



ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

A guide to effective sustainability
communications

WELCOME

to amfori's guide
to effective
sustainability
communications

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ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

A view from amfori

Together with our members, we strive for open and sustainable trade. In the last 40 years, we've witnessed the corporate sustainability landscape shift dramatically. In terms of operations but also communications.

Today's stakeholders, such as governments, consumers or buyers, expect companies to go well beyond compliance and to articulate how they're addressing major global challenges, from climate change to modern slavery. It's no longer enough to minimise your impacts. You must show how you contribute to a better future for people and the environment.

As sustainability has become a mainstream business concern, more and more companies are communicating their stories. Leading businesses are open about the challenges they face, and explain the important work they do to address complex social and environmental issues.

By communicating their efforts authentically, they demonstrate credibility, and earn greater trust and recognition among stakeholders.

As an amfori member, you can realise these benefits by communicating your actions. Through your membership, you're already taking meaningful steps to manage impacts in your supply chain and are part of a community which believes in open and sustainable trade. Communicating this can unlock endless possibilities, and drive further positive change across your business.

This guide outlines the benefits of communicating what you are doing, sets out specific steps you can take, and explores different channels you can use to tell your sustainability story.

We encourage all our members, regardless of your size or where you operate, to consider how you can unlock the endless possibilities of communicating sustainability.

Let's get started.

Stéphanie Luong – Vice President – Public Affairs
amfori

ENHANCING YOUR SUSTAINABILITY STORY

A view from Radley Yeldar*

Sustainability reporting and communications have come a long way. Historically, sustainability communications were largely a compliance exercise focused on ticking boxes for regulators. In recent years, we've seen companies completely rethink their communications approach.

Today, companies are connecting with diverse audiences on more sustainability issues than ever before. Businesses are telling their sustainability stories in an exciting way, successfully engaging both sustainability experts through data, evidence and performance targets, as well as the wider public through coherent sustainability narratives.

Organisations are looking to engage more people, and to make sustainability accessible and understandable for everyone. To do so, they're using the full range of communications channels available to ensure their message lands.

In the last few years, we've supported more companies with single issue communication campaigns, on topics as diverse as human rights, to the gender pay gap, and plastic waste. Some of this is driven by legislation, but it also reflects changing societal expectations, and a growing trend for transparent, authentic communications.

Communicating your sustainability journey is very achievable. It's something you can build into your existing corporate communications. By sharing your challenges as well as your successes, you'll build trust and credibility through the eyes of your stakeholders.

We're delighted to share our expertise with amfori members within this important guide. We hope it helps your business develop a sustainability story that truly reflects your impact on the world, and inspires you to keep talking about what you're doing.

Louise Ayling – Stakeholder Engagement Director

* Radley Yeldar is an independent, London-based brand, marketing and communications agency who partnered with amfori to create this guide.



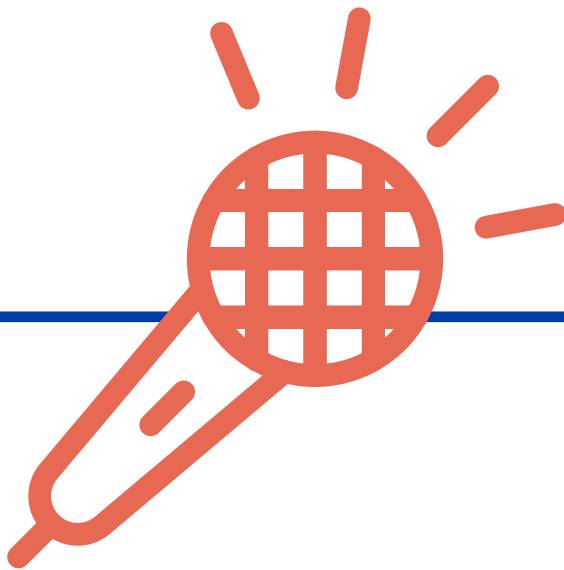
SECTION 2:

WHY COMMUNICATE?

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BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS



Sustainability issues are converging with the mainstream business agenda. Increasing recognition of business's role in building a fair and sustainable world has created significant opportunities for companies that can demonstrate their sustainability credentials.

Communicating your sustainability programme can unlock huge benefits, whether you're a large multinational or a small local business. Well-crafted communications can be a powerful tool, from engaging employees and helping to drive change internally, to sparking stakeholders' interest in the big milestones you're meeting on your sustainability journey. It can also help you increase competitive advantage as your position on social and environmental issues differentiates you from your peers.

Communicating your sustainability efforts will also help you address growing challenges, such as new reporting regulations, declining consumer trust in brands and closer scrutiny from investors.

It's now the norm for companies to communicate their sustainability progress. While there are regional differences, one global survey of sustainability reporting shows that 75% of companies across 49 countries report on their efforts.¹

As an amfori member, you are working towards having open and sustainable trade as part of your business's ethos. You've invested time and resources in establishing your sustainability programme, but you may not be reaping the full benefit of those investments if you're not proactively communicating the progress you've made.

Be proud of your efforts, share your progress and embrace sustainability communication as a way to also differentiate your company.

On the following pages we set out some of the key benefits of sustainability communications.

1. <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2017/10/kpmg-survey-of-corporate-responsibility-reporting-2017.pdf>

BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS CONTINUED

Sustainability communications can bring your business many benefits, and help you stand out from your competitors. People increasingly prefer sustainable brands, with a third of consumers choosing to buy from brands they believe are doing social or environmental good.²

#1 RISE ABOVE THE REGULATION

25%

increase in reporting requirements in 25 years

- Meet growing sustainability reporting requirements
- Respond to mandatory and voluntary rules and guidelines from governments, financial regulators and stock exchanges
- Stay ahead of issue-based regulations and guidance

#2 BE A CHANGE-MAKER

6/10

For 6/10 millennials a sense of purpose is part of the reason they chose to work for their current employers⁴

- Harness the potential for sustainability communications to drive change inside your organisation
- Engage employees in your sustainability strategy

#3 SUPERCHARGE YOUR REPUTATION

81%

of global consumers feel strongly that companies should help improve the environment³

- Build your reputation
- Maintain your license to operate
- Proactively manage customers' perceptions

#4 MEET EVOLVING INVESTOR EXPECTATIONS

60%

of investment board members say they'd divest from companies with poor sustainability performance⁵

- Meet investors' evolving expectations
- Demonstrate your business's response to social and environmental risks and opportunities

2. <https://www.unilever.com/news/press-releases/2017/report-shows-a-third-of-consumers-prefer-sustainable-brands.html>
 3. <https://www.nielsen.com/uk/en/insights/news/2018/global-consumers-look-for-companies-that-care-about-environmental-issues.html>
 4. <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/gx-wef-2015-millennial-survey-executivesummary.pdf>
 5. <https://corporate-citizenship.com/2016/09/22/long-term-value-investor-relations-corporate-responsibility/>

BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS CONTINUED

#1 RISE ABOVE THE REGULATION

Sustainability reporting requirements are on the rise.

Regardless of where you operate, it's likely that governments, financial regulators or stock exchanges have set out sustainability reporting rules and recommendations that affect you.

This trend is not likely to reverse any time soon, so it's critical to understand what your business must do and disclose. By complying with mandatory and voluntary reporting requirements today, you're also better positioned to respond to new regulatory requirements tomorrow. Staying ahead of reporting requirements - such as the EU Non-Financial Reporting Directive, and South Africa's King Code - also helps you increase transparency and avoid scrutiny.

The increase in issue-based legislation for example, requiring companies to explain how they exercise their human rights due diligence is another trend to watch closely.

For amfori members seeking to trade with purpose, issues such as modern slavery in supply chains and gender equality are relevant and evolving rapidly.

IN THE LAST 25 YEARS, THE NUMBER OF SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS WORLDWIDE HAS INCREASED MORE THAN TEN-FOLD⁵

i Making sense of the maze of mandatory and voluntary requirements can seem daunting: we set out further guidance on page 14.



#2 BE A CHANGE-MAKER

It's easy to focus on sustainability communications as something you do for people outside your business.

But this misses the enormous potential for sustainability communications to drive change on the inside.

Your sustainability story is a great route to engaging your employees. It can build employees' sense of purpose and pride in what you collectively do, and it motivates them to achieve your strategy and goals. You'll also improve your employer value proposition and attract the best talent, as people increasingly want to work for companies who have a purpose beyond profit. Three-quarters of millennials in the US consider a company's social and environmental commitments when deciding where to work and close to two-thirds won't take a job at a company that has weak sustainability practices.⁶



A well-honed communications strategy can be a vital component of your business's sustainability strategy and help you achieve your goals. Knowing what you want to be able to tell the world about your sustainability story in one, five, or fifteen years' time, can focus minds and resources on building the policies, data systems, executive buy-in and partnerships you need to get there. Publicly disclosing sustainability goals and targets allows stakeholders to hold you accountable, further strengthening internal momentum.

6/10

For 6/10 millennials a sense of purpose is part of the reason they chose to work for their current employers

5. https://www.cdsb.net/sites/default/files/cdsb_report_1_esg.pdf
6. <http://millennialemployeeengagement.com/>

BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS CONTINUED

#3 SUPERCHARGE YOUR REPUTATION

Trust in business is at an all-time low. You're doing everything right, but do your customers or business partners know?

Communicating your sustainability efforts will build positive sentiment towards your company. Over time, this translates into increased brand value and credibility, more loyal customers and deepened trust in your business.

BECOMING A SUSTAINABILITY LEADER IN YOUR INDUSTRY CAN RAISE YOUR PROFILE AND BRING YOU GREATER RECOGNITION THROUGH AWARDS AND MEDIA COVERAGE.

It also helps you maintain that all-important license to operate: society's overall approval of a company's activities and objectives. Without this, a business can face widespread backlash and opposition to its plans from regulators, civil society organisations or the public.

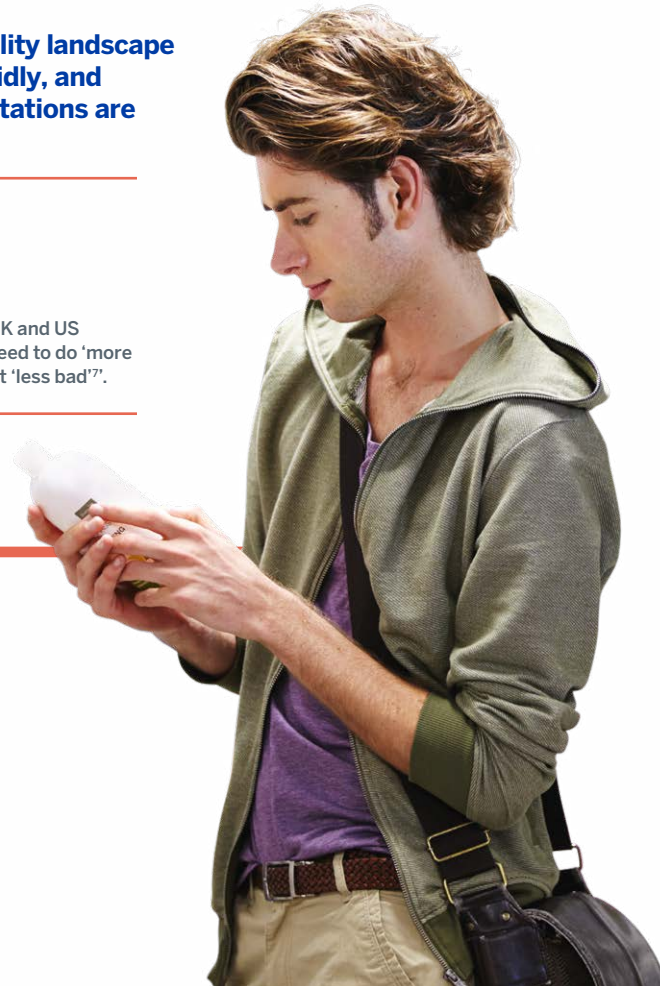
By proactively articulating your sustainability story, you can influence customers perceptions. Set out your sustainability strategy and progress in your own words, so you can direct customer attention towards the great progress you're making.

#4 MEET EVOLVING STAKEHOLDER EXPECTATIONS

The sustainability landscape is evolving rapidly, and investor expectations are keeping pace.

81%

of millennials in the UK and US believe that brands need to do 'more good', rather than just 'less bad'⁷.



Consumers expect more from companies, whether it's taking the lead on social and environmental issues, or acting with greater honesty and transparency. There is a growing preference for brands which are seen as sustainable, and revealingly, 88% of millennials in the UK and US believe that brands need to do 'more good,' rather than just 'less bad'.⁷ For companies that keep quiet, consumers may assume silence reflects a lack of progress on the issues they care about. Today's consumers are also savvy and increasingly unsatisfied with sweeping statements – they seek evidence of the benefits and impact of sustainability programmes.

Investors are also demanding greater transparency on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues and other non-financial risks, while some 60% of investment board members say they'd divest from companies with a poor sustainability performance.⁸

It's clear that businesses are increasingly scrutinised on how they minimise social and environmental risks such as human rights issues in the supply chain, or mitigating climate change.

And while this rapidly evolving sustainability landscape presents some clear risks to overcome, the opportunities are endless for companies that are poised to respond. This is reflected in the positive role businesses can play in contributing to the transformative agenda framed by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). Companies who are thought leaders on the challenges we collectively face can educate the public and raise awareness about the importance of sustainability.

7. https://altagamma.it/media/source/2016-Predictions-for-the-Luxury-Industry-Sustainability-Innovation_ridotto_1.pdf
 8. <https://corporate-citizenship.com/2016/09/22/long-term-value-investor-relations-corporate-responsibility/>

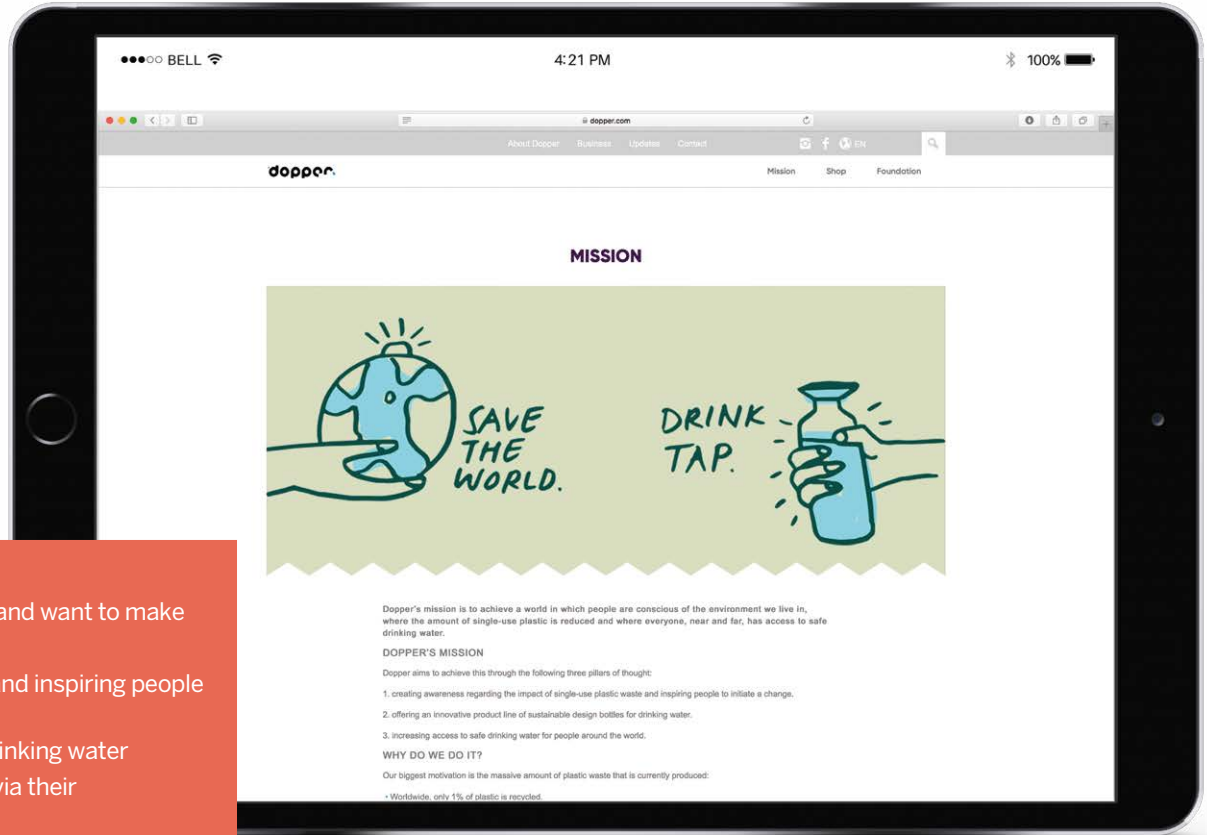
BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS CONTINUED

CASE STUDY – Dopper



The company, in a nutshell

Dopper dreams of crystal clear water. In every ocean. From every tap. To help achieve this dopper makes reusable tap water bottles. With every bottle sold they aim to reduce plastic pollution, protect our oceans and support projects to bring clean drinking water where people need it the most.



The challenge

More and more consumers are becoming aware of the plastic problem, and want to make an individual change. Dopper aims to help by:

1. creating awareness regarding the impact of single-use plastic waste and inspiring people to initiate a change
2. offering an innovative product line of sustainable design bottles for drinking water
3. increasing access to safe drinking water for people around the world via their dopper foundation.

The solution

Through approachable and 100% mission driven communication on this issue, Dopper sheds light on the consequences of plastic waste and the importance of clean tap water. Through the use of interactive campaigns and clear and simple messages, dopper consumers can understand how they can concretely reduce their use of plastic water bottles and how important it is.

Together with the community, Dopper has already saved 42.434.140 kg of single-use plastic water bottles. Dopper have been able to achieve significant change, by communicating authentically and getting consumers to buy into their mission.

[▶ Find out more about Dopper](#)



SECTION 3:

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

As an amfori member you're investing precious time and effort in developing your sustainability programme and embedding social and environmental concerns into the way your business operates. By laying this solid foundation, you're in a great position to take the next step and start communicating all your efforts.

What you communicate will need to be authentic, credible and trusted. To achieve this, you'll need to look inside and outside your business and reflect on the current state of your sustainability journey.

Identify what's expected of you by governments, regulators and other stakeholders. Compare your sustainability positioning with your peers and make sure you're on top of industry trends that might affect your business today, and in years to come. Talk to people that have a stake in the future of your business, including customers, investors, suppliers and staff, to understand their priorities and ensure that what you're saying resonates with your audiences.

In this chapter we outline three steps to take before you develop your sustainability communications plan.

IN THIS SECTION:

#1 ASSESS YOUR MATURITY

Ensure your sustainability story is authentic and reflects your performance
Page 13

#2 SCAN YOUR HORIZONS

Understand the regulatory landscape, your peers' sustainability positioning and the wider context for your communications
Page 14

#3 ENGAGE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

Identify and connect with your audiences and build credibility
Page 18

#1 ASSESS YOUR MATURITY

Every sustainability story should be built on the foundation of credibility.

Reflect on the current state of play of sustainability within your organisation, to understand how mature your approach is in the market and make sure what you're saying is authentic. This will help you craft the right messages and refine your communications plan.

Consumers and business partners want brands to walk the sustainability talk. Don't fall foul of potential cries of 'greenwashing' – where your sustainability claims don't stack up with your performance.

Greenwashing is when a company disseminates disinformation to present an environmentally or socially responsible public image, but has not taken meaningful actions to become a

more responsible business. Every company approaches sustainability in a different way as there's no single formula for being a better business. You might be starting your sustainability journey and tackling the most important issues first, while other companies might be more advanced and have spent years embedding sustainability across their business. There's nothing wrong with communicating your sustainability journey and performance, even if you're new to it. Stakeholders will welcome transparency, as long as what you say is truthful and grounded in real evidence. Shout about your efforts: just don't try to present your organisation as something it's not.

Getting started: key questions to understand your current status

History

- How long have you been taking action on sustainability? Is sustainability new for your company, or is it established in your business?
- For how long have you been a member of amfori and what improvements have you been working on?

Strategy

- What issues does your sustainability strategy cover? Are all material topics addressed in your strategy?
- Does your approach go beyond monitoring compliance with basic standards?
- Do you have well-defined sustainability ambitions and milestones to reach your goals? Is everyone in your organisation aware of your targets?

Performance

- Can you measure the scope and impact of your sustainability programmes?
- Do you have processes in place to monitor, measure and report on progress?

Governance

- Are senior executives on board with your programme? Are they comfortable talking about your sustainability initiatives?
- Have you dedicated sufficient resources to achieve your sustainability goals?
- What mechanisms do you have to engage with stakeholders and take feedback on board?

Use this check-list to get started

#2 SCAN YOUR HORIZONS

Getting started: tools to identify reporting requirements

- amfori has an online [Country Due Diligence tool](#). The tool assesses the risk of sourcing in different countries according to social, environmental and political benchmarks.
- The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)'s [Reporting Exchange](#) covers ESG reporting requirements and resources in 70 sectors and 60 countries, as well as mandatory regulations, voluntary standards and stock exchange listing requirements.
- The 'Carrots & Sticks' database from UNEP, GRI, KPMG and The Centre for Corporate Governance in Africa covers almost 400 reporting instruments in 64 countries.
- The [Sustainable Stock Exchange](#) database lists exchanges around the world that have ESG requirements for listed companies, or have introduced voluntary requirements or guidance.

A. Understand the regulatory landscape

There are mandatory and voluntary reporting requirements on almost every continent, with an estimated 400 policy instruments worldwide. Requirements cover a number of environmental, social and governance topics and apply to organisations of all sizes and ownership.

KNOWING WHAT YOU ARE LEGALLY REQUIRED TO DO IS A NECESSARY FOUNDATION FOR YOUR SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS.

We mention a few specific reporting requirements here, and provide guidance for you to identify relevant regulations.

To identify your sustainability-related reporting requirements, consider your company's:

- **Location:** check the requirements from governments, financial regulators, stock exchanges and industry associations where you operate. This will likely stretch outside the country where your business is headquartered. For example, the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires companies to disclose a slavery and human trafficking statement – it affects any company of a certain size that does business in the UK, not only those based in the UK. Under the French Duty of Vigilance law, all French companies of +5,000 employees or all companies operating in France with +10,000 employees are to provide an overview of measures taken according to a vigilance place.

- **Ownership:** a growing number of stock exchanges require companies to report on their sustainability performance. For example, companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in South Africa must comply with the King Code, and produce an integrated report including non-financial (sustainability) information.
- **Sector:** some requirements are commodity specific, for example the EU regulation on responsible sourcing of minerals trace conflicts affected and high-risk areas require entities importing above a certain threshold to conduct due-diligence and report on it starting 2021.
- **Size:** many regulations target companies of a certain size, often defined by the company's turnover or number of employees. For instance, the EU Non-Financial Reporting Directive applies to large companies with more than 500 employees. Keep in mind that your compliance picture might grow and change as your business does.
- **Issues:** consider which sustainability issues are most relevant ('material') to your business (see page 16). This could include disclosure on a broad range of issues including carbon footprint, diversity and gender equality, health & safety, and responsible supply chain management. Some issues are evolving faster than others, for example, the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) is likely to bring greater global standardization to climate reporting. It encourages businesses to disclose their strategies for dealing with the impacts of climate change, voluntarily integrating this information into their financial filings and existing reports.

#2 SCAN YOUR HORIZONS CONTINUED

B. Establish your context

To refine your communications activities, you'll need to understand the wider business and sustainability context that you're operating in. Identify the issues and challenges faced by your business and any industry-specific trends that could impact you now, or in future. You should also consider global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to understand how your company can contribute to the bigger picture. This information is critical to building credible and authentic sustainability communications – without this context, your communications might miss the mark.

Some businesses will be able to draw on their 'materiality' assessment here: this is a tool to understand which issues are most important and relevant to your business, and to your stakeholders (see page 16).



How to research your context

- **Your industry:** Identify the social, ethical and environmental issues addressed by leading companies in your industry – what do they think is important? What sustainability issues are important in your industry? What issues are your peers focused on? Check general and specialist media websites for references to your industry, such as Ethical Corporation, Edie, Environmental Leader and Novethic. Issue-specific websites such as the Business & Human Rights Resources Centre might also help. Your own trade press may also carry features and investigations into sustainability stories.



- **Your company:** Are there any sustainability issues for which your company is well regarded? And less well regarded? Is your company included in issue-specific benchmarks, e.g. Access to Nutrition Index, Corporate Human Rights Benchmark, Fashion Transparency Index, Oxfam Behind the Brands?



- **Media attention:** Has your industry – or companies in your sector – had media exposure related to sustainability issues (either positive or negative)? Search for any relevant stories from trade associations and in more mainstream media.



- **NGO attention:** Has your company – or companies in your sector – been targeted by NGOs on account of sustainability practices? Research the NGOs operating in your markets and the main issues at the heart of their campaigns. amfori can help you identify NGOs in your country and industry.



- **Investor views:** What's your company's reputation among investors? Is your company featured in sustainability indices and rankings, e.g. Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI), FTSE4Good, MSCI, Oekom, SustainAlytics?

#2 SCAN YOUR HORIZONS CONTINUED

CASE STUDY – Firmenich



The company, in a nutshell

Firmenich is the world's largest privately-owned perfume and taste company, founded in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1895. Driven by its purpose to “create positive emotions to enhance wellbeing, naturally”, the Group puts its science and creativity to work to shape innovative fragrance and flavour solutions while addressing key societal challenges; such as shaping the future of taste and nutrition, or accelerating access to sanitation around the world, while always respecting nature and leading an ethical business.

The challenge

In 2018, Firmenich updated its materiality assessment to inform its Pathways to Positive strategy as well as the direction of its sustainability communications. It was important to identify the most relevant issues affecting the business and its stakeholders, and to gain input from senior leaders within the company.

The solution

Firmenich developed an extensive long-list of issues affecting the business and its stakeholders, by assessing relevant mega-trends, reviewing the company's key risks, scanning the media and legislation, and identifying market-related sustainability issues. Engaging key stakeholders from the outset – including suppliers, customers, employees, NGOs and governments – allowed Firmenich to prioritise these issues in a future-focused and meaningful way.

The result? Firmenich communicates its approach and progress relating to the issues that matter most through its sustainability reporting, website and wider communications.

 [Find out more](#)



MATERIAL ISSUES ARE THOSE THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOUR BUSINESS AND YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

Understand your material issues

Put simply, your ‘material’ issues are those that matter most to the company and its stakeholders. A materiality assessment is a tool to define and prioritise the issues that have the greatest impact on your business and are most important to your stakeholders.

Companies unlock all kinds of value from their materiality assessment. They use it to engage stakeholders, inform their strategy and goal-setting, identify emerging trends and direct internal resources. Crucially, it also helps companies define the sustainability topics they report and communicate on.

That's why a materiality assessment is an important step to take in your sustainability communications journey: it will help you establish the most significant issues, and ensure you're talking about things that resonate with your audience.

#2 SCAN YOUR HORIZONS CONTINUED

C. Know your peers and competition

You probably already know a lot about your competitors, from their pricing structure to their product ranges. But how much do you know about their sustainability strategy and how they communicate and promote their ethical or environmental credentials?

Getting started: conducting a peer/competitor analysis

- Review your peers' corporate website and annual reporting, along with brand-specific or customer-focused sites (e.g. retail site) to identify any sustainability content and messages.
- Consider the following questions: What channels do they use to communicate social, ethical and environmental credentials? Do their communications accurately reflect the rigour of their strategy? Is it authentic, transparent and credible? Is it frequent or more 'one off'? Who are their audiences and what impression do their communications leave? Do they have issue-specific messages on how, for example, they manage their supply chain or ensure diversity in the workplace?
- Conduct a quick media search to see what good and bad press coverage they've received on social, environmental or governance issues. This might highlight some NGO campaigns or attention too.
- Look beyond your direct competitors to see what industry leaders or award-winners are up to and understand what sets their sustainability communications apart.
- Research whether any companies offer a 'responsible alternative' to your product, for example a certified organic or fair/ethically traded product. What can you learn from their positioning and the way they translate their commitments into messages?
- Look at how other peers and competitors are communicating their sustainability performance. We've highlighted a number of case studies throughout this report to get you started.

 Use this check-list to get started



CONDUCT A COMPETITOR ANALYSIS TO HELP YOU GET AN INSIGHT INTO WHAT YOUR PEERS ARE DOING AND ESTABLISH THE BEST POSITION IN THE MARKET FOR YOUR OWN SUSTAINABILITY STORY.

#3 ENGAGE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder engagement is about listening and responding to people who may be influenced or impacted by your activities. It's an important pillar of a credible communications strategy and the insights should help shape every aspect of what you say and do.

Stakeholder engagement gives you first-hand feedback on the kind of information your audiences want, the issues they're interested in, and how they want to be communicated with. It shows a willingness to listen and respond to peoples' concerns, ensuring they feel valued.

In return, you'll be rewarded with invaluable insights into stakeholders' needs that can shape and strengthen both your strategy and communications. You'll also ensure that the messages you craft are credible in the eyes of your audiences.

STEPS FOR ROBUST STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:

#1

MAP YOUR STAKEHOLDERS:

Identify and map your key stakeholder groups, both within and outside your business – see page 19.

- Interviewing your investor relations team to understand what social or environmental issues investors have raised,
- Stakeholder roundtables or a sustainability advisory committee to understand the views of a range of stakeholders, either on a one-off or more formal ongoing basis.

#2

DEVELOP LISTENING TOOLS:

Identify tools to listen to your stakeholders. Engagement mechanisms might be things you already have in place (like staff surveys) or you may need some new ones. Examples include:

- Staff surveys and questionnaires to understand employees' views. Some companies conduct an annual employee satisfaction survey – see if you could use results from this to understand employees' views, or add new questions to the next survey.
- Interviews with client-facing sales or marketing staff to understand your customers' views and if they're asking about sustainability issues.
- Consumer polls by third-party organisations to understand if and how consumers prioritise sustainability issues and whether it affects their purchases. Sources include global surveys such as Edelman's Trust barometer, GlobeScan and Sustainable Brands, and national or regional surveys (e.g. Eurobarometer in Europe, Ethical Consumer in the UK).

#3

ANALYSE RESULTS:

Review the stakeholder feedback to and consider how best to implement it. What issues were most frequently mentioned by stakeholders? How do your stakeholders access information about your company today, and how do they want to hear from you going forwards? Are there any emerging trends that might impact your business in future? How can your communications campaign meet their needs?

#4

RESPOND TO FEEDBACK:

Once you've digested the stakeholder input, consider how best to respond to the feedback, and how your communications campaign will demonstrate that you've listened to their concerns.

#3 ENGAGE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS CONTINUED

MAP YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

Whether you are a small or a big company you can use the model on this page to easily visualise them. You can organise a workshop with colleagues across different departments to arrive at the final list and make sure it is comprehensive enough.

The first step for robust stakeholder engagement is to map your key stakeholder groups. When identifying your stakeholders, it is useful to consider those inside and outside your business, as well as those you are connected to.

Once you have identified your stakeholders, you'll need to add more detail to your stakeholder mapping, to enable you to tailor your engagement effectively, and to meet your desired objectives.

- Prioritise your stakeholders according to their level of influence. E.g. are they a priority supplier, a major investor, a key customer, or an interested NGO? Some stakeholders' views and perspectives carry more weight than those who have less day-to-day contact with your organisation.
- Identify your stakeholders' key interests and areas of expertise. E.g. if you're about to develop a new strategy around waste reduction, you'll need to engage waste experts.
- Map your stakeholders' geographical location. E.g. if you're about to build a new factory in Indonesia, you'll want to engage local communities and governments.



INTERNAL

- Senior leaders
- Employees
- Sales team
- Sustainability team
- Marketing
- Communications
- Human resources



CONNECTED

- Auditors
- Factory workers
- Customers/consumers
- Peers and competitors
- Corporate partners
- Suppliers
- Prospective talent
- Investors



EXTERNAL

- Local communities
- Industry associations
- Issue-specific experts (NGOs)
- Media
- Government and regulators
- Ratings and indices
- Sustainability professionals

#3 ENGAGE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

CASE STUDY – El Corte Inglés



The company, in a nutshell

El Corte Inglés is the biggest department store group in Europe, headquartered in Spain. Its business model is based on continually adapting to suit the tastes and needs of society. This has led the company to diversify through the creation of new commercial formats, with several different chains within the group.

The challenge

El Corte Inglés wanted to have a robust stakeholder engagement process to gain a clear understanding of stakeholder expectations. The goal was to take a systematic approach to identifying and communicating with stakeholders, in order to be efficient and transparent.

The solution

The first step was to map its stakeholders. Although initially this was quite a difficult and manual job, El Corte Inglés found the effort very worthwhile as it uncovered lots of useful information to inform their CSR approach. Regular communication with stakeholders allows El Corte Inglés to identify ESG risks and stay ahead of rising trends and stakeholder concerns. It has also informed the Responsablemente campaign, which is the umbrella campaign used to communicate all actions related to the company's CSR approach.

[Read more here](#)





SECTION 4:

CRAFTING YOUR SUSTAINABILITY STORY

In this section:

Basic principles for effective communications	23
Define your communications objectives	24
Identify your audience	25
Develop your story	26
Case study – Lidl	28
Choose your channels	29
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CRAFTING YOUR SUSTAINABILITY STORY

Successful communications start with a comprehensive plan. It gives structure to what you're setting out to achieve, outlining where you hope to be and how you'll get there.

Your communications plan should define how you'll tell your sustainability story in a transparent, engaging and meaningful way, and get your message across to a diverse audience of employees, customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders.

Embedding sustainability within your business is an ongoing and iterative process, so you will likely find your communications objectives, audience, story and channels change and develop over time.

IN THIS SECTION:

#1 DEFINE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

What are you trying to achieve?

Page 24

#2 IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Who are you trying to reach?

Page 25

#3 DEVELOP YOUR STORY

What is your sustainability story?

Page 26

#4 CHOOSE YOUR CHANNELS

How will you tell your story?

Page 29

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

There are no fixed rules on how to get the most from your sustainability communications, but the following tips ring true regardless of the channels you use:

Keep it simple

Sustainability is a huge and complex topic; it's nuanced and multi-layered, and can overwhelm people unless you keep things simple. Try to distil complex information or concepts into easy-to-understand terms, and avoid slipping into technical jargon.

Be honest and authentic

Don't try and dress things up to make them sound better than they are, or present yourself as something you're not. Have the evidence to back up your message, or don't say it. Try not to overwhelm your audience with data, either.

Be positive

Always frame your message as positive, rather than negative, focussing on what there is to be gained, not lost. Share your challenges and explain the steps you're taking to solve them. Think about tapping into more inspirational language to achieve this.

Elevate your design

Consider design from the start, not as an afterthought. Make sure it's aligned to your brand and business and avoid, at all costs, the clichés of stock sustainability images, such as trees, light bulbs, sad polar bears, and even wind turbines (unless they are entirely relevant to your message). These images are outdated now, and symptomatic of an unimaginative approach that won't make sustainability feel real for people.

Find another way to show your thinking, using your own distinctive voice that's relevant to your brand and your audience.

19/20

brands feature at least one of the top stock sustainability clichés¹

Start with the basics

- Make sustainability information available: start by creating a list of all your communication channels and consider which ones you can use to communicate about sustainability.
- If you have a website, include a page or section on your sustainability efforts.
- Add stories to the news section of your website about key sustainability achievements or case studies.
- Consider publishing press releases when you have significant sustainability news to share.
- As an amfori member, you can display the amfori logo and relevant information in your corporate website, brochures or email signature - make sure to explain what amfori is and why you are a member, or include a link to where readers can find out more information. Please consult the amfori logo guidelines for more information.
- Create a brochure or include information on sustainability within your existing materials – these can be useful for taking to conferences and events.

Use this check-list to get started



Download the amfori brand kit for members [here](#)

1. <http://ry.com/ideas/2018/a-new-visual-language-for-sustainability>

#1 DEFINE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

What are you trying to achieve? It's great to be ambitious, but it's important to be realistic too. Your communications objectives need to be consistent with the maturity of your company's sustainability approach and your story should accurately reflect your performance.

Start by defining what you're trying to achieve through your sustainability story. Do you want to demonstrate how sustainability supports your business strategy, or how it could strengthen your communications approach? Are you trying to raise your profile as a responsible supplier with your existing and potential customers? Or perhaps you want consumers to know about a specific action your company is taking on a particular social or environmental issue (e.g. modern slavery)?

Getting started: defining your communications objectives

- Identify all the possible communication objectives you have. Examples include:
 - Engaging employees on your sustainability efforts
 - Complying with sustainability reporting requirements
 - Taking initial steps to raise awareness of your company's sustainability position externally
 - Becoming known, or better known, for your work in the supply chain through amfori
 - Showing customers that you address their social and environmental concerns
 - Differentiating your company from its competitors
 - Being recognised as a sustainability leader in your industry, or as a leader on a specific issue
 - Being ready in case of a crisis (such as an NGO campaign)
- Refine and prioritise your communication objectives:
 - Consider holding a workshop with colleagues from different business functions to understand their communication objectives
 - Try to refine the list of objectives to identify those which are most important
 - Ask colleagues across the company: what is the most important thing you want to happen as a result of your sustainability communications efforts?
 - Consider if there are external frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals that you would like to consider as part of your objectives and messaging?



Use this check-list to get started

#2 IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Who are you trying to reach? To craft compelling messages that resonate with people, you need to know who you're trying to speak to.

As sustainability communications have evolved and become more sophisticated, companies have moved from being reporting-focused to reaching more diverse audiences with targeted messaging across different channels (see page 29 for more about messaging and page 30 for different channels).

KNOW-FEEL-DO: THE KEY TO AUDIENCE CONNECTION

KNOW

What do you want people to know? What is the information you want to share and the messages you want to convey?

FEEL

What do you want people to feel?

DO

What do you want people to do? What actions are you asking them to take as a result of your communications?

Getting started: identify your audience

- Map your stakeholders:** Identify your key internal and external stakeholder groups. Consider holding a workshop with colleagues in different functions across your business to understand who their key stakeholders are on sustainability topics. Refer to page 19 for examples of stakeholder groups you might want to target.
- Refine your audiences:** Review your audiences and consider:
 - Location: which country is your audience in? A stakeholder in Europe, for instance, might have very different priorities and concerns on social or environmental topics compared to a stakeholder in Asia.
 - State of current engagement: do you have an existing relationship with the stakeholder, or is this the first time you're reaching out to them? Do you have established communication channels? Is it likely they have some preconceptions about your company and how it communicates?
 - Direct or indirect: are you going to reach your audience directly, or indirectly through another stakeholder? For instance, it may be better to target salespeople instead of directly talking to your clients, or working with a professional associations may be more effective to influence corporate partners.
- Prioritise your audiences:** refine the long list of potential audiences you've identified. Are there any audiences that are more important for your sustainability communications than others? Can you categorize the list into the most important (primary) audiences and the less important (secondary) audiences?



Use this check-list to get started

#3 DEVELOP YOUR STORY

What is your sustainability journey? You can take this as a base to build a sustainability story or shorter sustainability messages depending on your objectives and resources. A compelling story is the cornerstone of your communications plan. It's how you show what sustainability means to your business.

Done well, it will capture people's attention and get sustainability onto their agenda. It will demonstrate the value that sustainability creates for your business, and what your vision is for a better future.

Getting started: articulate your sustainability story

- Your story should capture what's unique about sustainability at your organisation and should reflect your brand's personality. Start by identifying your sustainability differentiators. What makes you stand out? What do you want to be known for? It could be anything from the rigour and detail of your strategy, to the way you work with partners, your approach to measuring the impact of your activities, or your progressive perspective on key issues.
- Consider your organisation's purpose. How do you integrate sustainability into your operations and how close is it to your business strategy? This could be the foundation for a sustainability story
- Remember, your sustainability story must be credible and authentic. To help inform and 'test' the credibility of your story, identify some key proof points that provide the evidence for your differentiators and your organisation's purpose. These will ensure that your story has enough evidence behind it to stand up to scrutiny.
- Using your differentiators as inspiration, and looking through the lens of your organisation's purpose (if applicable), identify the overarching theme for your sustainability story. What's the hook? Give it a name that reflects the nature of your work, and that will resonate with your audiences.
- Write a compelling paragraph or two that captures your sustainability approach and your point of difference. This forms the basis of your 'story'. It's important that your sustainability story is no longer than this – it's supposed to be a short, compelling introduction. Think of it as your 'elevator pitch' for sustainability at your organisation.
- Weave the theme of your sustainability story throughout all your sustainability communications, to share a coherent message with everyone you reach. Ultimately, it should become the 'golden thread' that joins up your sustainability communications, regardless of the channel or audience.

#3 DEVELOP YOUR STORY

HINTS AND TIPS

Helping you develop an engaging sustainability story.

Take a stand

A strong point of view on a specific issue can help your story stand out. Have you invested time and resources in addressing a social or environmental challenge? Are you taking a stand on a particular topic? Could you become a thought leader on it?

For instance, you may have a strong point of view on plastic waste or child labour, or perhaps you're pushing the boundaries to improve industry best practice, giving you a unique angle.

You don't need to have all the answers or solutions to have a point of view – you can share thinking on the future direction of a particular sustainability issue, or explain how you're working towards a solution. Your sustainability story could be a great opportunity to amplify the efforts you're making on an issue. As long as you're making genuine progress and your story is grounded in credible evidence and perspectives.

Create concise content

When it comes to content, make sure it's relevant, both for your business and your audience. Keeping it aligned to what the business is there to do is a fail-safe way of achieving this.

The story is there to engage, so make sure it's interesting and inspiring. A dull story can backfire, and prevent people reading more. A good story avoids jargon at all costs and keeps things simple. Too much information will overwhelm people and risks burying the message you're trying to promote.

MAKE YOUR STORY APPROACHABLE. USE INSPIRING LANGUAGE IN AN ACTIVE TENSE. SHOW WHAT PEOPLE ARE DELIVERING, AND THEIR MOTIVATIONS FOR DOING IT – THIS TENDS TO WORK PARTICULARLY WELL FOR AN INTERNAL AUDIENCE.

The importance of style

How should you get your story across?

Tone, style and content are three important ingredients, because how you say things is as important as what you say.

Make your story distinct and ensure it fits with your brand. If your company has Tone of Voice guidelines as part of its brand toolkit, then stick to these. Every time you communicate sustainability in a way that doesn't reflect your brand, you are reducing your brand's distinctiveness – or at least missing an opportunity to reinforce it.

Your narrative style should be consistent with your brand's personality. The lighter touch used by a fashion brand, for example, won't feel right for a financial institution, which calls for a more corporate tone.

A step further

The detail behind the story

Eventually, you can build the detail to support your core story. An extended, detailed narrative could sit beneath your overarching core story, to include more information about your approach, targets and data. What you're communicating must be grounded in fact, not fiction, or your audience won't find you credible.

Your extended story will probably answer questions, such as:

- What's happening?
- What's our ambition?
- Why does it matter? What difference does it make?
- Why is what we say credible? What concrete actions are we taking?
- What have we achieved so far? And what's our goal?

Including your goals, targets and data within your extended narrative will demonstrate that your commitment to sustainability is deep-rooted. It'll make it easier for people to trust you, and harder for others to discredit you.

#3 DEVELOP YOUR STORY

CASE STUDY – LIDL UK’S SUSTAINABILITY STORY



The company, in a nutshell

Lidl UK is a discount supermarket, known for its limited product ranges and cheaper prices. Its streamlined processes, efficient business model and direct supplier relationships means its operating model is inherently more sustainable than the traditional supermarket model.



The challenge

Many people assumed that Lidl's cheap prices reflected low quality produce. They didn't know about the work Lidl had been doing to progress its sustainability efforts, or the sustainable nature of its supplier relationships. Lidl needed to bust this myth.

The solution

In 2017, Lidl UK created its first ever sustainability report, to communicate its sustainability approach, including the launch of its new strategy and its progress so far. A central narrative, 'Efficient. Lean. Sustainable', ran through the interactive online report to highlight the essence of sustainability at Lidl. What's more, the report content built on Lidl's existing #Lidlsurprises campaign, which was underpinned by the same promise, and featured on TV adverts and social media.

[▶ See the full campaign here](#)

#4 CHOOSE YOUR CHANNELS – HOW WILL YOU TELL YOUR STORY?

Audiences for sustainability communications are becoming increasingly diverse, as the wider public is taking a greater interest. These varied stakeholders want different things from sustainability communications. People tend to fall on a spectrum from specialists to generalists:

THE SPECIALISTS:

Have a strong interest in sustainability. They're looking for detail on your company's strategy, goals and performance. They know your industry inside-out and they might be targeting specific topics in depth.



THE GENERALISTS:

Take a passing interest in sustainability content, spending long enough to make a quick judgement but not long enough to absorb the detail. They want a top line view of where you stand on certain issues.



Striking the right balance between detailed disclosure-driven information, and inspiring stories that bring sustainability to life, is one of the key challenges of sustainability communications. While a report often contains the data and detail that specialists are looking for, it is unlikely to communicate to everyone you need to reach.

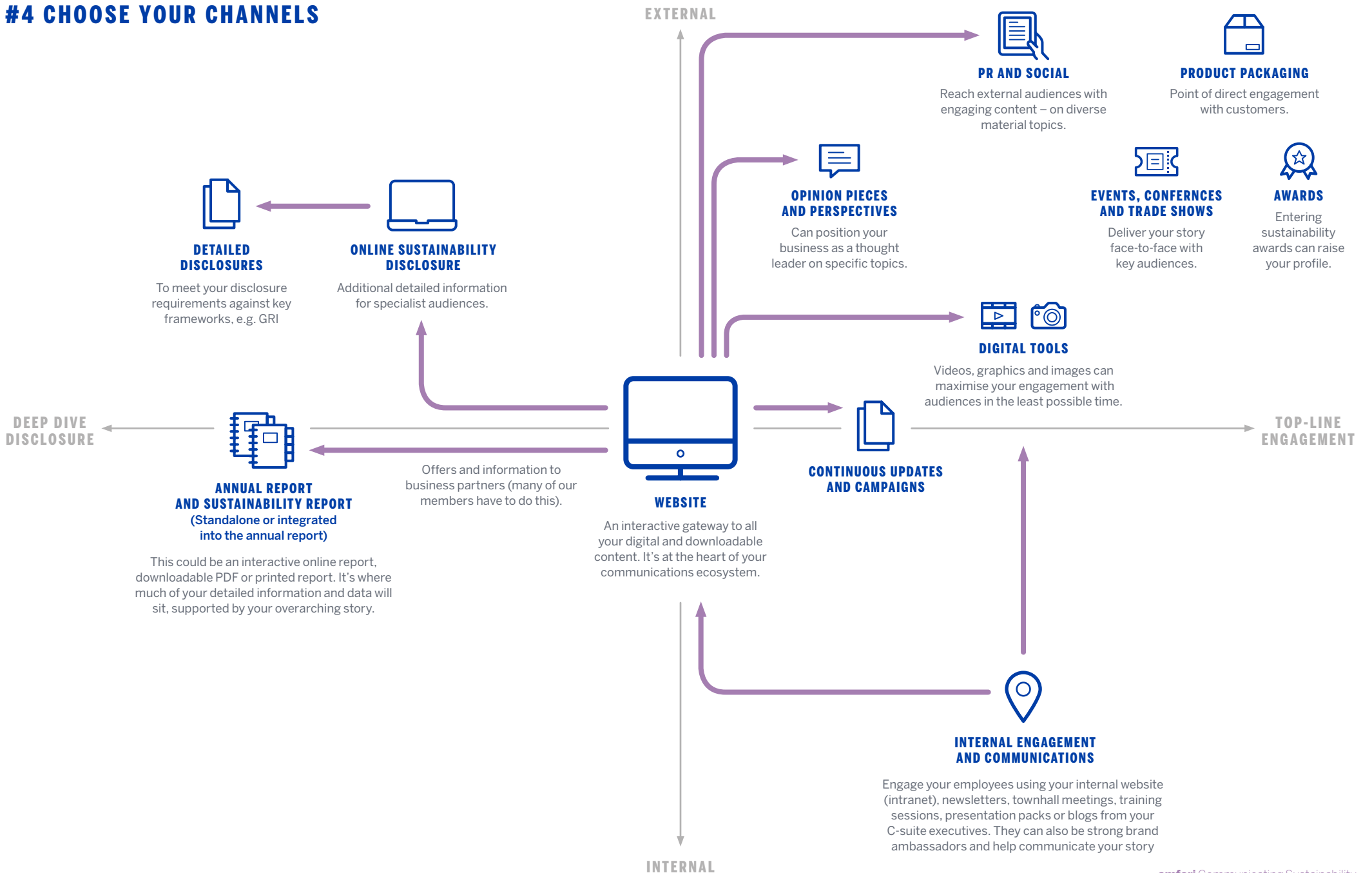
As a result, companies are increasingly using a combination of tools as an ecosystem – a network of interconnected channels to fulfil audiences' needs. This approach recognises that different channels are more appropriate for different audiences, and tailors the content and messaging to meet specific audience needs.

YOU'LL NEED TO CONSIDER ALL THE COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS AVAILABLE TO GET YOUR STORY ACROSS, AND HOW THESE CHANNELS CAN SUPPORT EACH OTHER.

You can meet the needs of both specialists and generalists by choosing appropriate channels for detailed disclosure that stands up to scrutiny, along with engaging channels to tell your story to a broader audience.

SEE OUR SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS ECOSYSTEM ON PAGE 30

#4 CHOOSE YOUR CHANNELS

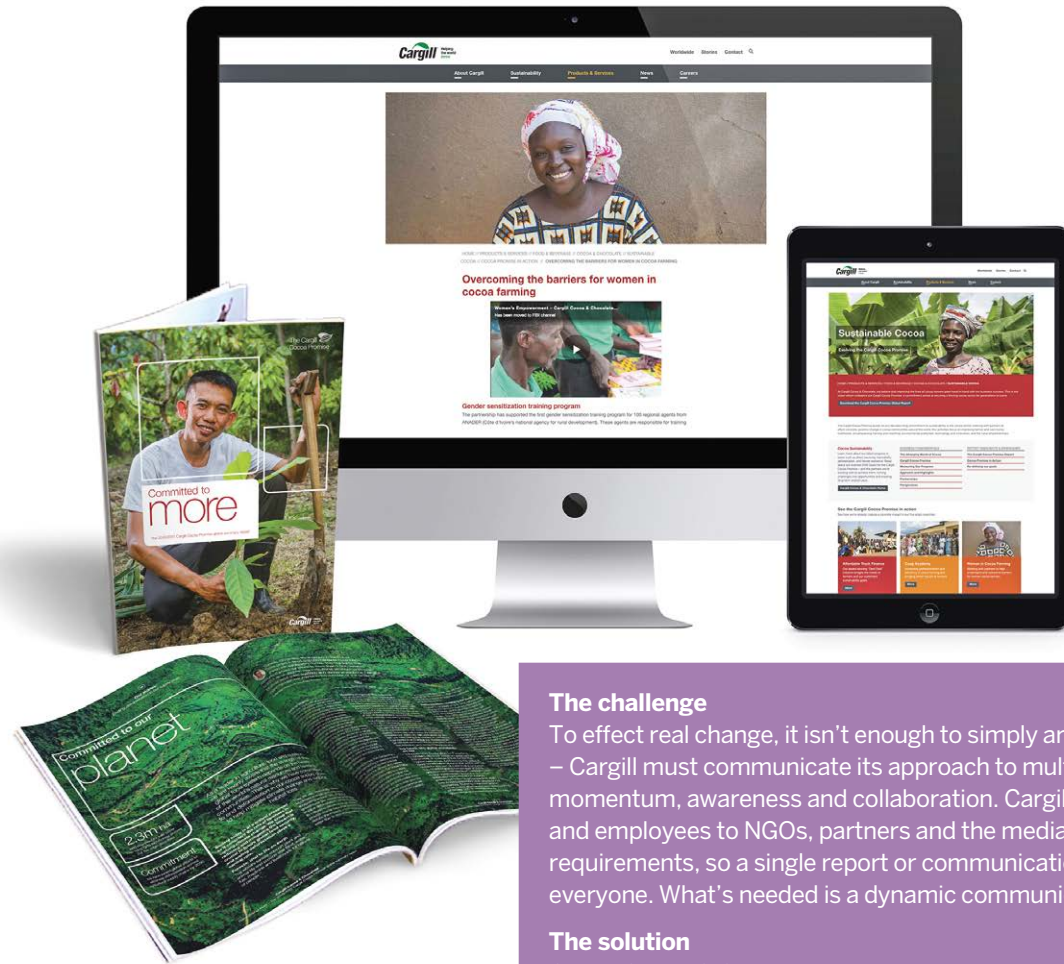


CASE STUDY – CARGILL COCOA & CHOCOLATE



The company, in a nutshell

Cargill Cocoa & Chocolate is one of the world’s biggest companies in its market. It has a strong history of supporting cocoa farmers and making cocoa supplies more sustainable through its sourcing strategy, the Cargill Cocoa Promise.



The challenge

To effect real change, it isn't enough to simply articulate the Cargill Cocoa Promise – Cargill must communicate its approach to multiple different audiences, to build momentum, awareness and collaboration. Cargill's audiences are varied, from customers and employees to NGOs, partners and the media. All have different relationships and requirements, so a single report or communications campaign won't resonate with everyone. What's needed is a dynamic communications plan.

The solution

Cargill Cocoa & Chocolate communicates its approach to sustainability in a holistic way across multiple channels, including an annual sustainability report, information on its website, social media content and published articles relating to particular issues within the cocoa supply chain. In 2018 its Women's Empowerment Campaign, launched on International Women's Day, raised awareness of the important contribution women make to the cocoa value chain every day.

[▶ Read more here](#)

BUILD YOUR OWN COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Now we've discussed the key elements of a communications plan, it's time to get started building your own. This template can be used as a starting point for planning your communications.

Depending on your business and communications objectives, you may need to communicate with multiple audiences, with tailored messaging, channels and timing. This template provides space for three different audiences groups, but you will need to identify how many audiences are relevant for your business.

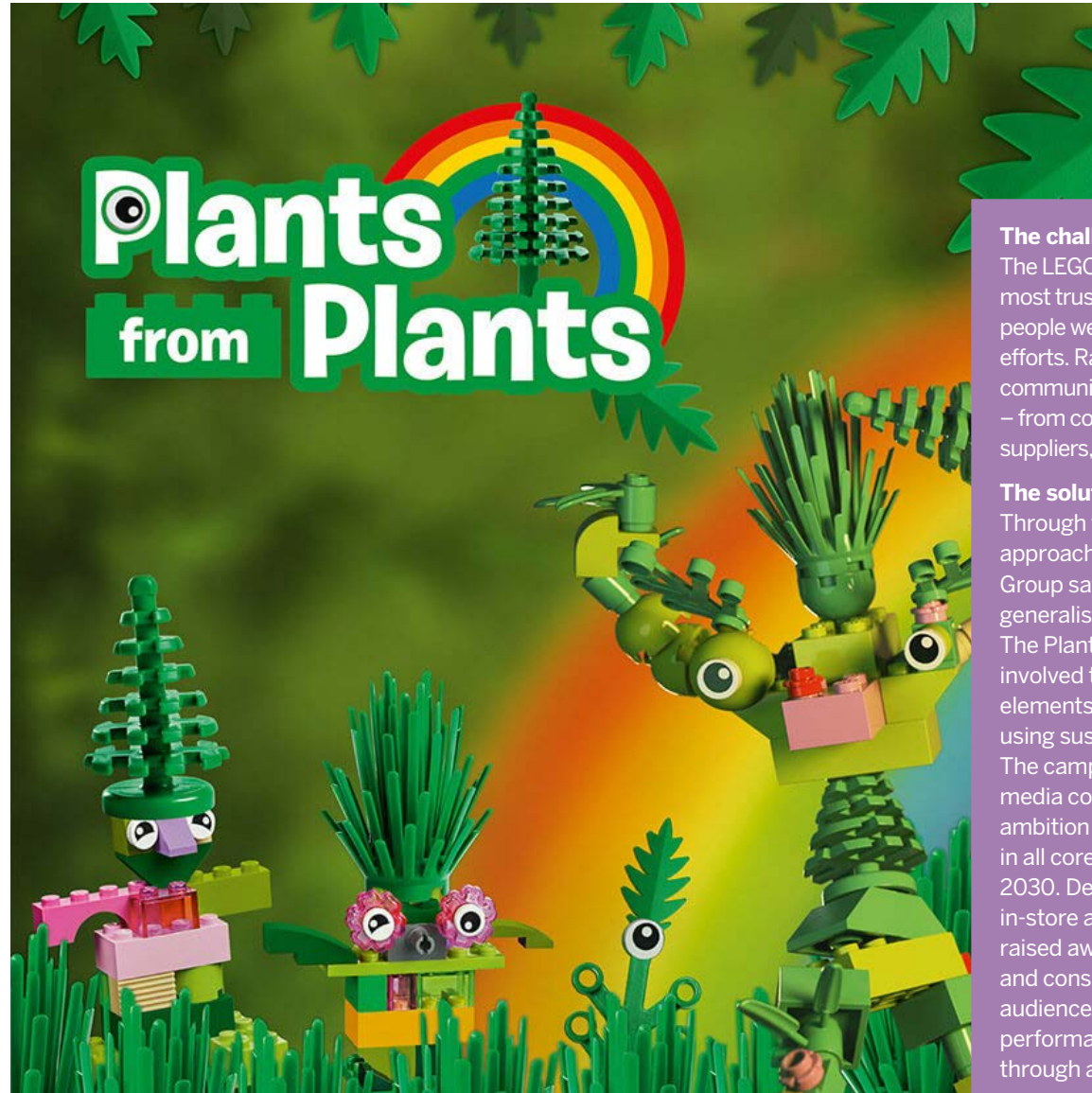
Business & Communications objectives			Measuring success
What are you trying to achieve? How do your communications objectives support your broader business objectives? Refer to page 24 for more guidance. _____ _____ _____			How will you know if your communications have been successful? What metrics will you use to track success? Refer to page 48 for more guidance.
Audiences	Messages	Channels	Timing
Who are you trying to reach? Refer to page 25 for more guidance.	What do you want these audiences to know, feel and do? Refer to page 26 for more guidance.	What channels will you use to reach these audiences? Refer to page 29 for more guidance.	When will your communications be scheduled? Will it be one-time or recurring? Consider what else will be happening internally and externally at that time.
Audience Group 1:	Know _____ Feel _____ Do _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Audience Group 2:	Know _____ Feel _____ Do _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Audience Group 3:	Know _____ Feel _____ Do _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

CASE STUDY – THE LEGO GROUP



The company, in a nutshell

The LEGO Group is a world-leading manufacturer of play materials, known for its iconic LEGO® brick. The company is committed to the development of children through creative play and learning.



The challenge
 The LEGO Group is one of the world's most trusted brands, however many people were unaware of its sustainability efforts. Raising awareness required communicating across diverse audiences – from consumers and parents, through to suppliers, retailers and the media.

The solution
 Through tailored communication approaches and channels, The LEGO Group satisfies the needs of both generalist and specialist audiences. The Plants from Plants campaign involved the release of the first LEGO elements made from a plastic produced using sustainably sourced sugar cane. The campaign gained significant media coverage of The LEGO Group's ambition to use sustainable materials in all core products and packaging by 2030. Delivered through social media, in-store and online it successfully raised awareness amongst the public and consumers. To satisfy specialist audiences, detailed sustainability performance information is provided through an annual Responsibility Report.

[▶ See the full campaign here](#)

A man and a woman are standing in a clothing store, looking at a tablet together. The man is on the left, wearing a tan t-shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a black top and a dark skirt. They are both smiling and looking at the tablet. The background shows clothing racks and shelves. A large blue graphic element, resembling a stylized 'D' or a bracket, is overlaid on the right side of the image.

SECTION 5:

GET COMMUNICATING

In this section:

Reporting your sustainability progress	36
Unlocking internal engagement	38
Case study – Beiersdorf	40
Reach a wider external audience	41
Case study – Claire Woman	45

IT'S TIME TO GET COMMUNICATING

Now that you've developed your communications plan, it's time to get started. In this section we explore how to report on your sustainability performance, and how to build wider internal and external engagement on your sustainability story.

IN THIS SECTION:

#1 REPORT ON YOUR SUSTAINABILITY PROGRESS

Page 37

#2 UNLOCK INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

Page 38

#3 REACH A WIDER EXTERNAL AUDIENCE

Social media, PR and marketing campaigns, communication calendars, product labelling, communicating in a crisis

Page 41

#1 REPORT ON YOUR SUSTAINABILITY PROGRESS

Your sustainability report will play a central role in your strategy for sustainability communications. It will provide a great foundation and source of content for wider internal and external communications. But producing a document that appeals to multiple stakeholders and hooks them in to read more, requires careful thought and planning.

It's likely that your report's purpose will be to track and communicate performance, typically once a year. As an amfori member, you're already doing this through amfori BSCI and amfori BEPI, and a sustainability report gives you an opportunity to further showcase the good work you're doing.

Ingredients for successful reporting

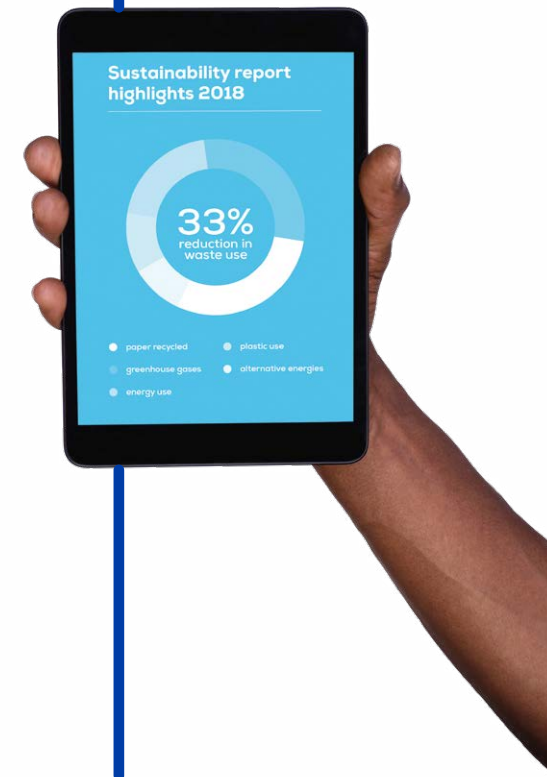
Try not to treat your report as a repository for everything linked to sustainability across the organisation. Be judicious about what you include, particularly when it comes to facts and figures, as they don't always make for the most engaging content. Displaying data using graphs or visuals can make this information more easily understandable. People's time is precious, so you need to develop a report that effortlessly leads readers to the information they're looking for, either online or in a printable document.

Materiality

Use a materiality assessment to identify the most important sustainability issues for your business and your stakeholders, and prioritise what you include in your reporting as a result. See page 16 for more information.

Completeness and scope

Make the scope and boundaries of your report clear. For example, you can decide you want it to reflect the social and environmental impacts of your business across the value chain, including how you source and produce products.



Getting started: creating your sustainability report

- Make sure you understand the regulatory reporting requirements that apply to your business. Refer to page 14 for how to identify relevant regulations.
- Consider your audiences. Who is your report for? What type of information do they require? Refer to page 25 for more information about identifying your audience.
- Decide on the most appropriate format for your sustainability reporting. This could be a stand-alone PDF document, information included on your website or a printed document.
- Define the frequency of your reporting – most companies report annually, but you may choose to report quarterly or biannually.
- Define the content you will include in your sustainability report. The best way to do this is through a materiality assessment, to identify the topics that are important to your business and your stakeholders. Refer to page 16 for information on how to identify your material topics.
- Reach out to internal stakeholders to help you gather the data and stories about your sustainability performance that you want to share.
- Include information about your approach, your performance and progress, as well as your future plans.
- Try to make your reporting as balanced as possible, including information about your challenges and negative performance, as well as your successes.
- You can also mention you are member of amfori in your report and highlight if you or your producers have taken any specific training opportunities or related actions during this period.



Use this check-list to get started

Context

To connect to the bigger picture, it helps to set your sustainability strategy and performance within the broader context that you're operating in. For example, you can acknowledge the potential impact that societal and environmental megatrends such as population growth, urbanisation, resource and water scarcity, or climate change could have on your business. Help readers understand relevant industry trends or regulatory changes that you're grappling with. Can you explain, for instance, how your efforts contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, or the Living Wage movement?

Strategy

Your report should set out your organisation's approach to sustainability, highlighting key priorities as well as explaining your future plans. Ideally your strategy will explain how you are responding to the wider context and external factors affecting your organisation.

Performance

Demonstrate progress using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that measure your performance against the goals and targets in your strategy. Reporting progress against KPIs aids comparability year-on-year, provides context, and improves accountability.

Accessibility and navigation

Make your report easy to navigate, so that audiences can quickly find the information they're looking for. Think about how your content flows together and order information logically to aid readers. Clear signposting and hyperlinks to relevant and related information will help readers navigate the content, too. Remember that people also like to read reports online.

As a member of amfori, you're already taking action. If you're part of amfori BEPI, you're driving focused environmental improvements in your supply chain across performance areas ranging from energy use and greenhouse gas emissions to chemical management and water use. If you're part of amfori BSCI, you're monitoring and improving social performance in your supply chain, on issues from fair remuneration to eradicating child labour. This is all information you can outline in your report as part of your sustainability efforts across your supply chain.

#2 UNLOCK INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

Your sustainability strategy will only become embedded in your business if you're able to turn it into action and make it part of people's everyday work. After all, employees are your greatest advocates. But to drive sustainable change, they need to be informed, inspired and involved.

Getting your people to engage in your sustainability strategy and communication can be tricky when there's competing demands for their time and attention. However without it, internal campaigns on environmental or social issues can lose momentum and fail to translate across business functions.

Creating a sense of shared ownership in your company's sustainability story relies on a solid base of support from every level of your business. Most companies, regardless of their size, have three different types of internal audience:



YOUR COLLEAGUES WORKING ON SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

These are colleagues working directly on your sustainability operations who are interested and knowledgeable on the different trends and operations taking place. Their expertise is crucial to make sure accurate and up to date information on your company activities is portrayed.

THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

If senior staff across the business don't know about your project, then they can't tell their teams about it. Successfully communicating to these colleagues will not only spread the word but can also help you to develop a new network of important endorsers.

THE COMPANY TEAM

Even if employees at large aren't directly involved in sustainability, most will still be interested in what the business is doing around sustainable development. Start revealing targets and achievements, and you'll be surprised to see how communications can boost cohesion, identity, pride, and a feeling of belonging in the business. Whether you've reduced your greenhouse gas emissions or reached a target in your community initiatives, people will want to know about it. In particular, make sure to communicate to people operating on the organisation's frontline in areas such as procurement and sales – because these people are the voice of sustainability directly to your customers. And if you're a large organisation, make sure the message reaches all the way through to your local offices.

#2 UNLOCKING INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

Inform, inspire, involve

To bring your sustainability strategy to life, think about how you can put sustainability into action in a way that inspires real commitment.

Giving people the information, tools and permission to define and drive change is crucial – particularly in large organisations where you'll want contributions from people in various functions, locations and roles.

By initiating early dialogue with the relevant teams, you can shape the communications and tighten up your story. The best sustainability communications are company-wide and aligned to the organisation's brand, so try and bring your marketing and brand teams into the conversation from the very start.

Identify the people who can really lead change across the organisation. This is more about influence than status, so look for colleagues who are natural networkers, perhaps with enough seniority to carry some weight, and who will demonstrate the principles in action.

Local ownership within a global strategy can also be a powerful approach. Encouraging wider involvement, with activity led by team managers, helps to promote sustainability as a central part of how you do business.

This, in turn, will spread the message across the business and build confidence in your story.

How to reach out

So, how do you reach your internal audience?

Whether face-to-face at meetings and team-building events, or digitally via newsletters, video messages or blogs, you need to give people talking points to spark conversations and stimulate discussions. Inspire people to think about what sustainability means to them, their team, and the wider business.

Embed your sustainability messages into existing points of accountability too, such as the company's code of conduct and induction procedure for new employees. Consistency helps to create a powerful message that everyone is expected to behave responsibly and in line with your sustainability approach at all times.

By putting sustainability on everyone's agenda, eventually you'll see this belief and commitment extend from inside to outside the business.

Getting started: how to engage your employees

- Establish a dialogue between colleagues who work in communications and sustainability to regularly be updated
- Identify individuals who care about sustainability and can help you lead change across the organisation. Many people will jump at the chance to get involved in an internal sustainability committee or working group.
- Make your message simple and relevant to employees. How does your sustainability plan affect their work day-to-day? What can they do to help achieve your sustainability objectives? Give simple actions they can take to make a difference.
- Ask for their ideas. Provide opportunities for employees to get involved and share suggestions for how you can improve your sustainability performance.
- Provide tools, initiatives or training modules that help educate employees about what sustainability means to your business and what is expected of them.



Use this check-list to get started

#2 UNLOCKING INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

CASE STUDY – Beiersdorf

Beiersdorf

The company, in a nutshell

Beiersdorf is a leading provider of innovative, high-quality skin care products and owns brands like NIVEA, Hansaplast, Eucerin and La Prairie.



The challenge

When developing its sustainability strategy, Beiersdorf wanted to make far-reaching, lasting commitments to operating responsibly. Finding a way to engage its employees would be crucial to keeping these commitments and translating the strategy into action.

The solution

As a business, Beiersdorf is all about care – it’s been caring for skin for over a century. Drawing on this core value, the strategy was named ‘We care’, to bring people together and inspire them to act. A network of promoters from across the business helped to develop and roll-out the strategy. Beiersdorf launched its new sustainability strategy with an internal engagement campaign, including video, presentations, posters, booklets and an interactive online tool to help employees understand the impact of their daily decisions. The ‘We care’ strategy and campaign has encouraged Beiersdorf’s people to take ownership of sustainability, and collectively their actions have helped the business achieve its commitments.

#3 REACH A WIDER EXTERNAL AUDIENCE

In this section we explore some key external communications tools in more detail, and finally, we consider how to communicate in a crisis if an unexpected story breaks.

- **PR & Marketing**
- **Social media**
- **Communications calendars**
- **Labelling your products**
- **Crisis communications**

PR AND MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Your communications objectives and audiences may be better served by traditional PR and marketing campaigns. Channels include media outreach and press releases to get media coverage, trade shows, conferences and sponsorship opportunities. Work with your corporate communications colleagues to feed sustainability messages into their existing communication campaigns, or plan new sustainability-focused ones. Leading brands develop big-hitting corporate communications campaigns, and major sponsorships or partnerships to reach their audiences. If you are a smaller company with limited budgets, focus on maximising your positive coverage in the media by proactively sharing great stories.

Getting started: PR and marketing campaigns

- Talk to your PR or marketing colleagues to find out what is possible, and their existing approach and channels used.
- Review what has been done previously and analyse how well it performed. Consider whether sustainability messages can be embedded in wider PR and marketing activity.
- Reflect on your sustainability story and upcoming work to identify whether there will be any key news stories that an external audience will be interested in.
- Contact sustainability focused publications in your market, or trade press, to enquire about relevant editorial features.

 **Use this check-list to get started**

#3 REACHING A WIDER EXTERNAL AUDIENCE

SOCIAL MEDIA



Social media is a powerful and flexible tool to spread your sustainability message. Choose social media channels that align with your objectives and audience, depending on whether you're a consumer-facing brand or targeting a business audience.

It's crucial to keep your content interesting, short and snappy. Communicate your approach, progress and perspectives regarding your key issues. Launch new initiatives, celebrate your successes and introduce new partnerships, as well as engaging in a two-way dialogue to find out what's important to your stakeholders.

To fully exploit the benefits of social media, use relevant hash tags to drive traffic, and to connect to broader campaigns and join bigger conversations. You should also consider whether you can work sustainability messages into existing social media engagement.

Social media offers a great opportunity to start or continue a two-way conversation on your sustainability topics, but you'll need to be ready to respond to social media users. Track the success of your social media engagement by analysing your data, engagement levels and click-throughs, and then put in place processes to learn from and improve your results.

Getting started: social media

- Choose which social media channels to use based on your target audience. For example, LinkedIn may be more appropriate for B2B communications, whereas Facebook or Instagram can be used to target consumers.
- Social media posts that include an image or video often receive more views and engagement than plain text posts. However, it's important to make sure the visual is aligned to your message and consistent with your brand.
- Include a link to direct your audience to more information. You can reduce the length of your link using 'bitly.com'
- Make sure you track the performance of your posts. Pay attention to what time of day and what type of content is gaining the strongest response from your audience.
- Adding a call to action helps to increase engagement. For example, encouraging your audience to click on a link to discover more, sign up to an event, or share their own story.
- Add relevant hashtags to increase the level of interest and engagement in your posts. For example, if your post is about recycling, you might wish to add #recycling, #circulareconomy or #zerolandfill (for example).
- You can follow the official amfori channels on social media and share the latest developments or promote your membership



Use this check-list to get started

#3 REACHING A WIDER EXTERNAL AUDIENCE

COMMUNICATION CALENDARS

Regardless of whether you're using digital or traditional channels to get your sustainability message across, it's worth planning the timing of your communications so you can ensure it is spread evenly over time. A communications calendar is a really simple way to schedule your communications, and plan ahead for the topics you want to talk about throughout the year. It's a useful tool to keep yourself on track, and make sure you are collating the content you need ahead of your deadlines.

Getting started: communications with a calendar

- Reflect on your organisation's sustainability strategy and any key developments that will be occurring in the year ahead. If you are working towards particular goals or achievements, plan for when you will be ready to share your news externally.
- Consider planning your communications around different themes or topics. For example, you could focus on a particular issue each quarter to educate your audience on your sustainability approach.
- Consider linking your content to specific established or emerging themes or events, such as International Women's Day, Earth Hour or World Water Week. Make sure your content and message is directly relevant to the specific campaign you're taking part in.

 Use this check-list to get started

May			1	2	3	4	5
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	27	28	29	30	31		
June						1	2
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Date	Content	Responsible
Social Media		
09/05/19	Announce RE100 commitment	Mary
11/05/19	RE100 follow up	Mary
13/05/19	Renewable electricity case study	John
20/05/19	World Bee Day post-Twitter	John
05/06/19	Sustainability Report launch	Mary
07/06/19	Key Performance Highlight Story #1	John
09/06/19	Key Performance Highlight Story #2	John
11/06/19	Key Performance Highlight Story #3	John
19/06/19	World Day Against Child Labour	John
Website Updates		
01/05/19	Upload blog posts	Mary
Media Releases		
09/05/19	Sustainability Report launch	Mary
04/06/19	Announce commitment to RE100 initiative	Mary
Newsletter		
01/05/19	Monthly sustainability newsletter	John
04/06/19	Upcoming Sustainability Report launch	Mary

#3 REACHING A WIDER EXTERNAL AUDIENCE

LABELLING YOUR PRODUCTS



Certification or eco-labelling schemes

Adding sustainability labels and information to your products is one way of telling your story directly to your customers. Independent certification can help bring credibility to your claims.

- First, check if your company already takes part in any certification or product labelling schemes, and if so, evaluate which ones to continue with. Having too many labels can confuse consumers.

COMMUNICATING IN A CRISIS

There may come a time when a story breaks that wasn't part of the plan and is an immediate risk to your company and its reputation. While the likelihood is low, the potential impact could be significant if it's not handled well. A crisis calls for clear thinking and well-rehearsed communication procedures. It's important to have a process already in place, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. If you find yourself in this situation, you can also contact amfori for support.

No comment means no answer

It's much better to be part of the conversation than ignore it and hope it goes away. Your most senior executives will need to speak out immediately, credibly and honestly. You can take control of the situation by answering your critics and getting your message out there.

Lines of communication

Regularly speak with and listen to stakeholders and the media, as established lines of communication are easier to use when an emergency arises. Beyond the media, your customers, suppliers and business partners can amplify your message. And remember that every employee is a brand ambassador too.

Knowledge is everything

It's always better to be prepared. Keep your finger on the pulse, and regularly scan the media and speak to stakeholders to surface potential flashpoints and vulnerabilities that could affect your business. You can set up Google Alerts, to ensure you are notified about news stories relating to your business, industry or specific sustainability issues.

Getting started: being prepared to respond to a crisis

- Make sure you have a plan in place to ensure you are ready to respond. Identify who will be involved in managing a crisis and who your key spokespeople will be depending on the topic and severity of the crisis.
- Communicate regularly with your stakeholders. Try to stay abreast of emerging issues and areas of stakeholder concern to avoid being taken by surprise.
- Build relationships with media outlets and identify key contacts to communicate with should a crisis emerge.
- Point to your sustainability report if you have one. Done well, your report should outline your robust approach to sustainability management, which can help to demonstrate rigour and accountability in a crisis. (see page 36).



Use this check-list to get started

#3 REACHING A WIDER EXTERNAL AUDIENCE

CASE STUDY – Claire Woman

The company, in a nutshell

Claire Group, who owns the Claire Woman and Hust&Claire brands, is a Scandinavian fashion house founded in 1975. Built on the Danish values of freedom of expression, democracy and respect for human rights, responsibility is the foundation of the business; Claire Group sells fashion with a clear conscience.



The challenge

Claire Group's vision is to produce clothes on a sustainable basis and create a company they are proud of. Their challenge is to share this mission with consumers day-to-day.

The solution

Both brands have a prominent Responsibility section on their websites, indicating to consumers the priority they place on sustainability. They use #ClaireWomanCares and #HustandClaireCares across their social platforms, such as Instagram to reinforce this message with consumers.

[Find out more](#)



SECTION 6:

KEEP THE STORY ALIVE

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CONTINUE COMMUNICATING

Sustainability is not a one-off activity. As you work to further communicate about sustainability engagement in your organisation, you'll find it keeps generating new stories, successes and challenges to communicate.

The long-term nature of sustainability means that you need to keep talking. Allowing communications to drop away after your initial activity is a missed opportunity. Keep talking to people about the trends you encounter, your progress, the goals you've achieved and new targets you've set.

Continue communicating

It's great to shout about successes, mark milestones and share challenges and lessons learned as they occur. Provide updates on your core sustainability story to show how you're delivering on your commitments. Keep developing and sharing new content, case studies and stories with your audiences. You need to continue grabbing stakeholders' attention with new content to keep them engaged.

Share exciting initiatives and news of partnerships and important developments in your sustainability programme as they

happen. You don't need to wait for your annual sustainability report to come out to share your progress. Do consider the timing of broader communications happening across your company, to make sure not to overload audiences.

Engage your employees to find fresh stories

Make sure that employees, so often the front line ambassadors when it comes to sustainability, know that if they've got sustainability news or stories, then you want to hear it.

Establish a straightforward process to collect feedback and share sustainability stories. Regularly ask colleagues what new sustainability-related projects they're working on and any upcoming milestones. Sharing success stories about individuals and teams helps create internal momentum and is a great way to show that your approach to sustainability is part of who you are, and what you do.

As you share more and more stories about your achievements and challenges, sustainability will become a vibrant part of your organisation's culture and strategy. With this will come unity, a strong sense of belonging and, ultimately, greater value for your people, your shareholders, and everyone you do business with.



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

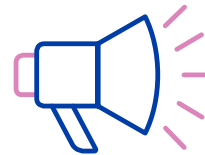
Track your communications progress

Measuring the progress of your communications plan can also help you keep the story alive. It will keep staff engaged in your success, and encourage them to continue supporting your sustainability strategy and storytelling. Reflect back on your communications objectives and evaluate progress against your goals. It helps to set review points (e.g. three or six months later) as a reminder. Tracking your communications progress is also important to learn from what works well, and identify what you would do differently next time.

MEASURES TO TRACK YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PROGRESS COULD INCLUDE:

REACH

Are your communications encouraging people to spend longer on your website? Has there been an increase in downloads or click-throughs? Have you included sustainability information in your brochures and how many stakeholders is this distributed to?



INTERACTION

Is the business receiving more likes, comments and shares on social media? Are you getting more feedback and enquiries from customers?



REPUTATION

Has an increase in the amount of PR and media generated by the organisation led to a change in sentiment towards your brand?



BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Has there been a noticeable increase in sales, orders or number of customers?



Getting started: key questions to evaluate your communications

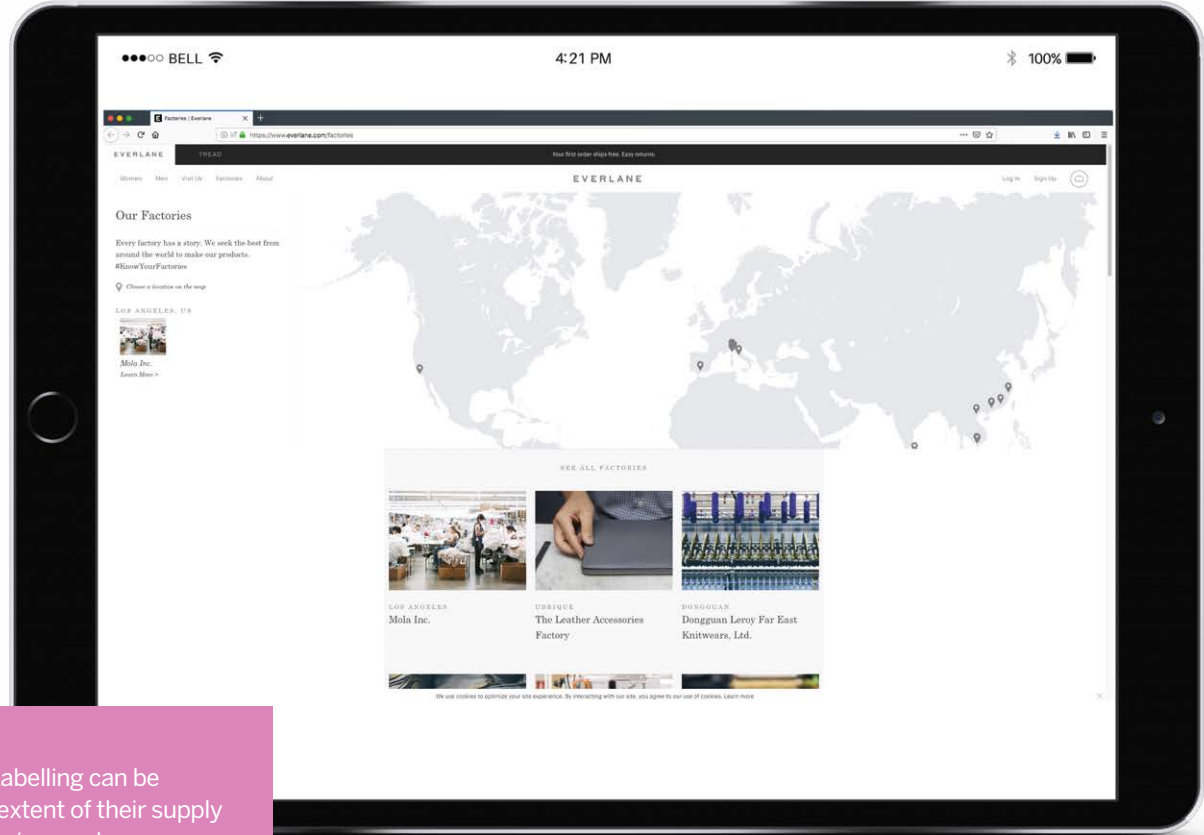
- What did you set out to achieve? Can you see progress against your communications objectives?
- Did your communications reach the right audience? How many people did you reach, and were they the right people?
- How did the audience respond? Did you receive any feedback? Did the audience engage with the message/content/activity?
- What have you learned? What went well and what would you do differently next time.

Use this check-list to get started

CASE STUDY – Everlane

The company, in a nutshell

Everlane is a clothing retailer in the United States with a mission to create exceptional quality garments, in ethical factories, whilst being radically transparent with consumers.



The challenge

As a consumer, finding truly sustainable clothing can be hard work. Labelling can be confusing, and many clothing manufacturers aren't aware of the full extent of their supply chains. Everlane wanted to show consumers that making the right choice can be as easy as putting on a great T-shirt.

The solution

Everlane is committed to radical transparency. It believes its customers have a right to know how much their clothes cost to make and where they're made, right down to factory-level. On its retail website, the brand reveals the true costs behind all its products, from materials to labour to transport – then sells them minus the traditional retail markup. What's more, the interactive online map allows consumers to explore each of Everlane's factories, and the brand's Instagram champions its ethical, transparent messaging.



Find out more



SECTION 7:

CLOSING REMARKS

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There's never been a better time to tell your sustainability story

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Additional resources

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THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO TELL YOUR SUSTAINABILITY STORY

People are more engaged than ever in the sustainability challenges and opportunities that businesses face: from millennial consumers to investment board members.

As we've seen from all the different approaches showcased by the case studies throughout this document, there's no one formula for perfect sustainability communications. The guidance we've set out draws on the substantial experience of amfori, Radley Yeldar and amfori members.

We hope these practical steps and the example case studies empower you to find a communications approach that works for your business. And we hope it gives you the confidence to start, or to continue, communicating the sustainability issues that matter. With clear objectives and a target audience in mind, there's no limit to the benefits you can gain from a well-planned communications campaign.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Compass

The SDG Compass provides guidance for companies on how they can align their strategies as well as measure and manage their contribution to the realization of the SDGs.

<https://sdgcompass.org/>

amfori Country Due Diligence tool

The tool assesses the risk of sourcing in different countries according to social, environmental and political benchmarks. It provides an overview of a country's trade and sustainability situation through specific indicators.

<https://www.amfori.org/content/country-due-diligence-tool>

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)'s Reporting Exchange

The Reporting Exchange is a free online platform that connects you to reliable, comparable information on sustainability reporting requirements and resources. It provides in-depth and up to date coverage across over 70 sectors and 60 countries.

<https://www.reportingexchange.com/>

Carrots & Sticks Database

This database from UNEP, GRI, KPMG and The Centre for Corporate Governance in Africa covers mandatory and voluntary instruments that either require or encourage organizations to report sustainability-related information. The data covers instruments in 64 countries and was collected during research for the 2016 edition of the Carrots & Sticks report.

<https://www.carrotsandsticks.net/>

Sustainable Stock Exchange Database

This database lists exchanges around the world that have ESG requirements for listed companies, or have introduced voluntary requirements or guidance.

http://www.sseinitiative.org/data_/

amfori advocacy

amfori advocates at a local and global level to shape an environment where companies can trade openly and sustainably.

<https://www.amfori.org/content/amfori-advocacy>

amfori BSCI

The amfori BSCI platform is a tool that allows companies to easily map their supply chains and drive improvements in social performance.

<https://www.amfori.org/content/amfori-bsci>

amfori BEPI

The amfori BEPI platform provides a single point for environmental performance data, while a sustainability intelligence dashboard helps users clearly visualise complex supply chains.

<https://www.amfori.org/content/amfori-bepi>

Reporting Matters

This annual publication from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and Radley Yeldar evaluates the state of sustainability reporting and provides good practice recommendations and examples.

<https://www.wbcd.org/Programs/Redefining-Value/External-Disclosure/Reporting-matters/Resources/Reporting-matters-2018>

A new visual language for sustainability

A guide from Radley Yeldar on how to avoid the pitfalls of 'stock' sustainability images and principles to design sustainability that sells.

<http://ry.com/ideas/2018/a-new-visual-language-for-sustainability/>

The Honest Product Guide

A guide from Futerra and the Consumer Goods Forum about product transparency for sustainability, ethics and health.

<https://www.theconsumergoodsforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CGF-Futerra-Transparency-and-the-Honest-Product.pdf>

We would love your feedback on our guide,
click **here** to respond to our survey



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