

Advancing the human element of sustainability

Introduction

Enterprises' initial efforts to address sustainability issues have been largely driven by public relations or brand defence—with less regard for meaningful outcomes. More recent efforts, such as reducing emissions in operations or manufacturing, are producing real but incremental improvement at the fringes of the business. Now it's time to take the next step to achieve tangible outcomes by focusing on the human element. This involves sourcing people-enablers for sustainability in the organisation, planning for the right technical and human skills to address future sustainability demands, making work better for humans, and designing for human sustainability.



Remain viable in the marketplace

- Align leaders around the sustainability ambition, vision and goals and ensure their accountability to outcomes
- Strategically communicate to ensure internal (worker) and external (marketplace) visibility into leadership commitments and progress
- Provide your workforce with sustainability upskilling opportunities relevant to your industry and organisational strategy

Differentiate to gain competitive advantage

- Co-create your sustainability strategy with workers, customers, suppliers, and vendors
- Incorporate nudging activities, e.g., interventions to help people act in their own best interest, in your digital transformation journey
- Prioritise the “moments that matter” for human-technology collaboration, and the investments needed to address them
- Understand and address risks of humans and technology working together (e.g., configure technology to mitigate unconscious bias)

Lead the market by radically innovating and transforming

- Account for shifts in skills and expertise that will enable long-term sustainability capabilities within your workforce planning approach
- Design your work and working environment for human sustainability and account for the consequences on your workforce, the market, your community and society

Reach out to discuss any of these topics further



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SIGNALS: This trend applies to you if...



More is expected of your organisation



There is rising pressure from workers and other stakeholders that organisations have a clear vision for sustainability in all they do

You need to report on your impact



Your regulators and shareholders are requiring more transparent reporting on human, environmental, and societal measures

You need to differentiate from competitors



You want to demonstrate to your workers and customers how your organisation creates value in society

You're unsure how to measure this work



Your organisation is struggling to measure the ROI of sustainability efforts

Practical Points – How to go about it

Setting aside both internal and external stakeholder pressures and wider societal needs, the benefits to your businesses for growing your readiness to lead on these issues is clear. You need to develop a sustainability strategy and put a supporting organisational structure and operating model in place, hardwiring the sustainability strategy into your business practices, workforce practices, and your work itself.

To accomplish this, organisations should consider the following actions:

- **Develop a sustainability mindset:** To increase the sustainability fluency of your workers, incentivise workers to think and approach business decisions with a sustainability lens
- **Review your value propositions for workers:** Create and develop “good jobs” that take a holistic approach to work, where the health, safety, and well-being of your workers is prioritised and where work output contributes to sustainability outcomes
- **Assess the sustainability skills your organisation needs:** Plan for the skills and capabilities (both technical and human in nature) needed to operate in a sustainability-forward culture and future
- **Define your strategic value:** Value environmental stewardship and human sustainability (e.g., making work better for humans)