



# Engaging Your Team

Learning module

Reading Time: 25min

# Overview

## In this module, you will learn:

- Best practices for leading a sustainability initiative
- Understanding the scope of a sustainability team
- Options for structuring a team
- Pros and cons for utilizing internal vs. external staff
- Engaging your employees

# How Do You Build a Team?

Getting started when your organization lacks sustainability expertise



## **Businesses know that sustainability is an increasingly important part of their business model**

However, it can be daunting to assemble the expertise, bandwidth, and manpower to focus on growing a sustainability function. Many aspects of sustainability are technical and rapidly evolving, so hiring professionals with this skillset can be challenging. With changing regulations, customer expectations, and requests for environmental reporting—the time to resource sustainability is now.

### **Today, we'll introduce you to:**

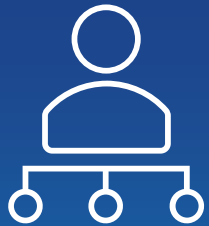
- The leadership mindset for a sustainability initiative
- Understanding the scope of a sustainability team
- Structuring a sustainability team
- Engaging your employees

# Leading a Sustainability Initiative

Effective leadership increases your potential for success

# Fostering Executive Level Accountability

Sustainability needs leadership that is supportive and sends clear messages through resources and actions.



Sustainability is more than just the right thing to do—it's an initiative that helps your organization stand out from the crowd and reap measurable benefits.

**Sustainability is not an add-on, “nice to have” function—it’s a fundamental shift in how you operate in today’s changing world.**

Executive-level accountability and leadership are essential. When senior leaders empower staff and promote sustainability, they send a clear message internally.

- Some leading companies are even tying executive and senior-level compensation to sustainability outcomes to send an even stronger signal throughout the organization
- Many leading companies make sustainability a core value

# Senior Leadership and Long-term Vision

Having a balanced perspective is important; there are a broad range of sustainability wins to be had. Some sustainability practices are easy to adopt quickly, while others take time and investment.

A complete sustainability practice includes environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. As the program matures, the longer-term benefits of sustainability knit together programmatically as you integrate across business areas.

- You don't have to do everything at once. You can tackle 'easy wins' first, and invest in longer term projects over time
- Investments to improve environment performance in facilities, retrofit or update technology, or consolidate suppliers can be large
- Other areas like diversity & inclusion (a social dimension of sustainability) are often lower cost and simpler to build in the immediate term

# Best Practices for Successful Executive Leadership

Key business principles that can increase your likelihood of a successful sustainability initiative

## DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES

Without step-wise goals, no plan can work. For example, if the goal is to develop science-based targets or reduce emissions by 30%, the first step is to develop a plan to uncover the carbon footprint of the company. A plan to make emission reductions would follow next.

## LOOK FOR EASY WINS

Begin with something small. For example, making it easier to recycle in the office or quantifying the waste your company generates. Seeing how easy it is to make a difference rewards early participants and provides talking points you can build on as you proceed. A consistent emphasis on incremental wins will keep you moving forward.

## ENGAGE THE SUPPLY CHAIN

No matter how good your own performance, supply chain sustainability will always be a challenge because you don't have direct control over your vendors. Be sure to keep perspective—this is typically the largest, most complex source of carbon emissions, ethics, and human rights violations. Addressing sustainability in the supply chain is a long-term endeavor.

## ALLOCATE RESOURCES

To make ongoing progress, you need to keep a growth mindset, where failure is an opportunity to learn. Major projects often need upfront investment, and continued resourcing over time—even if there are stumbles in the initial stages.



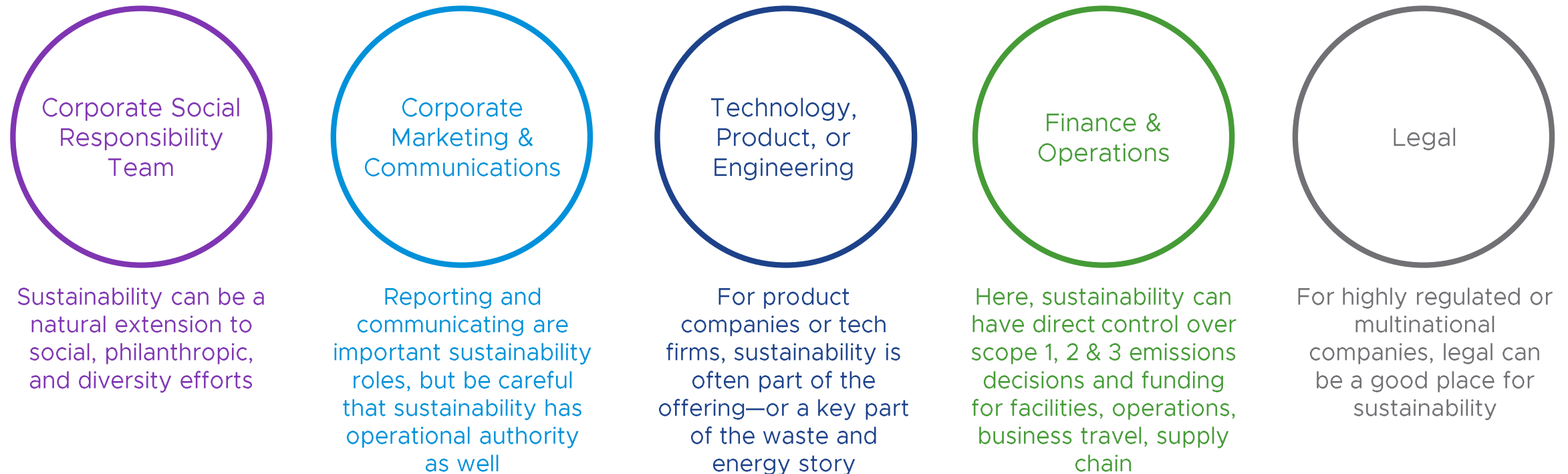
# Your Sustainability Team

Designing a sustainability function



# Where the Sustainability Team Should Reside In Your Organization

There is no single answer to this question—it depends on entirely on how your company is organized, the makeup of its leadership, culture and corporate priorities. The core function typically is created where it can have the most immediate business impact.



Sustainability may live in one department to start, and it may move to another as the function and sustainability journey matures. At the end of the day, no matter where the team lives, the team needs to be effective at engaging all departments.

# The Sustainability Team Must Work Cross-Functionally

Sustainability teams need to work effectively across multiple departments to engage teams, get buy-in and drive change. These are the typical roles they play across different functions.

## In Strategy, Finance & Operations

### Within strategic functions:

- Define sustainability strategy and monetize the business case
- Understand the company's distinctive risks and opportunities from a regulatory standpoint
- Manage expectations from investors, NGOs, customers, activists and strategic partnerships

### Operationally:

- Measure and manage qualitative and quantitative data for facilities
- Collect, calculate greenhouse gas emissions, track reductions, and manage environmental innovations and initiatives across facilities

## In Product Development & Supply Chain

### Within product functions:

- Understanding community context and risks where your product(s) are manufactured
- Managing your dependencies on raw materials and infrastructure for energy, water supply, and watershed conditions to avoid wasting or abusing resources

### In supply chain:

- Influencing your supply chain
- Designing products that deliver greater customer benefit with fewer resources
- Extending sustainability strategies upstream and downstream

## In Communications, Marketing, & Public Affairs

### Within communications functions:

- Tell your sustainability story in reports, internal and external communications, and through your brand
- Manage growing transparency and disclosure expectations and regulations
- Prioritize and engage stakeholders
- Map expectations and pursue strategic partnerships
- Influence and drive change management

# How to Extend the Sustainability Function Across Your Organization

The goal of a sustainability function is to help the company ensure its long-term future by protecting communities, restoring and conserving ecosystems, and creating competitive profit.

## Embed sustainability in everyone's jobs

In many companies, sustainability is increasingly included within traditional job descriptions.

**Examine your current management structure to see if you can incorporate accountability for specific sustainability actions into existing jobs.** If not, determine where and how it can be better entrenched across the organization as you hire.

## Enlist internal champions

**Identify employees and leaders** across the organization who are motivated to drive sustainability and have the skills and experience to do so—and **empower** them to expand their role in conjunction with the sustainability team.

## Be thoughtful about departmental ownership

It's essential to position your team within a department that implies seriousness of purpose and that reinforces that sustainability is a top priority.

If they are siloed in PR, for example, that may send a message that sustainability is 'greenwashing' or marketing, rather than a strategic or operational capacity.

# The most important takeaway:

Sustainability staff have a purview that spans across the organization. A common pitfall: isolating the sustainability team. **They need to work cross functionally to be successful**, especially if the company needs to set science-based targets or meet net zero goals.

These goals require all aspects of the business to address sustainability efforts.

# Structuring a Sustainability Team

Your choices will have a lasting impact on progress to goals



# Options for Building Your Team

There are three ways to staff your sustainability effort. In this section, we'll discuss the pros and cons of each one. We'll begin with an overview:



## In-house

Internal resources can be the best fit for your organization, given their unique institutional knowledge and perspective on processes and change management



## Outsourced / External

Experts can provide the “how” for implementing a successful strategy and staff up technical expertise quickly; external partners can also be helpful to tackle special projects and/or initiatives



## Hybrid

A team combining internal and external members may offer the best of both worlds; some organizations may also choose to start with an outsourced team to get operations stood up and slowly build an in-house resources to absorb the work as they build internal capacity



# Pros and Cons of an In-House Team

Because sustainability can be technical and complex, investing in dedicated sustainability staff can be an important part of building your sustainability strategy

## Why?

With unique insights into your organization, team members can often be more efficient, ensure continuity, and gain easier access to key stakeholders than outside hires.

Sustainability includes social, governance, ethical, and financial aspects of the business. Internal teams can work over longer time frames to integrate these considerations into a broader corporate strategy.

## Why not?

Staying abreast of trends, innovations, and emerging issues is challenging, especially when you are already managing operations, running strategic goal setting, measuring and reporting progress, and leveraging sustainability cross-functionally.

As your remit grows, your sustainability needs may require more specific expertise. This can be expensive to retain in-house.

Internal teams can be stymied by your company's organizational structure, outdated business practices, and workplace culture that is not in alignment with sustainability needs, or simply makes it harder to make progress quickly.

# Implications of Outsourcing Your Sustainability Team

Hiring a dedicated sustainability subject matter expert or retaining a partner consultancy offers a quick path to many essential and time-consuming parts of sustainability, such as reporting, managing data, and supplier engagement, and allows you to pick an expert to fill any gaps in your organizational knowledge.

## Why?

Specialized knowledge means that you have an expert who can help you build best-in-class sustainability programs and science-based targets right away.

An outsider view can offer broader perspective on complex issues.

External partners can often tackle specific, pointed problems that require certain expertise necessary for a particularly project.

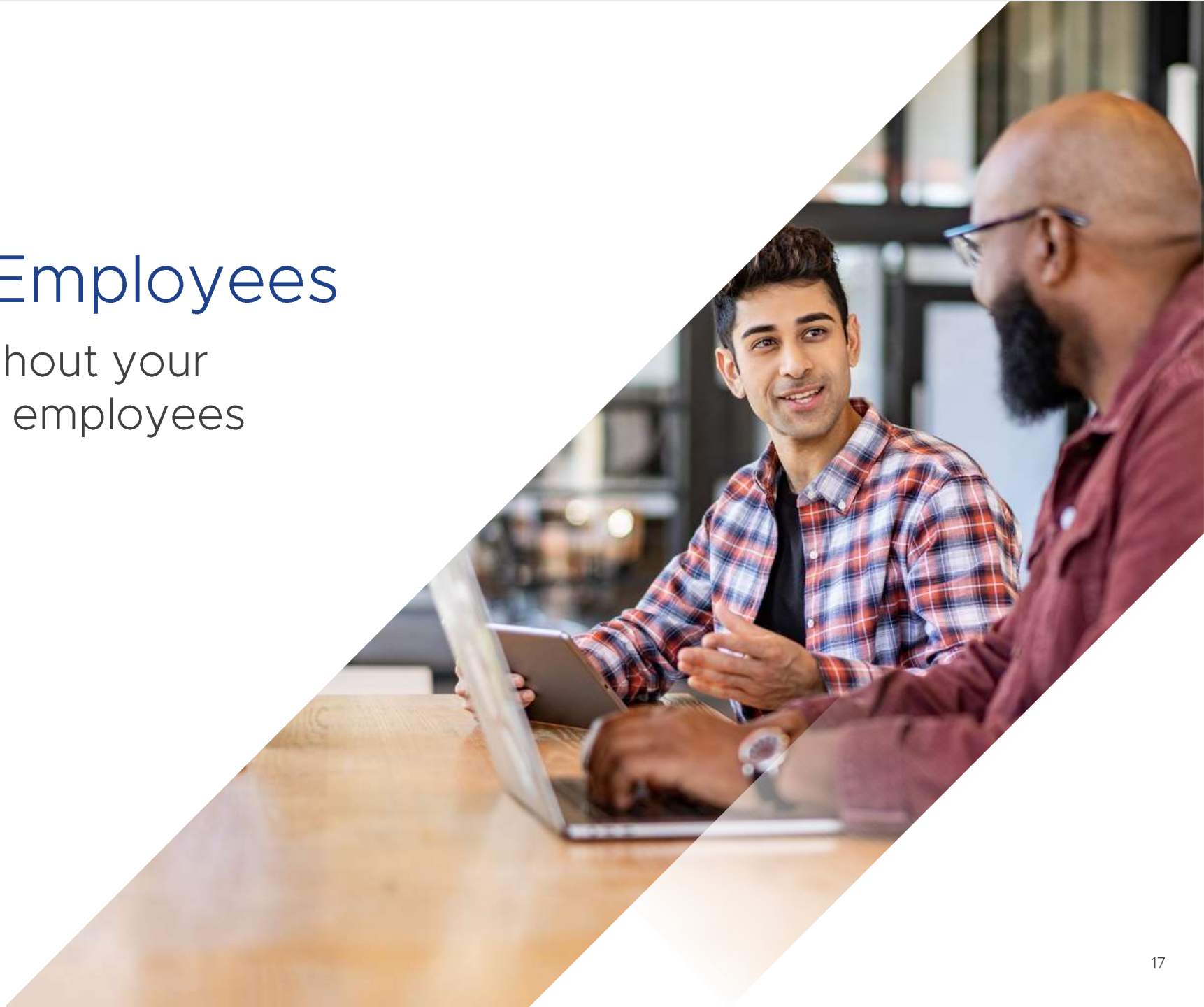
## Why not?

Consultant services can often come at a premium because they offer both the expertise and immediate resources needed to support your efforts; independent consultants can be less costly but can't scale if your needs grow beyond their individual capacity or expertise.

Sometimes sustainability consultants can have a hard time navigating within your organization and culture. Old practices might rub up against newer guidance, and met with resistance without strong internal sponsorship, making it more difficult for a consultant to succeed.

# Engaging Your Employees

Building support throughout your organization starts with employees



# Engaging Your Employees

Your employees care about your organization's sustainability efforts

The creation of a sustainability department almost always sparks an overwhelmingly positive response from employees.

The reality is that workers are often ahead of the game when it comes to environmental concern.

Even though most are excited to see their company embracing sustainability, few know what sustainability is, what this department does, or how to get involved.

83%

of workers thought their employer wasn't doing enough to be more sustainable and tackle climate change

65%

said they would be more likely to work for a company with strong environmental policies

# Create a 'Green Team'

Informal groups of employees working within an organization on grassroots sustainability efforts can be powerful change agents within your company.



**Building an in-house green team can break down company silos and facilitate employee-led change.**

Members **represent a variety of functions**. For example: operations, procurement, and management analysis; facilitation; budgeting; and project management. Ideally, they represent **different levels in the organization and a variety of skill sets**.

Their key functions:

- **Organize** and provide structure for sustainability initiatives
- **Champion** efforts and involve others
- **Support** the Sustainability Director

# Green Team Quick Wins & Best Practices

Get near-immediate and long-term results by implementing these tactics:

1

## Make changes in the office

Small things such as deploying lighting timers, instituting office recycling and composting, incentivizing public transit, and reducing business travel help keep sustainability top of mind during day-to-day operations. Implement consistent incentives and rewards for ideas and changes to daily operations can also engage your team.

2

## Incorporate sustainability into your everyday operations

For some companies, greening supply chains or reducing raw materials usage and waste will have immediate and obvious bottom-line benefits. Note that these tactics can require strategic planning and time to execute.

3

## Allow people to experiment and learn from failures

There is no ideal path forward; Becoming more sustainable takes trial and error.

4

## Make sustainability a two-way street

Encourage your workers, suppliers, and business partners to live sustainably both inside and outside the office.



# We Learned:

Sustainability staff intersect with nearly every level and aspect of the organization. Sustainability staff have a purview that spans across the organization.

- Nurture executive accountability in your business
  - Secure leaders and define your sustainability plans.
- Build your team
  - Assemble the right resources, whether insiders, outside experts, or both
- Engage other employees in the work
  - Invite employees throughout the company to participate through green teams