

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS

What is environmental sustainability?

Environmental sustainability is the practice of interacting with the planet in a responsible manner to conserve biodiversity and natural resources for future generations without giving up social and economic advancement.

Why is environmental sustainability important for business?

Environmentally sustainable practices present few or no risks to business operations, can potentially improve profitability through the reduction of expenses, and can provide a competitive edge for attracting customers and investors.

PRODUCT SELECTION ACTIONS

› Identify what sustainability means to your brand and your consumers

- Sustainability is of increasing importance to consumers, and it encompasses a broad range of topics across social responsibility, sustainable business practices, sustainable packaging, etc. Identify the attributes that resonate most with your brand and consumers. Research studies suggest that consumers are willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly products, sometimes as high as 60%.

› Identify products that meet your market needs and growth strategy

- Sustainably developed products reduce the impact on the environment, address social issues, improve the livelihoods of individuals and communities, improve your business' reputation, build consumer loyalty, encourage repeat purchases, and elevate responsible consumer consumption.

› Source sustainable brands and products

- Stock your store with products from brands that follow sustainable business practices. Developing a [sustainable purchasing guide](#) will help staff determine the best method to procure goods or services.

FACILITIES ACTIONS

› Energy, water, and waste benchmarking/audits

- Complete an audit of energy, water, and waste that will help you identify problems and risk areas, set targets to reduce waste, and improve your financial performance. You can contact your utility suppliers (many offer these as a free service) and ask that they conduct an audit on your business or use [Energy Star's Portfolio Manager](#).

› Find ways to reduce your carbon footprint for your business and in supply chain

- Investing in sustainability initiatives to measure and track the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of your business shows your commitment to sustainability. A GHG Accounting is becoming required by more business partners and governments.

› Upcycle or donate unsold products

- Upcycling is when you transform waste materials, byproducts, or unwanted merchandise into new materials or products. When you have left over stock, instead of dumping it, look into ways to upcycle it. Whether it is reused to create new products, upcycling helps reduce waste.

› Go paperless

- Email invoices/receipts. You save money and resources, while your partners and customers will appreciate having one less piece of paper.

› Highlight sustainability aspects for your customers and employees

- Once you understand what sustainability means across your product portfolio and brand identity, you can. Identify ways to feature sustainability in-store and online. For example, provide in-store resources to help your consumers recycle old products/containers.

SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS

What is social sustainability?

Social sustainability refers to equality, well-being, and balance across quality-of-life indicators between sociocultural groups over time and from one generation to the next. From a business perspective, social sustainability is about understanding the impacts of corporations on people and society. Purpose-driven companies not only offer a product or service but develop programs that have a social and/or environmental impact, while also benefiting from them.

Why is social sustainability important?

Employees, suppliers, and partners who feel respected and safe are more loyal and productive. For example, according to a [2018 CONE survey](#), 88% of consumers say they would buy a brand from a purpose driven business. Another [research study](#) showed a 16% increase to employee productivity in business' that had voluntarily adopted sustainable practices.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS

› **Employee survey**

- Identify the skills, knowledge, and attitudes of the company's employees and what internal barriers exist

› **Lunch and Learn sessions**

- Offer a sociable and collaborative learning / knowledge sharing experience to encourage teamwork and cooperation, while helping to break down silos.

› **Employee contests with prizes**

- Incentivized walking challenges, most volunteer hours, sales targets, etc. can increase employee engagement, loyalty, and retention while encouraging activity and employee bonding.

› **Recognition programs**

- Show employees that the company values them and their contributions. Build employees' sense of security and motivate them to continue great work.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION (DEI) ACTIONS

› **Ensure that you and your whole team understand the difference between diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

› **Solicit diverse suppliers**

- Demonstrate your company's commitment to your community's economic growth by seeking small and diverse businesses (minority-owned, women-owned, LGBT-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, etc.). Help inspire innovation, drive competitiveness, provide opportunity to penetrate new markets, and attract new customers

› **Audit your hiring process**

- Ask yourself: Who is involved in defining job requirements and hiring criteria? Do you ensure your criteria do not shift? Where do you publicize your jobs? Who is involved in each step of the hiring process? How can people with disabilities to request accommodations?

› **Choose the metric(s) you wish to improve. Measure your baseline. Set goals.**

- For example, increase by 10% the number of people of color in management positions in the next year.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACTIONS

› **Paid volunteer days with local organizations**

- Build relationships with and give back to the community, build brand recognition, increase sales, improve your employees' mental and physical health, teach employees new skills, and facilitate a sense of purpose. For more information, please read about [Engaging Employees and Your Local Community to Improve Business Resiliency](#).

› **Mentoring young professionals interested in entrepreneurship, retail, or pet industry**

- Help local community members learn more about the pet industry, develop their professional skills, and improve performance in their current jobs.

For more information on how to engage people in the important work of increasing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in our workplaces please read [7 Practices to Improve Diversity & Inclusion](#).