



Tips to help raise environmental awareness within your own company

ESG & Sustainability Transformation

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ESG Transformation



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In the area of sustainability, both at the national and organisational level, capacity building means building the skills and capabilities to drive sustainable change. But it all starts with awareness.

Do you want to make the world a better place, especially where you work?

That can often be a challenge – even more so when your company is not focused on sustainability and your colleagues don't understand your passion for the environment.

Short-term results beat long-term vision

If you're like us, you understand why your company needs to take environmental protection more seriously. After all, it's something we all have to do together.

But the reality is that businesses are often still focused on their short-term results – especially in these difficult and uncertain economic times.

This means raising awareness and building capacity to work together to reduce our environmental impact. This is also known as capacity building.

Capacity building means developing the knowledge, skills and processes needed to make a positive contribution to society or the environment. It is the holy grail of sustainability – and can be frustrating if you keep being ignored.

Even if you are already in a position where sustainability is your primary responsibility – for example, as a sustainability and ESG manager – it is no guarantee that you will be successful.

We asked the community for their best advice on how to build capacity within their company – even if their colleagues “don't care”.

Here are 12 top tactics.

How far along is your company on the journey to Sustainability Maturity?

The first thing we learned is that actions really depend on how far along a company is in its sustainability journey.

One way to measure this is to use the sustainability maturity model.

There are four steps along this path – from simple compliance to purposeful organisation. They are: 1. Starting – 2. Developing – 3. Advancing – 4. Leading

We have divided the tactics into two blocks: For organisations still in the process of transitioning to fully sustainable organisations and companies that are further along.

Starter tactics for building capabilities in companies



If your company is in stages 1-2 of the Sustainability Maturity Path, it is not always intrinsically motivated to pursue sustainable business practices. The drivers for sustainability action are largely external: Regulations, customers, and cost-effectiveness.

Management is still not measured by environmental performance indicators, and sustainability programs are decentralized and dispersed. There may even be full-time sustainability professionals working within the company – but if sustainability is not a topic led by senior management, there is still a lot of work to be done.

The following tips can be useful for raising initial awareness and building capacity even in organisations where environmental awareness is still in its early stages.

Tip #1: Lunch Diplomacy

We recommend that you always talk openly about sustainability – especially during “social” moments at work. We call it lunch diplomacy. So when you have the opportunity to have an open conversation outside of work with colleagues, bring it up. Goal: Activate a grassroots movement within your team that can spread further throughout the company.

Tip #2: Never use a “Doomsday” scenario

As with tip #1 or any of the other tips, we also recommend never approaching sustainability with a negative mindset. Instead of talking about negative scenarios and “Doomsday” thinking, approach it with a positive and creative perspective.

Tip #3: Raise it in every decision-making process

Even if your company’s business model isn’t driven by environmental metrics, you should still raise it when making decisions.

If there are no direct goals, let your colleagues know about the potential negative impacts of their decisions (“This decision will lead to more carbon emissions, do we really want to do this?”). This way, you can steer the conversation in a positive direction – instead of having to decide for a more sustainable alternative, they have to decide against a less sustainable alternative. A reality check!

We implemented a simple strategy. In every business decision, we asked: Is this the most sustainable decision within our budget? This has helped us embed sustainability into every aspect of our company, from leasing electric cars instead of gas ones to sourcing from local partners.

Tip #4: Take Independent Action

This idea has worked for many: Encourage colleagues to get creative and start independent micro-projects to raise environmental awareness. Even if it’s just a lunchtime run to raise environmental awareness – any topic will do.

Tip #5: Sustainability Task Force

Another frequently suggested tip: Create a sustainability task force and create a roadmap.



“Only create a task force with people who are willing to commit their time. Distinguish between your primary and secondary processes. Where do you want to prioritize impact? Energy? Plastics? The entire procurement process?”

Tip #6: Share internal success stories

Many high performers like to sow seeds by sharing internal success stories. The topic of sustainability is still in its infancy in most companies today, but that doesn't stop them from inspiring their colleagues with stories and trends.

Advanced tactics for building sustainability capabilities

If your company is in stage 3-4 of the Sustainability Maturity Path, in other words, does your company have sustainability goals? That doesn't guarantee perfect environmental performance. With the following tips, you can ensure that your colleagues (and managers) are as committed to sustainability as possible.

Tip #7: Define Sustainability KPIs for Every Position

This best practice is a must – “what you can't measure, you can't improve”. To understand your sustainability performance, you must define a baseline for your environmental footprint – and then set clear targets. Start at the top – but when everyone in your company is working towards a clear number, you can really drive sustainable change.

Tip #8: Management KPIs hold leaders accountable

This may sound like a big step for many companies – but linking your management to environmental performance is definitely a step that every company needs to take at some point. More and more companies are even linking board remuneration to environmental performance! The key is to clearly define relevant KPIs that can be improved over time.

Tip #9: A clear structure for sustainability activities

The rule of thumb is to always focus on communicating the basic structure of your company's sustainability approach – Green Products, Responsible Production, People and Society. This helps everyone in the company find ways to innovate around shared sustainability goals – you could even call it an “Internal Sustainability Goal”!

Tip #10: Young People Exercises to Bring a New Perspective

Sustainable innovation requires creative, out-of-the-box thinking and a desire to contribute to society, which is where the new generation excels. You should lead young people exercises with a “sustainability flavour” across multiple departments. The goal: Bring new knowledge and question existing processes. At the same time, this creates opportunities for young talent to shine.

Tip #11: Be Completely Transparent

No one is perfect. And no company is perfect. A useful way to start the improvement process is to be transparent about where you stand. Sustainability is sometimes seen as a “fuzzy,” unquantifiable topic. A fact sheet can help you hold yourself accountable for your environmental performance and measure your progress accordingly. The next step is to fully report on your company's sustainability – but this is a bigger project. Start with a



simple fact sheet to align internally. Work your way up to meeting more reporting requirements to empower and specifically engage colleagues and customers.

Tip #12: Turn CO₂ into actionable numbers

CO₂ and other environmental metrics can be confusing. So why not turn them into something everyone can compare?

Now you have tactics for raising awareness and building capacity – where do you start? Do you know who to talk to? If you have a good experience, please share it with us!

To learn more about ESG and sustainability-related models, please contact [YTT Consulting!](#)

