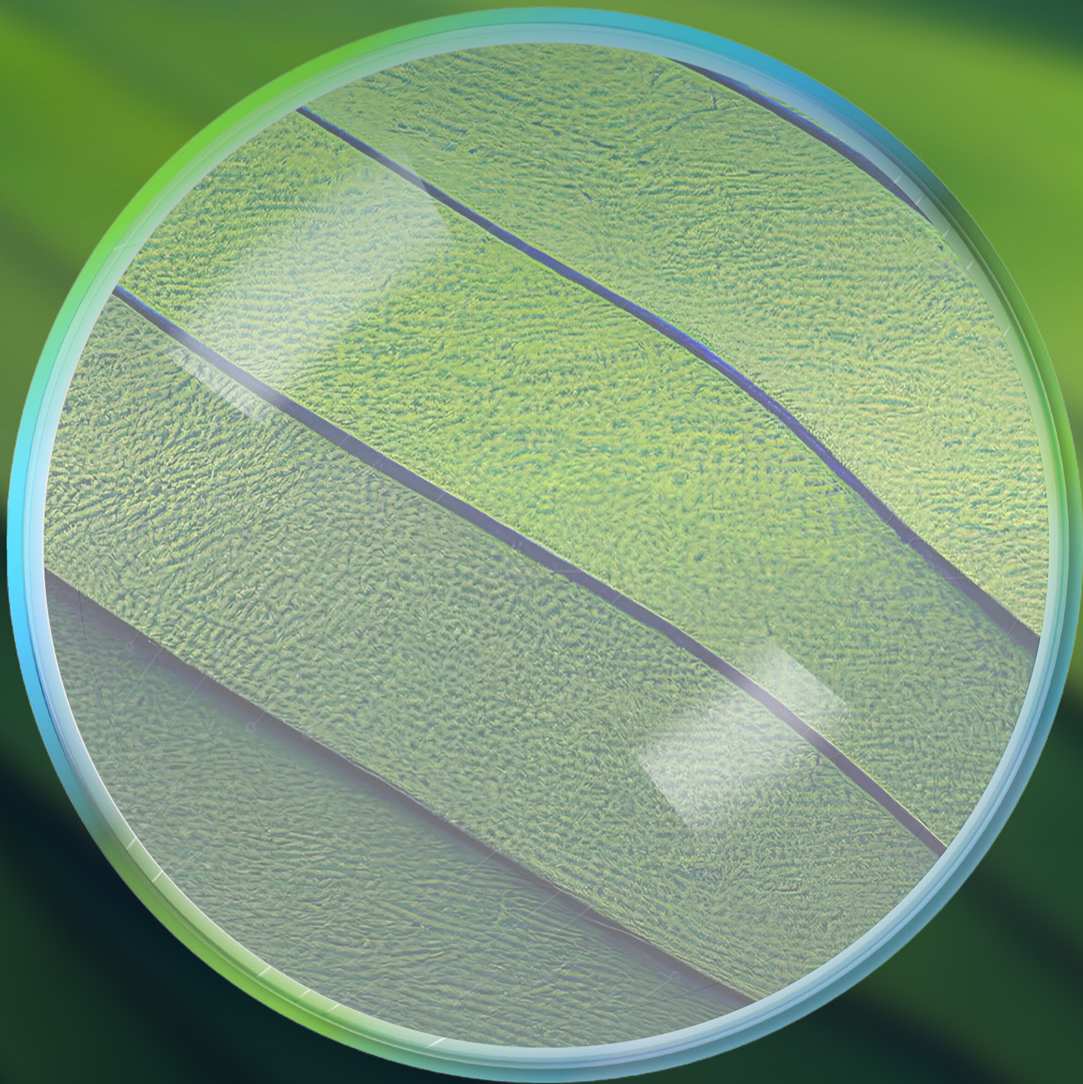


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**Sustainability
Communications**

Strike the Chord,
Advance the Message



MAKING AN
IMPACT THAT
MATTERS
since 1645

Introduction

Environmental and social issues are at the forefront of public consciousness. As a result, sustainability has become a primary consideration for corporate bodies. However, for enterprises to simply institute sustainable practices is inadequate; they must convey their endeavours to interested parties in an effectual manner. Clear communication is vital to demonstrate advancement and preserve the trust of those with a stake in an organisation's doings. By openly and accurately relating sustainability initiatives, businesses can further both their own aims and society's interests jointly.

This article delves into the importance of sustainability communications within corporate environments. Embracing sustainability communications is not just a moral imperative; it is a strategic business move. It highlights its role in nurturing trust among stakeholders and instigating impactful change. The aim is to inspire organisations to reassess their approach to sustainability communications and integrate sustainability communications into their business strategy.

The importance of sustainability communications

01



Enhanced reputation

Stakeholders, including consumers, investors, and potential employees, are increasingly drawn to companies that prioritise sustainability. A strong sustainability reputation can attract customers, foster brand loyalty, and differentiate companies in a crowded marketplace.

02



Risk mitigation

Transparency and open communication enable companies to identify and address sustainability challenges before they escalate into crises. By proactively communicating their sustainability practices, companies can mitigate reputational, regulatory, and operational risks.

03



Access to capital

Investors now consider ESG factors when making investment decisions. Companies that effectively communicate their company's commitment to responsible practices, provide investors with the information they need to make informed choices. This ensures that sustainability efforts are aligned with financial interests, creating a win-win scenario for both the company and its investors.

04



Employee engagement

Effective sustainability communications can help foster a sense of purpose, pride, and motivation among employees, leading to increased productivity and loyalty.

05



Competitive advantage

Sustainability communications can drive innovation by highlighting the need for new solutions. Companies that effectively communicate their sustainability efforts can gain a competitive edge by positioning themselves as leaders in their industries.

The unique role of sustainability communications

While businesses have established dedicated sustainability departments, the significance of sustainability communications often goes unnoticed. This oversight represents a missed opportunity to harness the influential power of effective communication.

Traditional corporate communications and Corporate social responsibility (CSR) functions may play a role in disseminating information about sustainability initiatives, however, they often miss the mark in truly achieving effective sustainability communications. In the realm of corporate communications, the traditional approach typically entails a one-sided dissemination of information. However, companies that solely rely on this method may encounter difficulties in effectively engaging their stakeholders. By omitting authentic dialogue and meaningful engagement, companies inadvertently forgo valuable insights, neglect stakeholder concerns, and restrict the potential for collaborative solutions. To foster sustainable change, it is necessary to actively involve stakeholders throughout the entirety of the communication process.

CSR convictions fall short as CSR activities often remain detached from fundamental business operations. Relying solely on CSR metrics prove inadequate in conveying a company's genuine dedication to sustainability. To truly exemplify commitment, deliberate choices must be made to integrate sustainability across the entire communication process. Effectiveness in sustainability communication hinges on the cultivation of a broader context that encompasses sustainable business practices and a long-term vision aimed at fostering a positive impact. A comprehensive context of sustainability efforts needs to be developed. This includes adopting sustainable business practices and taking a long-term vision to make a positive impact.

The growing integration of sustainability into business strategies, combined with the increasing expectations of stakeholders, necessitates the consideration of a dedicated role specifically focused on sustainability communications. This role would serve as a vital link between sustainability practices

and the external perception of the company, ensuring that sustainability communications are characterised by being transparent, authentic, and impactful. Working closely with internal stakeholders such as sustainability teams, finance and legal departments, this dedicated role would collaborate to develop comprehensive sustainability narratives. In addition, it would engage with external stakeholders such as investors, customers, and communities to foster trust, address concerns, and showcase the company's unwavering commitment to sustainable practices.

Neglecting to communicate sustainability initiatives carries inherent risks. Failure to communicate sustainability efforts transparently and accountably may invite allegations of greenwashing or being disconnected from societal expectations. Such negative perceptions can swiftly spread, eroding trust and impacting customer loyalty.

Governments and regulatory bodies are increasingly stringent in enforcing environmental and social regulations. Neglecting to communicate

compliance endeavours and progress can result in legal ramifications, financial penalties, and reputational harm.

Investors and financial institutions are progressively integrating sustainability considerations into their decision-making processes. Companies that fail to effectively communicate their sustainability efforts may encounter challenges in accessing capital, face elevated borrowing costs, and miss out on valuable investment opportunities. Relevant stakeholders expect transparency and accountability, and a dearth of communication may have financial consequences.

By establishing a dedicated sustainability communications role organisations can navigate regulatory risks, combat greenwashing, and enhance their reputation as genuine sustainability leaders. Moreover, companies that consistently communicate about their sustainability exhibit leadership and accountability by positioning themselves as active participants in the global quest to address critical environmental and social concerns.

Principles of sustainability communications

Establish clarity

Clarity involves communicating your sustainability vision, commitments, and targets. By effectively communicating the urgency of sustainability concerns and showcasing the tangible benefits that result from such endeavors, companies can empower stakeholders, encouraging their active participation in the pursuit of a more sustainable future. This empowerment can be achieved through the persuasive and influential power of compelling storytelling, which has the remarkable ability to evoke emotions, foster meaningful connections, and inspire collective action.

Address your stakeholders

To truly achieve effective sustainability communications, companies must transcend the limitations of one-way broadcasting and actively engage their stakeholders. This entails establishing robust communication platforms, attentively listening to diverse perspectives, and incorporating stakeholder feedback into the development of their sustainability strategy.

Moreover, sustainability communications serve as a conduit for inclusive debate and collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders. To effectively engage stakeholders, companies must adopt a multi-channel approach that leverages various communication methods and platforms. Surveys, forums, public consultations, and community engagement initiatives are just a few examples of ways in which businesses can establish communication channels and forge partnerships with stakeholders. By including stakeholders in decision-making processes and co-creating solutions, companies ensure that their sustainability efforts remain relevant, impactful, and aligned with societal demands.

Be transparent and accountable

Sustainability communications serve as guardians of authenticity, preventing companies from engaging in deceptive greenwashing practices. By upholding transparency and honesty, sustainability communications safeguard a company's reputation, bolster its social license to operate, and contribute to a more sustainable future.

In an era where stakeholders increasingly demand openness and authenticity, businesses must prioritise substance over mere rhetoric when it comes to sustainability. Transparency and accountability are paramount in sustainability communications, ensuring that information is presented in a candid and forthright manner. By regularly providing updates on accomplishments, setbacks, and challenges, companies cultivate confidence, credibility, and constructive dialogue with stakeholders. Businesses that genuinely value sustainability communications demonstrate a willingness to be held accountable for their actions. By sharing data, metrics, and performance indicators, companies can assess their progress and contribute meaningfully to ongoing discussions surrounding sustainability. They understand that transparency transcends being a mere slogan; it is a vital element in establishing trust and fostering confidence.

Inspire others to action

Beyond mere information dissemination, sustainability communications should serve as a catalyst for action. Enterprises have the remarkable power to inspire individuals, communities, and even other businesses to embrace sustainable practices. By showcasing the positive impact of their sustainability activities and sharing success stories, companies can effectively persuade stakeholders to follow suit. There is the potential to ignite a ripple effect of positive change, encouraging others to adopt and champion sustainable practices.

How to embark on sustainability communications

01

Goals and targets

Companies must highlight their well-defined sustainability goals and targets, emphasising the importance of measuring and tracking progress. By showcasing their commitment to specific objectives, they can demonstrate their dedication to driving meaningful change.

02

Integration of sustainable practices

It is crucial for companies to communicate how sustainable practices are integrated throughout their organisation. This includes showcasing efforts to embed sustainability principles in the supply chain, daily operations, and the development of products and services. By emphasising this integration, companies can underscore their holistic approach to sustainability.

03

Innovation

Companies should highlight their commitment to finding innovative solutions and leveraging cutting-edge technologies that contribute to sustainability. By sharing their advancements in this area, they can demonstrate their role as pioneers in driving positive environmental and social impacts.

04

Collaboration

Companies should communicate their collaborations and partnerships with stakeholders to showcase collective impact. By highlighting these collaborations, they can demonstrate a commitment to working together to address sustainability challenges and achieve shared goals.

05

Sharing

Sharing stories of employees, customers, and communities positively affected by sustainability efforts can be incredibly powerful. By highlighting these stories, companies can humanise their sustainability initiatives and inspire others to join their journey.

06

Transparency

It is important for companies to be transparent about the challenges and setbacks they encounter along their sustainability journey. By openly addressing these obstacles and communicating their continuous improvement efforts, companies can demonstrate their commitment to learning, adapting, and making progress over time.

Conclusion

In a world facing urgent environmental and social challenges, sustainability communications play a crucial role in shaping a more responsible and sustainable future. As companies embrace sustainability as a core business principle, the power of effective communication becomes ever more essential in striking the right chord with stakeholders and advancing the message for sustainability. This, in turn, enables companies to sustain corporate reputation, recruit and retain talent, foster greater collaboration and attract new customers and investors who are increasingly seeking to support businesses committed to sustainability.

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