



BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY INTO YOUR BUSINESS

A simple process to build sustainability into strategy and plans for your business

Click on the stage you want to read in the flow chart below or [click here to start from the beginning](#).





STAGE ONE: CONSIDER STAKEHOLDERS?

It is essential to know who you are communicating with. Ask yourself:

- Who are our stakeholders?
- How much influence do they have on our business?
- How interested are they in what we do?
- How can I best manage these different stakeholders?
- Which sustainability issues do they care about?

Doing this will help you identify what you should communicate to specific stakeholders and how you should prioritise what you do.

STAGE TWO: CONSIDER THE FUTURE

Look at the outputs and inputs to your business in five or ten years:

- Will people want what you're selling?
- Will what you're doing be constrained legally?
- What will your customers really want? (e.g. for a car manufacturer: does the customer want a 'product' or simply a means of getting from a to b?)
- Is there another way of looking at what you do? This will help you think about new opportunities. For example a provider of gas or electricity may think of themselves as providers of light and heat which opens up new avenues.
- What are the key resources your business relies on. Will they still be available?
- What will affect their availability and price?
- What else will affect your cost base?

To help you think about these questions, you may want to try different exercises.

- **Backcasting:** this first involves defining a desirable future, and then identifying the steps that are needed to achieve it.
- **Scenario planning:** is a forecasting technique used to make long-term plans. Based on key trends (such as political, environmental, societal, legal and technical ones), you develop different scenarios and identify how these could impact your business, but also how you can make the most in different scenarios.

STAGE THREE: INCORPORATE INTO STRATEGY

- Ensure your plans for sustainability are aligned with existing organisational strategies
- Consider how sustainability could help you build your reputation with key stakeholder groups
- Explore opportunities for new markets
- Look for solutions to current business problems. For example, reducing waste sent to land fill reduces costs as well as helping the environment.
- Consider opportunities for building internal competency. Many organisations encourage volunteering for example, which helps to build leadership qualities



STAGE FOUR: GAIN COMMITMENT

You will need support and engagement from your stakeholders. Making sure that people in your organisation are on board is important. While you may be setting the policies, they will be implementing them. So how do you do that?

- **Communicate:** from the onset, it's important you explain to your workforce why and how you are doing what you are doing. And it's imperative that you keep communicating these aspects. You may want to ask people to volunteer to be sustainability champions – individuals who will act as ambassadors for this new approach.
- **Empower:** empower your employees to make your business sustainable. Make them feel part of, and allow them to contribute to the journey. Give them the power to drive your company's vision forward. You may want to try using different techniques to engage them. For example, you can implement processes to allow them to suggest ideas. Or you can start using different types of incentives to encourage employees to get involved.
- **Bring it close to home:** tell your employees why this matters specifically for them. Explain how a sustainable business makes business sense.

STAGE FIVE: MEASURE PROGRESS

To track progress, you must measure what you are doing. The table below is something you might want to use on each of your (key) performance indicators (KPIs). When choosing KPIs, make sure you pick those that are likely to have the biggest impact. If they are unlikely to impact your business, why bother?

The performance measure record sheet (Adapted from Neely et al, 1996)

Component	Description	Example
Measure	A good self-explanatory title.	Volume of waste sent to landfill
Purpose	Why are we measuring this?	To avoid landfill charges and reduce environmental impact of waste disposal.
Relates to	To which sustainability objective does this relate?	Waster reduction
Target	What is to be achieved and by when?	2000kg reduction by end 2012, zero in 2013
Formula	How is this measured? Be precise.	Kg sent to landfill
Frequency	How often is this measured and reviewed?	Measure weekly, review monthly
Who measures?	Who collects are reports the data?	Quality controller
Source of data	Where does the data come from?	Purchase order system
Who acts on the data?	Who is responsible for taking action?	Site general manager
What do they do?	What are the general steps that should be taken?	Identify sources of waste, systematically reduce



1. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - a. What are the key resources my business relies upon? These include things like raw materials, energy and fuel as well as people, and financial resources.
 - b. What will affect their availability and price in the future?
 - c. What effect will this have on my company operations and company profitability?
2. Set targets to reduce the use of these resources, make your business more efficient and save on these costs. It's best you first focus on the ones that you think are most likely to affect your operations and profitability.
3. Ensure your targets are SMART:
 - **Specific:** to make your target specific you may want to ask:

For example:

What do you want to accomplish?	Reduce amount of business travel by 50% and replace with teleconferencing.
Why do you want to accomplish it?	Because it will reduce company costs and reduce the company's carbon footprint.
Who will be involved?	All employees who travel; IT to sort out technology necessary to replace travel.
Where will this happen?	In all offices across the UK.
Which resources are required to achieve this?	Video conferencing equipment.

- **Measurable:** you need to be able to measure your progress. For example, how will you measure if the amount of business travel is reduced?
- **Achievable:** your targets should be realistic. How will you achieve them? Do you have the resources necessary to achieve them? For example, are you able to afford the technology needed to replace travel? Are you able to replace travel or is that an irreplaceable part of your business?
- **Relevant:** does it make sense for your business? And within a sustainable business context?
- **Time-bound:** make sure to put a timeframe on your target. If you aim to reduce the amount of business travel by 50%, how quickly do you hope to achieve that?

Continued...



STAGE SIX: REPORT ON PROGRESS

Reporting on progress focuses effort on key areas of the business and motivates individuals to take action. Different stakeholders will be interested in different aspects so ensure you tailor the report to the interests of the recipient rather than provide a deluge of information.

Some key pointers are:

- Include sustainability KPIs in your regular management reporting
- Post KPIs on the intranet, notice boards or other prominent places
- Encourage discussion about the results, looking for trends, correlating results to draw conclusions and determine actions (taking care not to make spurious connections)
- Ensure action is taken

FINAL WORD

If you're stuck and don't know where to begin, just begin somewhere. There are many [resources available online](#) and elsewhere and people willing to help, including us.