



9 IDEAS

FOR BUILDING A CULTURE OF AUTHENTIC SUSTAINABILITY IN YOUR BUSINESS.

WHY YOU NEED A CULTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY.

Let's get something clear: sustainability should never have been an option. It's not a perk, a trend, or an add-on. If a business isn't sustainable—or at least genuinely working towards it—it's a business that's living on borrowed time.

Sustainability is the bare minimum we should expect from any organisation. In fact, any company that doesn't align its operations with environmental and societal responsibility probably shouldn't be operating in the first place. And we're not talking about the kind of "sustainability" that's just a veneer of eco-friendly marketing; we're talking about a culture rooted in authenticity, where sustainability is baked into the way the business thinks, behaves, and leads - from the boardroom to the breakroom, your brand should reflect a genuine commitment to the environment and society. Without this cultural foundation, sustainability efforts risk becoming disjointed, inauthentic, or purely superficial.

Here are nine ideas to spark and flame a culture of sustainability in your business.



YOU NEED A CHAMPION.

Leadership might lay down the vision, but you need someone to live and breathe it—daily. Every sustainability initiative needs a champion, someone who is accountable and relentless.

This isn't the job you give to Bob from accounting just because he's good with spreadsheets and occasionally uses a reusable coffee cup.

Your sustainability champion has to be someone with the clout to push initiatives forward, keep the team engaged, and yes, gently remind leadership that empty promises do more harm than good.

Without a champion, sustainability risks becoming a box ticking exercise in your annual report.

No one ever won a race without a coach, and no business ever built a culture of sustainability without someone leading the charge.





CARE FOR YOUR PEOPLE FIRST.



Sustainability falls flat if you're not caring for your employees first. You can't expect people to think about the planet if their own well-being is overlooked.

Only when your team feels valued and supported can they start to focus on making a wider impact. So, before you dive into green initiatives, ask yourself: do you truly know your people?

Do you understand the communities your staff live in, the challenges they face, or whether conditions in those areas could be improved?

Are you supporting your team with reliable transport options, especially for those who rely on public infrastructure?

How about your company culture—are your employees empowered, respected, and managed fairly? Are workloads humane, or is burnout the norm?

Sustainability starts at home. If you're not addressing the well-being of your staff, no recycling program or carbon offset initiative will mask that shortcoming. Take care of your people, and they'll naturally extend that care to others—and the planet.

GET CLEAR ON YOUR COMPANY'S PURPOSE.

A clear company purpose is the backbone of everything your business stands for. It's what drives your team, giving them a reason to show up beyond the paycheck.

Without a well-defined purpose, sustainability efforts can feel aimless and disconnected. Think of your purpose as a North Star—a guide to ensure everyone is aligned and on course. Is your team clear on why your company exists and the impact it's striving to make? Does this purpose resonate with them on a deeper level? When everyone knows the "why," it becomes much easier to chart the "how"—whether it's through sustainable practices, community engagement, or ethical leadership.

Bonus Tip: If Your Purpose Doesn't Serve the Planet, It's Time for a Review

The fact is that no business driven solely by self-interest will endure. Every company, in some fundamental way, depends on nature and society—and cannot thrive in isolation from them. Whether it's the resources you consume or the communities you rely on, your business is interconnected with the world around it. If your purpose doesn't acknowledge and serve these primary stakeholders, it's time to rethink it. A purpose that fails to contribute to the well-being of the planet and society is not only short-sighted but unsustainable in the long run. If your purpose is purely profit-driven, it's not a purpose—it's a business plan.



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SET CLEAR AND ACHIEVABLE TARGETS.

Targets are the compass that guides your sustainability efforts. Without them, you're aiming at nothing and hoping for the best.

The key is setting goals that are specific, measurable, and realistic—broad ambitions won't cut it. Concrete targets, like reducing carbon emissions by 20% in two years or reducing energy usage by 50% by 2025, give your team something clear to work towards.

Targets are more than benchmarks—they create accountability.

They force action, helping you track progress, make adjustments, and ensure sustainability isn't just a buzzword, but a business priority that everyone has visibility of.

Make your goals ambitious but grounded in reality.



5» UNDERSTAND THE ‘WHY’ BEHIND YOUR TARGETS.

Targets are meaningless if no one knows why they're important. Reducing your energy use or cutting waste isn't about improving next quarter's profit margins—it's about making a tangible impact on the planet.

It's about realising that if we don't change, we're part of the problem.

And let's be clear—this is not about giving your team a lecture on carbon footprints. People need to see that meeting these targets is about more than good PR or balancing the books.

Your team need to understand that hitting these goals means they're making a real contribution to something larger.

When employees understand the “why,” they'll see the work as meaningful, not just mechanical. Without that understanding, you're left with numbers on a spreadsheet that inspire little more than a collective shrug.





FOSTER A PERSONAL AND AUTHENTIC CONNECTION WITH NATURE.



Sustainability means nothing if it feels like a distant concept.

If people don't feel connected to the natural world or the society they're impacting, all your sustainability efforts are going to feel about as personal as a corporate memo.

To cultivate real engagement, you need to help your team form a direct connection with nature and the community.

This isn't about dragging everyone into a weekend tree-planting retreat (though, to be fair, that's not a terrible idea #Greenpop). It's about giving your team opportunities to experience firsthand why sustainability matters.

Host workshops on conservation, organise volunteer days, or sponsor experiences that open their eyes to the fragility and beauty of the environment - these can even be done in your office.

Because once people have a felt connection and understand what's at stake, they stop seeing sustainability as a corporate initiative and start seeing it as a personal responsibility, and perhaps calling.



ASK ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY WHEN HIRING.



Hiring isn't just about filling roles—it's about bringing people into your company who align with its values.

If sustainability is a core value, it needs to be part of the conversation from the start. When interviewing candidates, ask them how they view sustainability. Do they see it as a necessary responsibility, or is it just another corporate trend to them?

And more importantly, don't forget to tell them about your company's purpose and gauge how that resonates with them.

Candidates should know that sustainability is a core part of how you operate.

If their idea of sustainability is dropping their recycling in the right bin once in a while, it's probably best to keep looking. After all, you're not just building a team; you're building a culture—and that starts with finding people who genuinely care.



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CELEBRATE SUCCESSES AND GROW FROM FAILURES.



Sustainability isn't a sprint, it's a marathon—one where the finish line keeps moving.

So, when you hit a milestone, celebrate it. Recognise your team's hard work, whether it's reaching a 20% reduction in waste or shifting to sustainable suppliers. These victories matter, and they keep everyone motivated to keep pushing forward.

But let's be real—sometimes, things will go wrong.

Maybe an initiative flops, or your energy-saving plan doesn't hit its target.

That's fine. Learn from it, be transparent about what didn't work, and move on. Sustainability isn't about perfection; it's about progress. As long as you're learning and adapting, you're still moving in the right direction.



COLLECTING DATA IS ABOUT MORE THAN NUMBERS.



Data is essential—you need to know where you're starting, where you're going, and how much progress you're making.

But here's the thing: data collection isn't just about filling out a corporate report—it's about gaining visibility into how your actions are affecting both your business and the planet.

Without this insight, you're flying blind. Data collectors are like pilots then, playing a pivotal role in ensuring your business stays on course and makes a positive impact.

The goal isn't to impress shareholders with a pretty graph—it's to make sure your efforts are actually making a difference.

And when your team understands that data collection is about supporting the planet, not just checking boxes, the entire exercise becomes far more meaningful. Because really, no one should get excited about tracking metrics unless those metrics are helping to improve the planet and its inhabitants lives.



A culture of sustainability isn't something you bolt onto your business for good optics—it's the foundation of how any business worth its salt should operate.

If your sustainability initiatives are purely driven from compliance, or are reactionary, or solely performative, it is unlikely that they be valued by your stakeholders. However if you embed sustainability into your purpose and culture —by giving it a champion, setting clear targets, and helping your team make a personal connection to the cause—you'll not only build a resilient, forward-thinking company, but you'll also contribute to something far bigger than the bottom line.

