Fashion Goes Bad: When Clothing Has a Shelf Life

SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 1 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Welcome: Rather than talking about trends that go out of style, imagine clothes that physically go bad. Our question today is: Should fashion be engineered to expire? Let members react before showing examples. This is a thought experiment, not a claim that commercial garments currently rot on schedule.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 2 OF 18



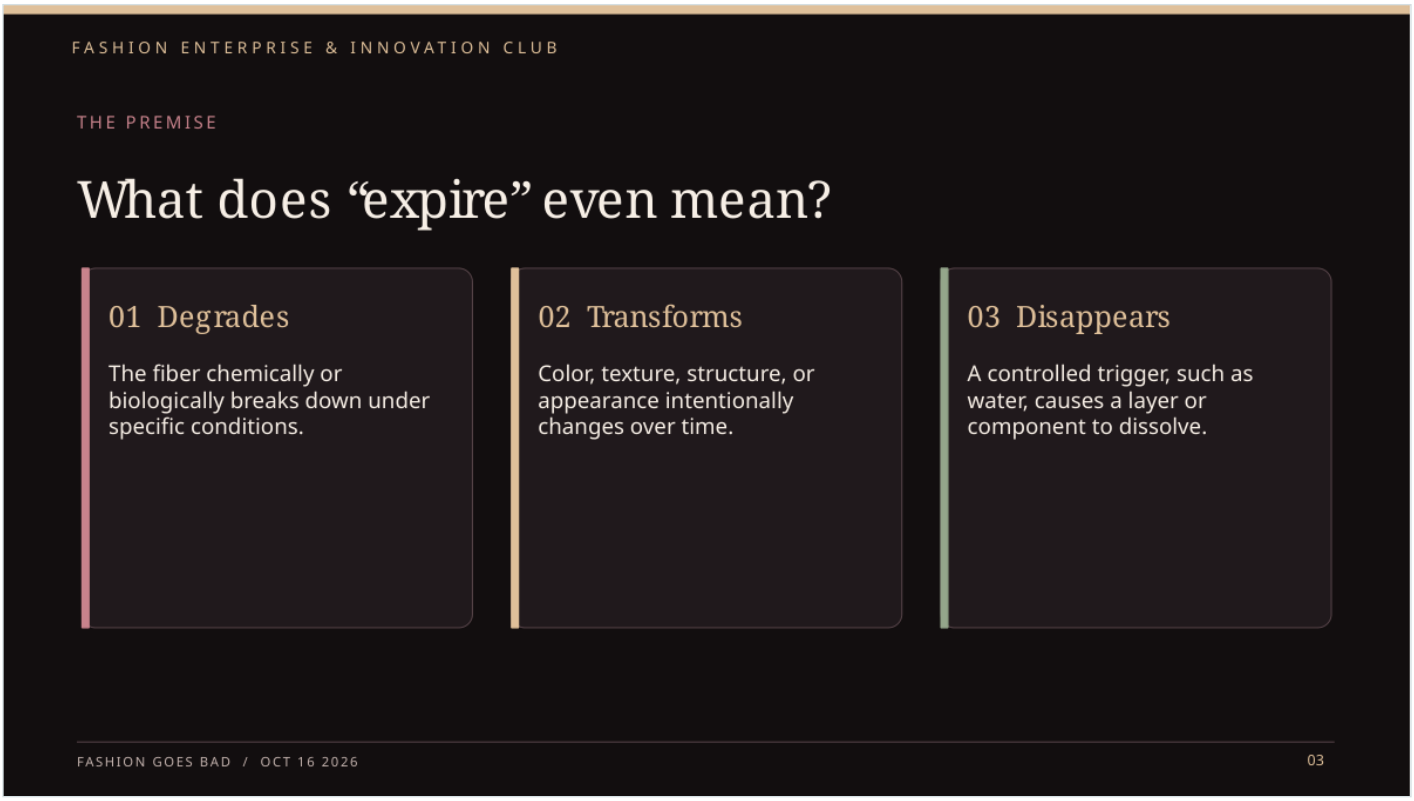
Original speaker notes

Ask members to vote in chat: YES / NO / DEPENDS. Follow-ups: Would your answer change if the dress were made for a single red-carpet appearance? If it composted safely? If you could rent it for $100? Do not explain your own opinion yet.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 3 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Make the scientific distinction: fading is not biodegradation; dissolving is not automatically composting; decaying when worn is not necessarily safe or desirable. A realistic design normally requires a trigger or specified end-of-life conditions rather than an exact food-like expiration date.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 4 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Explain with a sugar analogy: sugar can dissolve in water yet has not vanished as matter. Likewise, a dissolving garment might release substances that need safe disposal. Biodegradation requires a suitable environment and is different from falling apart or producing fragments. Ask what evidence a brand should show before saying “compostable.”

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 5 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Real example: Chalayan SS16 in Paris, shown October 2015. Two outer garments melted under showerheads to reveal crystal-embellished outfits beneath. The effect proves runway transformation is possible—not that the pieces were everyday, safely compostable dresses. Source: Vogue https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2016-ready-to-wear/chalayan and Dazed https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/26842/1/hussein-chalayan-talks-making-dresses-dissolve-on-the-runway. Consider opening the Vogue article for images/video rather than implying our concept photo is Chalayan.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 6 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Reported in WIRED 2019, the Vollebak shirt was made from wood-pulp-derived material with algae-based pigment. Distinguish fading algae ink and soil biodegradation from programmed on-body decay. Source https://www.wired.com/story/vollebak-algae-plant-shirt/ . Ask members whether compostability matters if the shirt is rarely worn.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 7 OF 18



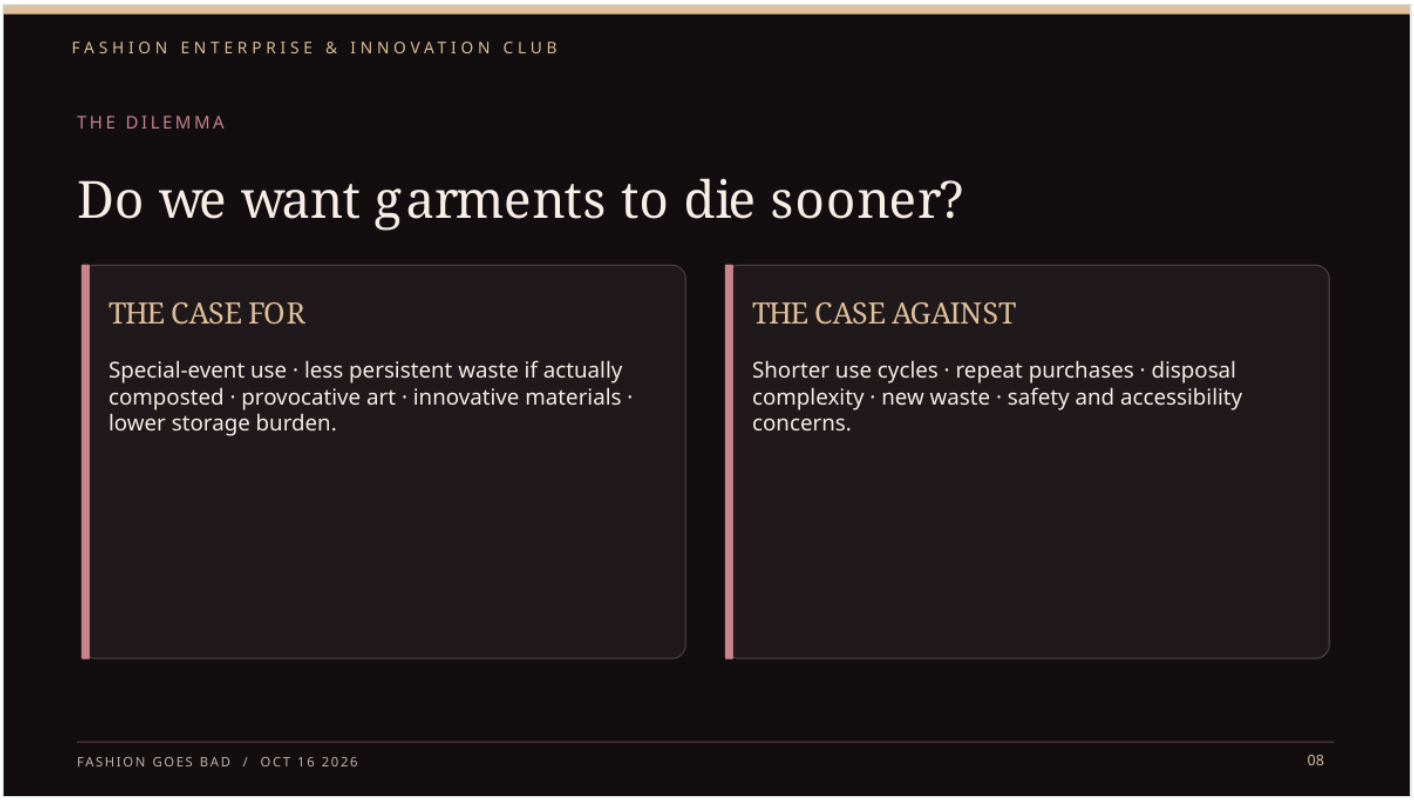
Original speaker notes

Suzanne Lee was a pioneer in experimental biofabricated garments including jackets made from bacterial cellulose. Academic 2026 review discusses the material’s textile potential but also engineering and cost barriers. Source https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-026-71025-7 . It is a research/design field, not a commercial closet of reliably expiring dresses. Ask: If microbes “grow” fabric, is it still manufacturing?

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 8 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Facilitate debate. Team A supports a limited-use, confirmed compostable dress for performances or events. Team B opposes selling a short-lived $500 item as “green.” Strongest answer recognizes context, full lifecycle, packaging, energy and replacement rates.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 9 OF 18



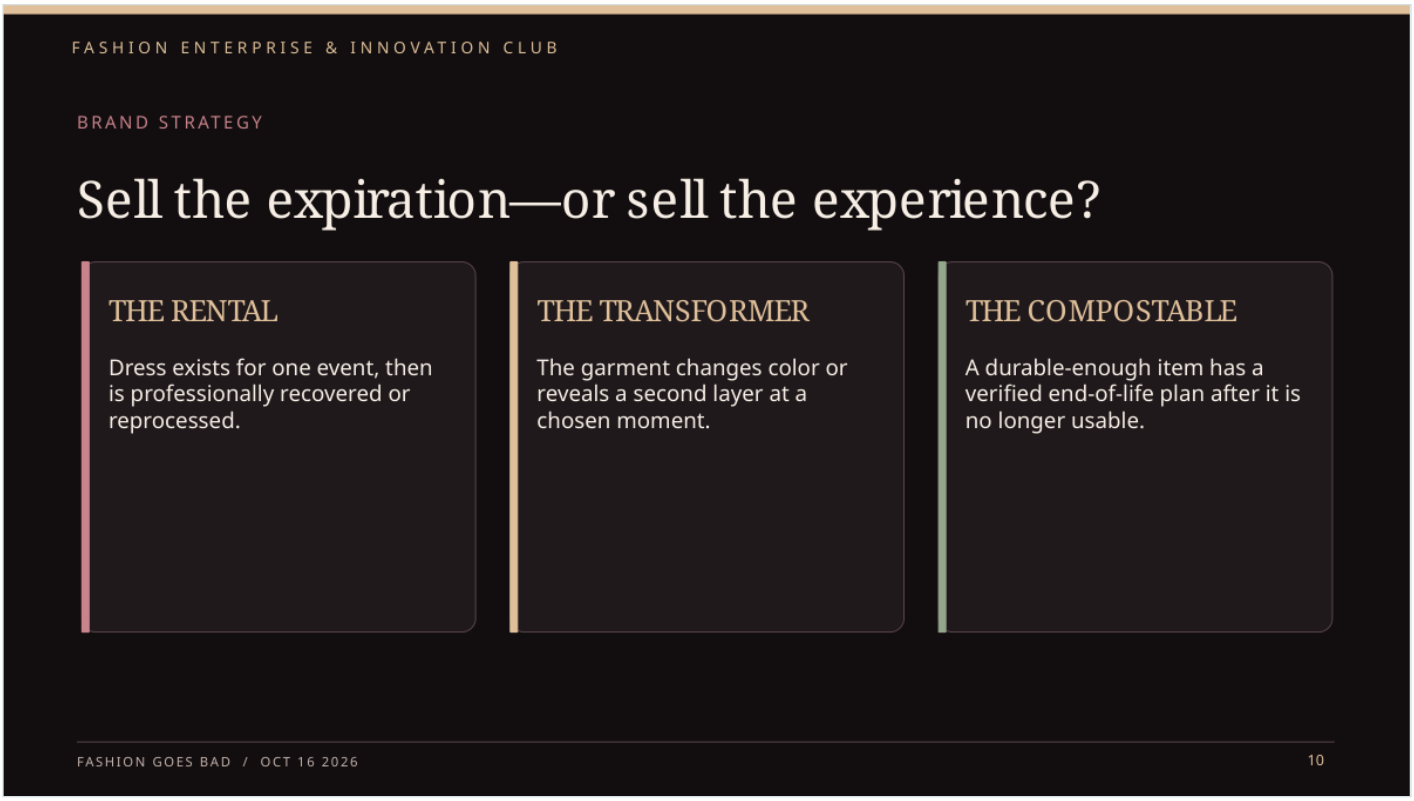
Original speaker notes

Source European Commission 17 July 2026 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/ban-destruction-unsold-clothes-and-shoes-enters-into-application-2026-07-17_en . 4–9% is the EEA estimate reported by the Commission, not a measurement of every brand. Distinguish unsold inventory destruction from disposal after consumers use clothes.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 10 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Define business model = customer, product, price, distribution, reuse and end-of-life. Each business model has different operational tradeoffs. Controlled visual change is more realistic for luxury experience than unsafe on-body “rotting.” Ask which model a venture capitalist would support.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 11 OF 18



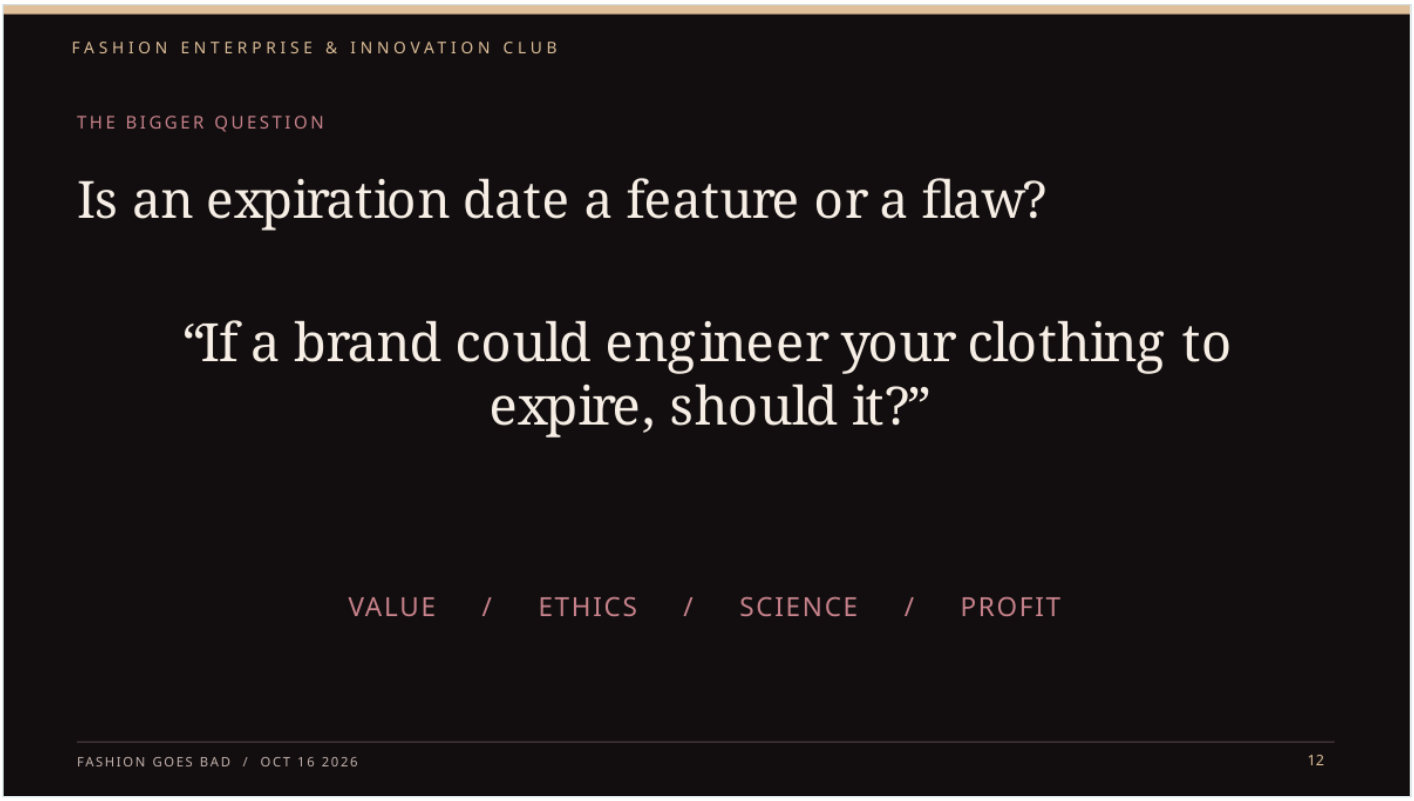
Original speaker notes

These products and prices are hypothetical. Use Adobe Connect poll or chat. Ask one member per option to explain: What information would persuade you? Could someone afford only one dress? What makes a claim credible? Keep 3–4 minutes.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 12 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Invite 2–3 responses. Challenge simplistic yes/no answers: a protective medical costume, biodegradable festival outfit and everyday school uniform have totally different requirements. A responsible proposal needs safety, realistic triggers, transparent testing, and business sustainability.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 13 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Reveal this near the end, not at the beginning. Members work individually or in teams (you can decide). It is a proposed competition and not a claim that a formal school-sponsored prize exists. Encourage practical thought rather than intentional pollution or spreading mold.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 14 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Suggested deliverable: 3–5 slides or a one-page business concept sheet, submitted ahead of competition. Ask teams to identify which claims are proven versus speculative and include one credible source. They do not need to manufacture anything. Any prototype should be safe and not involve culturing molds, pathogens, or hazardous chemistry.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 15 OF 18



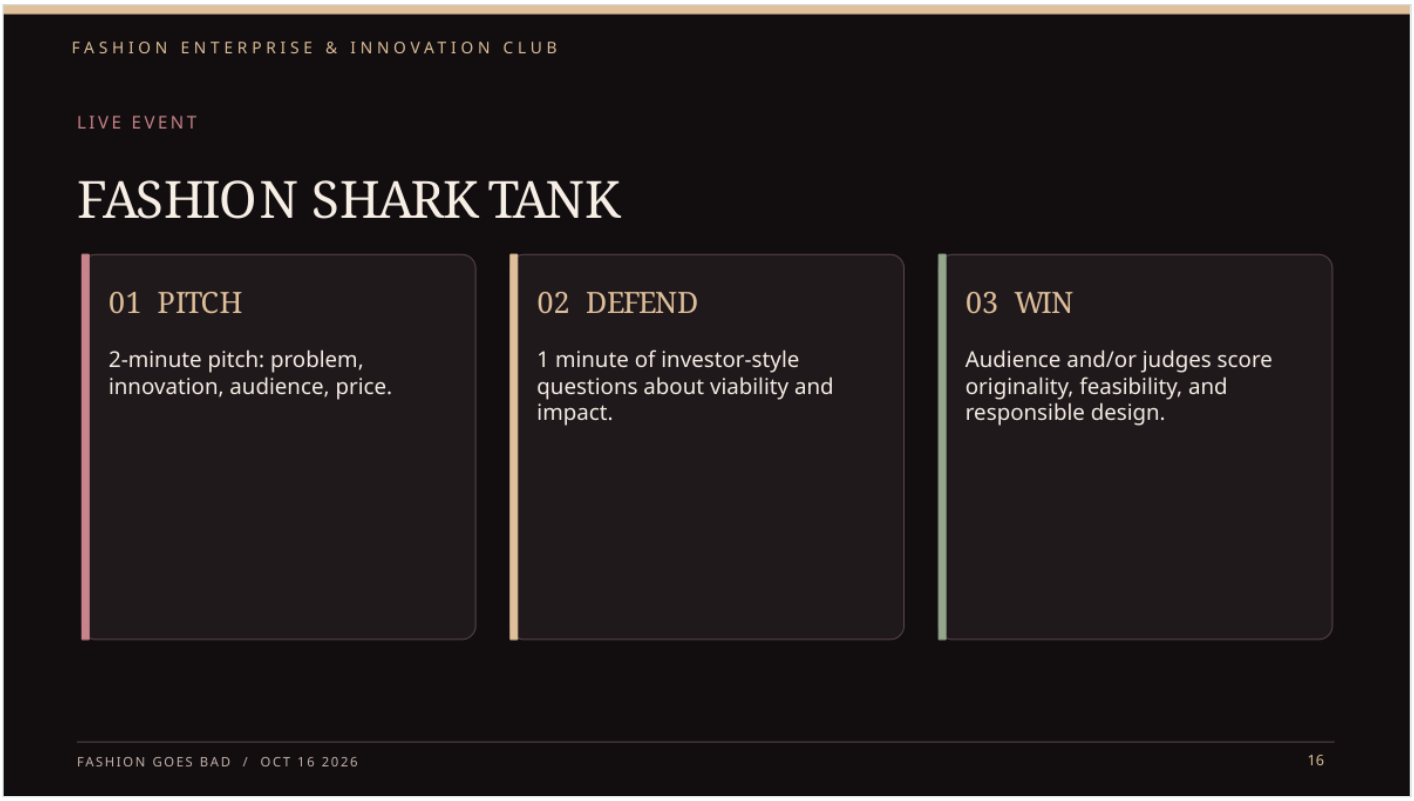
Original speaker notes

This timeline is a suggestion. Do not call the October 30 and November 6 dates confirmed unless they have been officially chosen. Clarify team size, submission form, timing and any available prizes later. Optional checkpoint lets interested students ask questions.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 16 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Proposed rubric: innovation and originality 30%; business feasibility 25%; scientific and environmental credibility 25%; clarity and pitch 20%. If the group is large, host multiple short pitch heats. Ensure members know this is a company-concept challenge, not an experiment requiring actual biological decay.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 17 OF 18



Original speaker notes

Ask participants to leave one bold product idea in chat. Thank them and give a teaser for the challenge rules. Encourage submissions that are both creative and defensible.

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SPEAKER NOTES · SLIDE 18 OF 18



Original speaker notes

References are for fact-checking and useful links to original reporting. Synthetic image art in this deck was previously generated for the club poster and is conceptual, not documentary photography.

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