platforms, or adaptive decision-support systems that enable leaders to unlock actionable insights.

We invite innovators, industry leaders, and sustainability advocates to collaborate in turning sustainability into a competitive advantage through AI-driven solutions.

AI for All: A Framework for Workforce-Wide Adoption

A challenge by Deutsche Telekom

AI is becoming the defining tool for knowledge workers, unlocking new levels of efficiency and resilience in the face of economic and resource challenges. However, its benefits remain unevenly distributed across organizations, slowing progress and limiting potential gains. Companies like Deutsche Telekom illustrate that with the right frameworks, AI adoption can become a widespread reality, driving innovation and collaboration at all levels.

How might we democratize AI adoption within organizations, creating inclusive frameworks that inspire, educate, and empower every worker to leverage AI effectively?

The goal is to create a scalable, replicable approach for AI adoption that ensures every knowledge worker can confidently use AI to enhance productivity and contribute to organizational resilience.

Proposed solutions include fostering widespread inspiration for AI, building foundational literacy, enabling effective prompt usage, developing practical use cases, and sharing best practices across industries.

This challenge calls on corporations, AI experts, training specialists, and industry leaders to collaborate on developing frameworks, sharing insights, and driving the democratization of AI adoption globally.