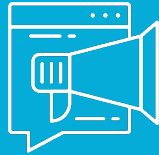




**SME ESG
HUB** 



COMMUNICATE

Sustainability
Communications Plan



Business & Communications Objectives	Measuring Success
What are you trying to achieve? How do your communications objectives support your broader business objectives?	How will you know if your communications have been successful? What metrics will you use to track success?

Audiences	Messages	Channels	Timing
Who are you trying to reach?	What do you want these audiences to know, feel and do?	What channels will you use to reach these audiences?	When will your communications be scheduled? Will it be onetime or recurring? Consider what else will be happening internally and externally at that time.

	KNOW	FEEL	DO
	What do you want people to know? What is the information you want to share and the messages you want to convey?	What do you want people to feel?	What do you want people to do? What actions are you asking them to take as a result of your communications?
Audience Group 1:	1]	1]	1]
	2]	2]	2]
	3]	3]	3]
Audience Group 2:	1]	1]	1]
	2]	2]	2]
	3]	3]	3]
Audience Group 3:	1]	1]	1]
	2]	2]	2]
	3]	3]	3]



TOOL GUIDE

#1 DEFINE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

Business & Communications Objectives
What are you trying to achieve? How do your communications objectives support your broader business 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. gender equality)?

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.
- 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.



TOOL GUIDE

#2 TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

<p style="text-align: center;">Measuring Success</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How will you know if your communications have been successful? What metrics will you use to track success?</p>

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.**



TOOL GUIDE

#3 IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Audiences
Who are you trying to reach?

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.

	KNOW <small>What do you want people to know? What is the information you want to share and the messages you want to convey?</small>	FEEL <small>What do you want people to feel?</small>	DO <small>What do you want people to do? What actions are you asking them to take as a result of your communications?</small>
Audience Group 1:	1)	1)	1)
	2)	2)	2)
	3)	3)	3)
Audience Group 2:	1)	1)	1)
	2)	2)	2)
	3)	3)	3)
Audience Group 3:	1)	1)	1)
	2)	2)	2)
	3)	3)	3)

KNOW – FEEL - DO: THE KEY TO AUDIENCE CONNECTION

<p>KNOW</p> <p>What do you want people to know? What is the information you want to share and the messages you want to convey?</p>	<p>FEEL</p> <p>What do you want people to feel?</p>	<p>DO</p> <p>What do you want people to do? What actions are you asking them to take as a result of your communications?</p>
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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.

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.



TOOL GUIDE

#4 DEVELOP YOUR STORY

Messages
What do you want these audiences to know, feel and do?

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.



TOOL GUIDE

#5 CHOOSE YOUR CHANNELS & TIMING

Channels What channels will you use to reach these audiences?	Timing When will your communications be scheduled? Will it be onetime or recurring? Consider what else will be happening internally and externally at that time.

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, in depth.

Getting started: Choosing your channels

- 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 COMMUNICATION 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.



SME ESG HUB

A small icon consisting of a grey arrow pointing right, with several colorful dots (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) above it, suggesting a hub or network.

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