

Building Capacity in Your Organization

Learning module

Reading Time: 25min

Overview

In this module, you will learn:

- How to lay a foundation for sustainability in your organization
- How to find a leadership champion
- How to build cross-departmental support
- How to develop shareable plans

Building Capacity in Your Organization

Businesses have a major role to play in fighting climate change.

Climate change is having a devastating impact on the Earth. We're witnessing it in real-time as wildfires, severe droughts, and once-in-a-lifetime storms have swept the world in recent years.

There is overwhelming scientific evidence that human activities are the leading cause of these extreme weather changes.

Businesses play an outsized role in tackling climate change. Sustainability efforts are the leading way to manage climate impacts. The time is now; the U.S. economy could lose \$520B across 22 sectors linked to global temperature rise.**

In this presentation, you'll learn how to lay a foundation for sustainability in your organization.

In 2021, the U.S. experienced **20 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters**, putting 2021 in second place for the most disasters in a calendar year, behind the record 22 separate billion-dollar events in 2020.*

Three-Tiered Approach to Starting the Process in Your Organization

In this presentation, we'll discuss tools and tactics you can use to build sustainable capacity within your organization. We've broken these down into three distinct approaches:

Find a leadership champion

Finding a leadership champion is vital to your sustainability plan's success. This could be a dedicated employee group, a sustainability specialist, or a team.

In this section, we'll discuss tactics and talking points to help win critical support for your sustainability efforts.

Build cross-departmental support

Building your sustainability plan requires cross-departmental support.

In this section, we'll provide guidance to help you make your case and engage with people across your organization.

Start the planning process

Developing shareable plans enables a collaborative approach.

In this section, we'll give you two examples of early planning documents: a roadmap and sustainability SWOT.

Find a Leadership Champion

Exec support increases your chances for success

Finding a Leadership Champion is Vital to Your Sustainability Plan's Success

When executives make sustainability a strategic priority, the odds of follow-through increase. Here are three tactics you can use to build support—and the talking points to support your business case.

TACTIC:

Educate executives & senior management

- Use data points and cite specific reduction opportunities within your organization to help executives make the connection between your business case and environmental action

Talking Points:

- Yes, there will be initial costs for sustainability programs. However, over time, environmental practices yield a lower risk return on investment than business as usual.
- Visit: Building the Business Case Learning Module to learn more

TACTIC:

Link executive goals to sustainability

- This demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability and ensures that from the bottom to the top of the organization, there are tangible incentives to perform

Talking Points:

- Sustainability is now an expectation, not simply an optional program
- Justifying investments in sustainability means considering comprehensive operational efficiencies, talent retention, and market growth as part of a strategic shift towards sustainability—these areas are new ways to find ROI

TACTIC:

Add environmental financial trackers to high-cost areas of the business

- Adapt financial tracking to measure environmental, social, and governance metrics. This will help build and track your business case year on year

Talking Points:

- Sustainability ROI can be found in operations, upgrades, market share, marketing efforts, product design, shipping, packaging, fleet, business travel and more. Tracking carbon reductions over time alongside financials gives visibility into your sustainability program, and lets you continue to improve year over year

Encourage Executives to Embrace Sustainable Practices

Approach your leaders with specific, actionable changes. Here are three suggestions to get you started:

Ask vendors to follow your lead

Encourage (or require) your suppliers and business partners to meet specific environmental/sustainability criteria. This has a positive impact on emissions for both vendors and your organization

Switch to sustainable materials

Stock the office with items made from recycled materials or lower-emitting products. This connects everyone to your organization's sustainability work and supports eco-friendly businesses

Embrace the modern digital workplace

Shift to a hybrid work model that includes telework and reduces business travel. There is still a carbon footprint from working at home, but a digital workplace can reduce unnecessary business travel—a notoriously high-impact area

Build Cross-Departmental Support

Building support throughout your organization

Identify the Stakeholders You Need to Get on Board

You'll need support from across the organization—and beyond.

There are people throughout your organization who will need to be involved in sustainability. The facilities team will be shifting to sustainable practices internally. Your marketing/PR team will be managing public-facing messaging. Even customers may have a response.

You will also face pressure from external stakeholders, who may be asking for your carbon data or environmental reporting.

Building support begins with identifying your stakeholders and determining why sustainability will matter to them.

Primary Stakeholders



- Customers
- Employee
- Suppliers
- Investors
- Community partners
- Donor recipients

Secondary Stakeholders



- Media
- Government
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Creditors
- Industry Associations

Tailor Your Talking Points To Your Audience

Different departments, different needs: Focus on what matters to your audience.

Once you've identified your target stakeholders, it's time to think about how you approach them.

The good news:

Sustainable practices offer many business benefits as well. With a little research and planning, you can use that to your advantage.

- **Know what matters to each department/role.** Are they focused on revenue or technology? Brand image or productivity?
- **Customize your approach.** Focus on the issues and benefits that matter most to each department/role.
- **Speak in their language.** Use the same terms they use every day (see sidebar). Not sure what to say? Search on the department name or role and look for terms that will resonate.

Suggested Terms:

- Revenue
- Profitability
- Brand Image
- Risk
- Market Share
- Growth
- Innovation
- Productivity
- Time to Market

Prepare for Some Resistance to Your Request

Be respectful and listen to objections. Then, present your case.

Change can be difficult. You're asking people to leave their comfort zone and learn a new way of doing business.

Here are some tactics to help win them over:

- **Meet 1-to-1.** You'll occasionally need everyone within a department in the room. Otherwise, try to meet individually with key stakeholders and influencers.
- **Listen to their concerns.** Getting resistance? Ask questions to determine their concerns and/or fears. Stay positive and talk through their issues.
- **Bring in outside help.** Getting buy-in may be more difficult than you expected. An outside consultant or facilitator can provide additional support and resources to help drive the conversation forward.

Common Objections:

- Established habits
- Don't see need
- Don't want to learn
- Personal impact concerns
- Fear of the unknown
- Tried it before, "didn't work"

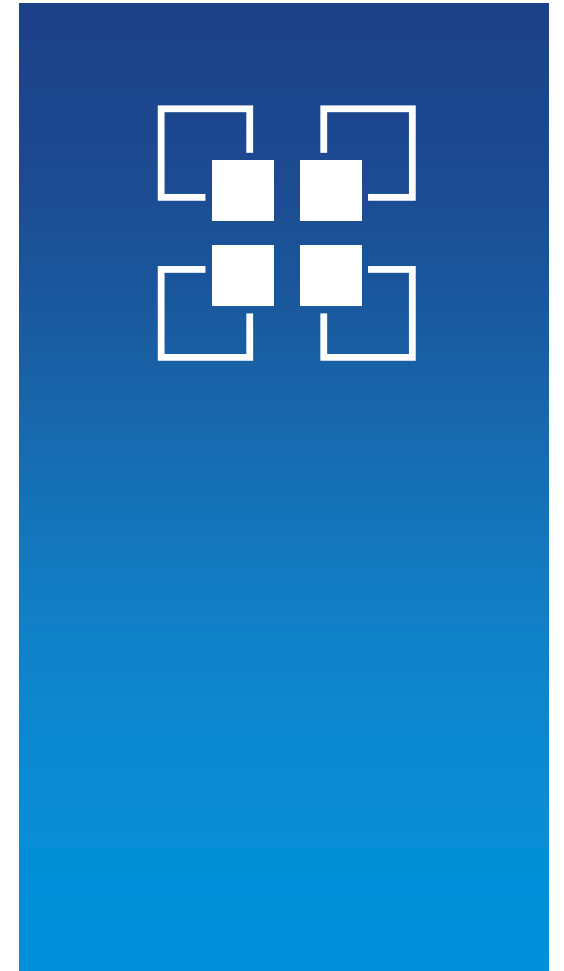
Start the Planning Process

Planning your change management approach

View Your Business Through a Sustainable SWOT Lens

Once you have buy-in, it's time to build an action plan. SWOT is a common business acronym meaning Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats.

We recommend developing a **Sustainability SWOT** to inform your capacity building strategy.



Considerations to Guide Your Actions

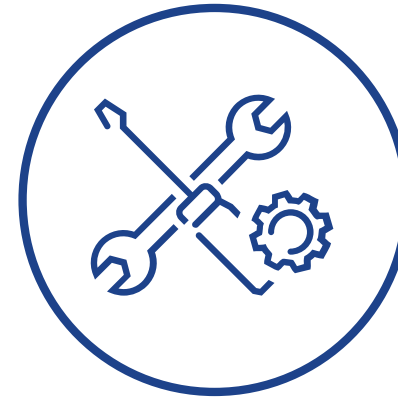
Taking time to understanding the current state is an invaluable exercise in the sustainability journey



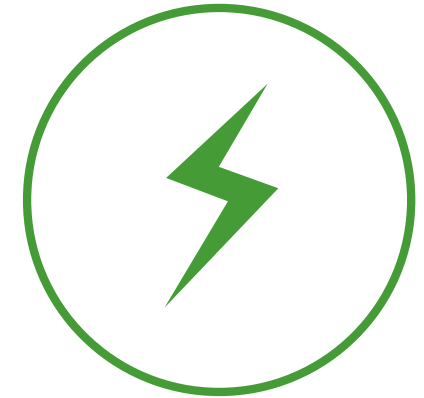
Where to put
resources toward
sustainability within
your organization



Who should be
involved in helping
create change (e.g.,
facilities, sales,
product, finance,
marketing, HR, etc.)



Which change
management tools
make the most
sense for your
sustainability efforts



How to
strategically
address climate
risk for your
organization

Sustainability SWOT

Here is an example of a SWOT that focuses on sustainability activities.

Strengths		Opportunities	
ASK:	What are unexpected ways we can apply our strengths to social/ environmental challenges?	ASK:	Where can we create new solutions for environmental challenges?
ASK:	Who works in our organization to do this today? What do our stakeholders say?	ASK:	Are there new, non-traditional teams we can create for new solutions?
		ASK:	What are our customers looking for?
Weaknesses/Risks		Threats/Consequences	
ASK:	Who else has similar weaknesses or faces similar risks from social/ environmental challenges?	ASK:	Where are social/environmental challenges creating broad threats to future business value?
ASK:	Who within our organization can work to address these risks?	ASK:	What is our long-term strategy to manage our business in a changing world?
ASK:	Is this something we can engage finance, investor relations, or others in a sustainability-focused risk management initiative?	ASK:	Who can help craft that strategy?

Capture Your Goals and Plans in a Shareable Roadmap

There are four change management processes that you can use to help build a roadmap from the actions in your SWOT. Sustainability capacity relies on all four approaches to succeed. Here are some ideas for structuring sustainability activities within each management process:

Collaboration Oriented	Control Oriented	Creative	Competitive
<p>Facilitating group brainstorming sessions</p> <p>Developing or improving from employee suggestion and feedback—employees often can provide keen insights into implementing sustainability within their own job</p> <p>Developing an online internal collaboration platform for sustainability activities</p>	<p>Understand relevant regulations and associated risk exposure</p> <p>Analyze or audit existing processes and environmental impacts (e.g., lifecycle analysis)</p> <p>Review existing policies for procedural inefficiencies and opportunities for sustainability</p>	<p>Use social media or crowd sourcing to generate new ideas faster</p> <p>Create training programs to cultivate sustainability thinking</p> <p>Empower intrapreneurs & corporate entrepreneurs to innovate</p> <p>Adopt a growth mindset where failure is seen as a learning opportunity</p>	<p>Establish goals, objectives, and measures based on company vision and standards</p> <p>Benchmark performance against initiatives of key competitors when it comes to sustainability</p> <p>Use competitive means for project idea generation; for example, a contest between individuals and teams</p>

Take the First Steps Towards a More Sustainable Organization

Making a difference in the fight against climate change begins with small steps. We've given you the basic tools you need to start making a difference within your organization. Now, it's time to act.



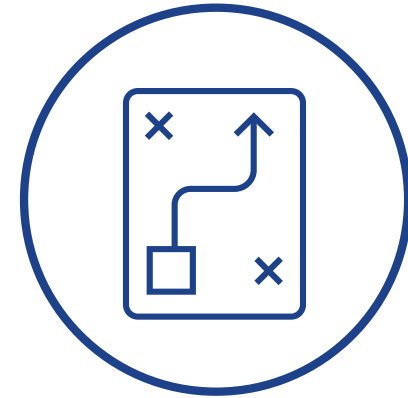
Find a champion

Get executive buy-in for your plans early in the process



Build internal support

Meet with key stakeholders to get their support



Start Planning

Develop foundational materials to inform longer-term plans

We Learned:

Sustainability is a successful function when people from across the organization participate, leadership buys in, and employees are empowered.

Finding a champion for sustainability is key to building momentum—especially in senior leadership

Learning how to speak to individuals in a language they understand is important—especially if you meet some resistance

Planning is vital to sustainability. Taking action through a variety of change management approaches helps you be successful