

# Sustainability through the human lens

Where can HR move the needle  
in the coming 12 months?

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HR is uniquely positioned to put people at the core of the organization's sustainability transformation and hardwire sustainability efforts into work, workforce and work environment to drive lasting change.

Recent conversations with Belgian CHROs who are also taking up the role of Sustainability Officers, reveal that there are a handful of areas where CHROs can move the needle. Let's take a closer look at **the non-regrettable moves** HR can make in their organization's sustainability transformation.

## LEADERSHIP

Investing in different dimensions of leadership to drive sustainability.

Buy-in and alignment from leadership on the importance, goal and ambition level is a first critical step. Often the alignment on the latter is missing: whereas leadership is often convinced of the importance of sustainability-efforts, they are **less aligned on the level of ambition**.

Leadership also entails **enabling leaders** to drive sustainability forward and **building sustainable leaders** who can drive the future business forward in a sustainable way.

Leadership and culture go hand in hand: leaders play a considerable part in role-modelling the desired behaviour and fostering the right mindset and culture. Leaders should help **shape a culture in which people take pride in sustainability**.

Lastly, leadership can also be about being a **pioneer** in sustainability and being **market-leading**.

*"We must take people's fear away: we are not taking away jobs. We'll still make donuts, but we will just make the healthiest donuts."*

*"We don't always have the conscious intent to do green: we sometimes do it because we have a product or innovation challenge, and we might not get access to resources if we are not doing or being green. I believe being more intentional about green skills will bring new opportunities."*



## GREEN SKILLS

### What is it?

Looking at green skills holistically, we define them as a set of technical and soft skills, as well as general knowledge and behaviours needed to tackle sustainability challenges and to create new, innovative opportunities for sustainable growth. Depending on the business you operate in, quite some 'green reskilling' will already happen on the job.

### What to focus on?

The general notion prevails that green skills are only relevant for a subset of jobs, typically STEM-related jobs, but actually we see that green skills will become relevant throughout the entire organization. A **conscious approach** to which skills to develop and how to apply them is key. When it comes to green skills, many organizations are still focusing on mitigating risk from sustainability rather than **maximizing and benefiting from its potential**. Having the conscious intent to be and do green will enable you to unlock your workforce's full potential.

Think and help your workers to **think holistically**: introducing new skills and knowledge requirements touches people personally and can leave them feeling insecure and unsure about their current capabilities and job security. This can cause friction and tensions. Enable your workers to think holistically and **see the bigger picture** so they understand why certain capabilities, skills, and knowledge are becoming increasingly important in the job they are doing and how they can implement it.

At the same time, it will not always require a massive knowledge change but in some areas a strategic **transfer of skills** can be impactful: same skill, same person but **applied in a different way**.

## BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

Sustainability isn't a choice... It's billions of them. Behavioural change isn't just about short-term gains but about addressing root causes to create the foundation for a better, sustainable future.

Traditional approaches tend to focus on raising awareness, providing more information and developing capabilities through information and education. But that does not always directly lead to the desired change in behaviour which is needed to become greener or sustainable.

Focus on changing behaviour rather than raising awareness seems evident but companies might not always be mature enough to drive behavioural change. Some things are initiated from **top-down** and can then be **used as a lever to drive behavioural change** forward, such as **clients' demands, certifications, regulation,...**

Making the change as easy as possible is a recipe for success. But be mindful and realistic about your employees' willingness to change as well as the fears they have.

## GREEN REWARDS

The right reward strategy for the road to sustainability

Including well-considered sustainability targets in leadership goalsetting and KPI setting is a **tangible incentive to make the right choices and drive behaviour**.

Make sure to **adjust green KPI setting to your target groups**: make it concrete so that people, teams, and departments, can concretely see what they are working towards and where they are making impact

HR has the imperative to co-drive the sustainability transformation and set the business and workforce up for a sustainable, successful future.



Prioritization remains key

Especially when navigating a complex regulatory and reporting landscape. But these compliance measures can serve as levers to accelerate change



Ecosystem-thinking

No company is an island: consider efforts to rally the entire value chain you operate in behind the same goal



Governance

Set up a committed and responsible corporate governance from the top

# We are happy to start a conversation!



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