



Small steps to a greener business

Changes you can implement now to make your business more sustainable

acopia

Sustainable change

How much effort are you really making in your business to create meaningful, sustainable change?

After the turbulence of the pandemic, many businesses let it slide down the agenda with only one in seven (13%) setting targets to reduce their emissions – down from one in five (21%) when firms were surveyed before the pandemic in February 2020¹.

The path to sustainable business is just one of many challenges facing businesses in 2022 but possibly one of the most important.

In this guide we will show you why it's so important and how you can start making meaningful change that supports your sustainability agenda without compromising your business.

Change really does start with you – and it's not as hard as you might think.

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This is a jaw-dropping amount of plastic waste. Just 12% of all this plastic is likely to end up being recycled in the UK, despite the public's alarm about the issue and efforts to recycle. The rest becomes pollution, whether through landfilling, incineration or export to countries all around the world, gradually contaminating everything – our water, our food, even the air we breathe.

”

Chris Thorne, plastics campaigner at Greenpeace UK.

The urgency for sustainability in business

The world is at an environmental crossroads. As we edge closer and closer to seeing the earth's temperatures rise by 1.5 degrees Celsius², time is running out to make meaningful change.

The Big Plastic Count³, a recent survey by Greenpeace, asked consumers to keep track of plastic waste in their households for one week. The study highlighted the astronomical amounts of plastic waste being generated every week and produced estimates from their research that showed UK households are throwing away 1.85bn pieces of plastic packaging every week – that's 96.6bn pieces a year.

Read our eGuide on the Plastic Packaging Tax to make sure your business is on track with plastic reduction →

¹ <https://www.britishecchambers.org.uk/news/2021/08/carbon-footprint-a-mystery-to-9-out-of-10-small-businesses>

² <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1117842>

³ <https://thebigplasticcount.com/>



For every kilogram of fossil-based plastic produced, there is between 1.7 and 3.5 kilograms of carbon dioxide released.



Woody.com

Businesses have their work cut out to make valuable contributions to cut carbon emissions and waste ending up in landfill or the ocean.

Why is it so important that businesses lead the charge? Because, since 1988 just 100 companies have been the source of more than 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions⁴. Of course, many businesses sit outside the top 100 biggest polluters but there's no doubt that business has a big impact on the environment.

And this impact is beginning to affect how people buy from you, who wants to work for you and the brand loyalty people develop towards your business.

As a new generation of consumers comes through, they have different expectations to Boomers and even Millennials. Gen Z now accounts for 40% of consumers⁵ and they are the most likely to believe that companies should help address urgent issues (94%) – like climate change.

And they're savvy. With ever increasing information and transparency available to them, like the Sustainability Brand Index⁶, this new generation of consumers is less likely to buy on impulse and much more likely to buy on an informed picture.

In fact, research suggests that by not capitalising on the sustainability options available to you, you could be missing out on -6% missed revenue⁷.

It's not just consumers who want you to become more sustainable – your staff, and prospective staff, are invested in sustainable agendas too. A huge two thirds of staff surveyed want more transparency from their employer on environmental impact⁸.

As the research hints at, it's not just the products you sell that consumers, and staff, are interested in but the practices that go on behind the scenes in your business. There is now strong demand that businesses take an active role in reducing their environmental impact in their own organisations.



66% of consumers choose to purchase products or services based on their “environmental friendliness.”⁹



In fact, according to Deloitte's 2022 UK consumer survey¹⁰, producing sustainable packaging ranks as the most important sustainable practice for businesses among consumers and a swathe of consumers want companies to be held to tighter regulations and to be more transparent about their sustainability practices.

Environmental responsibility is no longer something you can avoid.

And even if you tried to, new legislations like the Plastic Packaging Tax (PPT) and the impending introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in 2024 are forcing businesses to make a change.

It's clear that reducing your business' environmental impact needs to start **now**.

But **where** do you start?

4 <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/100-companies-are-responsible-for-71-of-global-emissions-study-says>

5 https://www.porternovelli.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/17_2017-Cone-Gen-Z-CSR-Study-How-to-Speak-Z.pdf

6 <https://www.sb-index.com/>

7 <https://www.capgemini.com/gb-en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/07/Final-Web-Report-Sustainability-In-CPRD-1.pdf>

8 <https://play-studio.com/insights/corporate-climate-crisis>

9 <https://www.capgemini.com/gb-en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/07/Final-Web-Report-Sustainability-In-CPRD-1.pdf>

10 <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/consumer-business/articles/sustainable-consumer.html>

What can sustainability look like in your business?

Sustainability can look very different from one business to another. What works for one, doesn't work for the other so it's important that you focus your efforts on what is achievable and meaningful for your business. Starting small is better than no start at all.

As this infographic opposite from Less Plastic shows, there are many areas within businesses where sustainability gains can be achieved but there are many more that businesses have yet to consider that could make a huge difference to the environment.

Areas where you might think there is nothing to be gained, could turn out to be transformational for your sustainability agenda. You just need to find the parts of the value chain you can access easily and begin to make small changes.

In your business, sustainability could look like:

- Immediate savings on waste by switching the products you procure
- Educating customers on how to recycle or reuse your products
- Saving on carbon emissions by purchasing through a single source supplier
- Upgrading equipment or machinery to improve output and efficiencies
- Changing internal processes to refine operations and reduce plastic waste

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Starting small is better than no start at all.

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9 steps to using less plastic packaging

Step 1



List plastic packaging you currently use

Step 2



Reduce costs by identifying resources you can reuse

Step 3



Be economic with box sizes & use of gum tape

Step 4



Protect goods with recycled paper or shredded cardboard

Step 5



Reinvest savings into innovations, e.g. mushroom packaging!

Step 6



Explore returnable packaging schemes

Step 7



Calculate annual plastic savings made

Step 8



Ask your suppliers to follow these steps

Step 9



Share eco messages with your customers



However big, or small, you are there will be areas you can access that give you significant results. Here's a few examples of small steps to change, that can result in big impact.

Change packaging

As far back as 2010, organic vegetable box scheme Riverford analysed its use of cardboard packaging and realised that by switching to plastic crates and boxes, it could reduce its carbon footprint by 70%¹¹.

Reduce unnecessary plastic

Lush Cosmetics identified that as much as 40-50% of product costs were down to their packaging. By stripping away the excess, and going big on "naked" products it could reduce waste and put more money into great quality products¹². Supermarket giant, Tesco, did something similar. They stopped using plastic bags for home deliveries and saved 1,800 tonnes of plastic use every year¹³.

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We helped a major high street retailer switch to next generation pallet wrap.

Their plastic waste reduced by 49.66% - that's 45 tonnes of plastic waste eliminated.

Read the e-guide on how much switching your pallet wrap could save you. →

”

Group deliveries

Georgia Ayfantopoulou at the Hellenic Institute of transport in Thessaloniki, Greece, says that between 20% and 30% of a city's carbon dioxide emissions come from last-mile deliveries¹⁴. By grouping deliveries together and opting for a single-source supplier, you can reduce your carbon emissions significantly within your supply chain (not to mention the time and efficiency savings you'll see).

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/mar/31/plastics-cardboard>


¹² <https://www.lush.com/uk/en/a/naked-truth-packaging-free-cosmetics>

¹³ <https://www.which.co.uk/news/article/plastic-bags-tesco-iceland-asda-sainsburys-morrisons-aLh7D7V5GRz1>

¹⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/en/horizon-magazine/carbon-cost-home-delivery-and-how-avoid-it>

¹⁵ <https://www.zenbusiness.com/blog/list-companies-that-excel-recycling-waste-management/>

PLASTIC



Incentivise recycling

Technology firm, Intel, has recycled more than 75% of the total waste generated by its operations since 2008. The company has even linked a portion of the employees' compensation to solid waste recycling metrics¹⁵. Everything from paper and drinks bottles to electronic and plastic waste can be recycled - find out what areas would bring significant benefit to your business and give your employees good reason to recycle.

Go paperless

Online fashion retailer, ASOS, ditched their pre-printed returns labels and delivery notes in every order. This removed 320,000kg of waste after they realised that only 30% of orders were returned - leaving 70% heading for the bin¹⁶. Are there any areas where you're using paper unnecessarily in your business?

Consider your business travel

Customer experience technology company, Uberall, stopped making its new hires travel to Berlin for their induction. They also changed the format of their annual summer party, hosting one in each city they operate in so that no one needed to fly. Two-thirds of employees now expect their employer to make sustainable travel options available to them but you could do better by doing away with the unnecessary travel¹⁷.

Explore operational efficiencies

Hilton's launched a Light Touch cleaning service at their hotels for guests with extended stays. They reduced the number of times they cleaned hotel rooms, rewarding guests who opt in with Hilton Honors points. Efficiencies like these reduce the number of cleaning products being used and the number of visits being made by cleaning staff.

Measure what you can change

So many carbon emissions sit outside of your control (around 80%) either up or downstream in your supply chain. By measuring what you can internally, it's a great way to get started on your sustainability journey. A recent audit we completed for a large bottled water company showed that they were using 69% more pallet wrap than they needed to each month. Insights like these into your operations can help you measure your progress more effectively.

Educate consumers

We produced a series of posters for our charity shop customers to help explain to their customers why they made the bag choices they have and how to get the most out of them.

Despite some consumers assuming that plastic is always the worst choice, it's important you're choosing what's right for you and showing you've done your research.

Sometimes, reducing your environmental impact can be as simple as educating consumers on how to reuse or recycle your products and packaging at the end of their lifecycle.

¹⁶ <https://www.reboundreturns.com/blog-articles/asos-paperless-returns>

¹⁷ <https://www.raconteur.net/sustainability/plotting-a-course-for-sustainable-business-travel/>



Making sustainability changes is good for business


Despite the obvious environmental benefits for increasing your sustainability efforts, there are a plethora of reasons why making changes now makes good business sense.



We are convinced that we get access to higher quality talent because we have a clear purpose as a company.”



Eelco Smit, Senior Director Sustainability at Philips



Since we began investing in researching and creating more sustainable lines of packaging, we've seen a 65% increase in the number of our customers wanting these products and choosing us as their supplier because of these changes. For us, sustainable packaging has underpinned our success during the last 3 years.

Wayne Lynes, Commercial Director, Acopia

Despite the obvious environmental benefits for increasing your sustainability efforts, there are a plethora of reasons why making changes now makes good business sense.

Unilever reports that its Sustainable Living Brands (including Dove, Hellman's and Domestos) are growing 69% faster than the rest of the business and delivering 75% of the company's growth²⁰.

And this is backed by 30% of SMEs who have said they've seen improved profitability as a result of implementing sustainable business practices²¹.

Consumers want sustainable choices from sustainable companies.

This gives hope to many businesses who are afraid that making sustainable changes will mean large expenditure, for little return.

The British Chamber of Commerce's national business survey said that the main barriers that businesses reported that prevented them from making sustainable changes were high upfront adaptation costs (34%) and a lack of finance (30%)²². But as we've seen, not all changes require huge costs and big thinking.

Organisations are yet to come to terms with how fundamentally consumer preferences have shifted.

Capgemini Research Institute; How sustainability is fundamentally changing consumer preferences →

Being sustainable can even help to reduce your costs. When our customers switch to Miniml cleaning and hygiene products, not only do they reap the benefits of a closed loop, zero waste, system for the containers but they save money too.

If you re-fill your 500ml bottle from the 5 litre dispenser – you'll see a 35% reduction in cost. Over time, savings like this add up alongside the sustainability gains from a closed-loop system.

It's important to note that the benefits of increasing your business' sustainability won't just touch your consumers. It can have a transformational impact on your staff too.

According to a new global survey from IBM Institute for Business Value (IBV), 71% of employees and employment seekers say that environmentally sustainable companies are more attractive employers. They also said that they are more likely to apply for, and accept, jobs with environmentally and socially responsible organisations – and nearly half surveyed would accept a lower salary to work for them²³.

²⁰ <https://www.unilever.com/news/press-and-media/press-releases/2020/unilever-celebrates-10-years-of-the-sustainable-living-plan/>

²¹ https://www.worldgbc.org/sites/default/files/Capturing-the-Value-of-Sustainability_0.pdf

²² <https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/news/2021/08/carbon-footprint-a-mystery-to-9-out-of-10-small-businesses>

²³ <https://theecsrjournal.in/ibm-employees-work-environmentally-sustainable-companies-pandemic/>

How we can help you implement small, but meaningful changes

At Acopia, we have a basket of sustainable solutions that deliver tangible sustainability benefits for your business. These small steps can soon add up to large savings – for the environment and for your business.



Complete paper-based packaging

We've developed NEST™ packaging. A collection of eco-friendly packaging for ecommerce that's fully recyclable (even down to the labels), contains 100% recycled content and has FSC accreditations.

You can have a 100% paper-based e-commerce packaging system including mailers, protective wrapping and void fill, mailing boxes and tape and paper document wallets.



Zero waste cleaning

We've partnered with Miniml to offer closed-loop cleaning, laundry and personal care.

All the products in the Miniml range are vegan and created to have as little impact on the environment as possible – including a carbon neutral manufacturing process. A glance at their ingredients list will show you all you need to know about their commitment to keeping cleaning clean.



In 2021 Miniml removed over 200 million tonnes of plastic from the supply chain



Minimising delivery impact

We organise our deliveries through shared logistics wherever possible and with couriers that are carbon neutral.

This helps eliminate wasted mile journeys by allowing customers to choose to order with as few deliveries as possible.



Eradicating virgin plastic use in retail stores

Our exclusive Velo range of tagging guns and plastic tags eliminates virgin plastic use in the tagging process.

Our plastic tags are made from recycled plastic and are recyclable meaning you can make the tagging process in your stores waste free.

Reducing our customers' plastic waste

Our high performance next generation machine pallet wrap reduces our customers' plastic waste by 40% thanks to its superior strength and thinner film and is recyclable – further reducing the impact on the environment.

By using a high performance pallet wrap, it will have a positive impact commercially (such as cost reductions of 25%+) and operationally so it's definitely worth exploring further.

iWrap easily aligns to your sustainability and H&S goals such as:

- Using 40%+ less pallet wrap
- Purchasing less pallet wrap so lower volumes need to be shipped, resulting in carbon footprint reduction
- Elimination of pallet wrap breaks on the machine, meaning no more partially used or wasted rolls of plastic
- Pallet wrap rolls producing greater stretch yields resulting in less roll change overs and manual handling
- Elimination of damaged deliveries and unstable loads means a safer working environment with no re-wrapping of pallets and recovery of damaged goods





High performance pallet wrap with recycled content

Our hand wrapping pallet wrap is as thin as 5 microns and contains 30% recycled content. This reduces your PPT liability and keeps virgin plastic use down.

On average, the Grip Film system means using 40% less plastic on every pallet you wrap.

Using Grip Film will deliver benefits right across your business including reduced costs and plastic use with safer working:

- For Procurement – 40% purchase savings with complete end of roll usage
- For H&S – less trip and RSI injuries
- For Operations – better load stability and faster palletising
- For Warehouse Operatives – easier, safer and faster pallets wrapped

Conclusion

It's obvious from the evidence that the time to change is now. And for businesses to enact meaningful change, taking stock of what matters to you is the most important thing you can do to start your journey.

There are three key steps to take to make this happen:

Step 1

Evaluate the environmental impact across all areas of your business

Step 2

Identify opportunities for change that are within your reach right now

Step 3

Establish a solid action and evaluation plan

Prioritising the areas in your business where you can begin to make realistic sustainable gains will make a positive difference to you and your customers – enabling your growth and building your brand reputation, no matter how small.

We want to help you to reach those growth and sustainability goals faster. If you're ready to make some small changes on your path to a greener business, then we're here to help.

Every organisations' needs and requirements are unique. We specialise in tailored sustainable solutions that work right across your business. If you would like to know more about taking steps towards becoming greener, wherever you are on your journey, we are happy to help and support you with impartial advice. Just call us today on 0845 075 6111 to get started.



As efforts to tackle plastic waste are swiftly gathering momentum, it is becoming increasingly important for businesses to make visible efforts in the area – far better to be seen as a pioneer than a laggard



James Woolven, Ellen MacArthur Foundation



About Acopia

Acopia has been supporting leading brands with over 50 years of experience and expertise.

From foundations that are built on solid ethics and a commitment to continued excellence, we help businesses with sustainable packaging, process improvement and supply of essential and every day consumables across manufacturing and retail.

Our strapline, Together Better, reflects our collective, collaborative approach to business and partnership as well as the comprehensive range of products and services we offer. Our packaging products and consumables are sourced locally and globally, stored and delivered at point of need, with the sole aim of sourcing the best possible solutions for your specific needs, at a very competitive price.

Why not get in touch for a free help and advice on how Acopia can uncover the true cost of your pallet wrap spend.

acopia®

iWrap
Intelligent pallet wrap

[gripfilm]
self gripping stretch film

Miniml

NEST™
SWIFT · SECURE · SUSTAINABLE

velo

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