

# **WORKPLACE SUSTAINABILITY**

## **WORKSHOP GUIDE**



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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The way that many of us are living right now is degrading this environment, often without us realising. Our carbon emissions are causing a rise in global temperatures, we're depleting precious resources, and our waste is polluting the Earth. Minimising the damage, we're causing starts with a better understanding of our impact. And our workplaces are some of the biggest contributors to waste and carbon emissions. Much of the damage to the planet driving climate change is caused by businesses, as they supply us with the necessities - and luxuries - of modern life.

If you're employed at a power station or factory, your workplace's environmental impact may be obvious. Yet every organisation will affect the environment through its day-to-day activities. All workplaces use energy for heating and lighting, consume resources, produce waste, and have transport needs.

The objective of this course is to prompt your group to think about your own organisation and consider your workplace's role in the environmental crisis and what you can do to improve it. They will be able to discuss if you need to shift culture towards one that is motivated by shared values and desire to protect the environment.

**LOOK** – watch the videos and reflect on the content and message

**THINK** – activities and questions linking the videos to their own experience and workplace

**REMEMBER** – a summary of the key learning points

Each section relating to the videos will last around 15 minutes

**PRACTISE** – At the end of the series of videos there is a practical exercise which will bring the learnings together. Delegates should be encouraged to record any personal development actions on their Personal Action Plan sheet.

## FEATURED VIDEOS

- Why is sustainability important to me?
- What should my organisation do to be more sustainable?
- What are the benefits of a greener approach in the workplace?
- How can we promote it to others?

## FILM 1 – WHY IS SUSTAINABILITY IMPORTANT TO ME?

### LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

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Give the group some background before you show the film. Welcome to the Mammoth Clothing. Michelle, a contemporary clothing retail office manager is briefing her two stone age bosses, Um and Ah. The trouble is that the company is stuck in the stone ages!

### THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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Explain to the group that at many organisations have a large environmental footprint and a low culture of sustainability. Reactive behaviour hides behind the viewpoint “I’m powerless” with no motivation to act or take responsibility. They would much rather kick the can down the road and take little or no activities or measures to address it as environmental business requirements constrain change.

Ask the group to discuss what they can do? Whether you work in an office or at home, ask them to think about the changes you can make to your daily habits that could have a positive impact on the environment. Answers should include the following.

1.     Energy use  
Turn everything you can off when you leave the workplace - heating or air conditioning, monitors, workstations powered down, printers turned off at the plug, Windows and blinds closed, Lights. It all helps to eliminate the phantom drain and could save your 35% energy. A temperature of around 19-22°C suits most workplaces. Try to avoid arguments over temperature by suggesting people bring an extra layer along just in case they get cold.
2.     Recycle, reduce, and reuse.  
Instead of printing documents, try keeping them as a digital file. Many programs allow for documents to still be highlighted or have notes made on them digitally, negating the need for a printout.  
Buy refurbished tech. Only 17.4% of e-waste produced in 2019 was recycled.  
Make recycling a no-brainer. For every waste bin you have around the office, have one for recycling as well. You’ll find that simply having the option to recycle will mean that a lot less goes to waste.  
Using a refillable water bottles or glasses and a source of cool drinking water could slash your single use plastic consumption.
3.     Carbon footprint  
Cut your commuter carbon. Drive less, fly less if you. And if you’re driving and stopped in traffic, switch off the engine instead of letting it idle.  
Working from home. Giving employees the opportunity to work from home some of the time, eliminates at least some of their commutes altogether.

### REMEMBER

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Remind the group that no change is too small. You can help your organisation make a difference by implementing minor changes in the workplace that will help combat global warming, reduce waste, and save water. These incremental improvements and combined efforts will have a significant impact over time.

## FILM 2 – WHAT SHOULD MY ORGANISATION DO TO BE MORE SUSTAINABLE?

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

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Set the scene for the team before showing the video. UM and AH, the stone age bosses have started to evolve. The office is still full of mammoth off cuts, but they are starting to set some ground rules.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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Explain that more and more workplaces are adopting sustainable approaches and encouraging employees to use resources more wisely. Not only is it ethical, becoming greener makes a lot of business sense.

Your organisation will already have to comply with a range of environmental laws. Over the years, governments and regulators have enacted environmental legislation and set strict standards to govern activities in the workplace. At least 27 countries have passed domestic laws enshrining economy-wide net zero commitments.

Ask the group if they can define what these terms mean - Net Zero - Greenwashing.  
Hopefully responses will sound something like this.

Net Zero means cutting greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible, with any remaining emissions re-absorbed from the atmosphere, by oceans and forests for instance. If your Net Zero strategy is to reduce your carbon footprint whilst offsetting the residual balance each year; then you are getting it right.

Greenwashing - branding something as eco-friendly, green, or sustainable when this is not the case - misleads consumers into thinking they are helping the planet by choosing those products.

Explain that 'going greener' often involves 'getting leaner' - by ironing out inefficiencies and waste. It can increase productivity and reduce costs. While green approaches can be more expensive at the outset - such as improving insulation or installing renewable energy sources - the energy and cost savings in the long term more than justify initial investments.

Finally reflect on the point that having clear green ethics can attract like-minded employees who are loyal to the organisation and its values, along with investors who see the benefit of sustainable practices.

REMEMBER

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At this stage, organisations might be committed to compliance but no more. Individuals still believe that responsibility and any initiatives lie with the senior management or the sustainability team if they have one.

However, organisations must comply with a range of environmental laws. But having clear sustainability goals can attract like-minded employees who are loyal to the organisation and its values, along with stakeholders who see the benefit of sustainable practices.

## FILM 3 – WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A GREENER APPROACH IN THE WORKPLACE?

LOOK (play video, 2 minutes)

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Set the scene for the team before showing the video. The story has moved on a stage. Um and Ah continue to evolve and are working towards a greener, more sustainable company. All the mammoth skins have gone and in their place are recycled faux fur clothing.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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Workplace sustainability culture evolves into an independent stage, where it's no longer about following management and rules. Everyone accepts responsibility for their personal and work impact and takes personal action.

Ask the group to think about how consumer or customer behaviour and values have evolved and has changed your business or perhaps their outlook as consumers?

Answers may include these points but there will be others!

- More and more organisations are increasingly being forced to rethink their policies, thanks to consumer pressure. Consumers have woken up to the power they have in their pockets in recent years. They are telling businesses; you need to change the way you do things.
- Over a third of UK shoppers in 2019 stopped using a product because of concerns about its environmental impact, and 37% of consumers said they would pay around 5% more for a sustainable product.
- As Mammoth Enterprises show, promoting green products or ethical practices is also a great way to improve your brand's image! And now consumers expect companies to 'do their bit' and adopt sustainable practices. A business that promotes itself as environmentally friendly (and practises what it preaches!) will find a fast-growing green customer base.

REMEMBER

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Complete the discussion by stating that not only is it ethical, becoming greener makes a lot of business sense. Organisations that embrace sustainability sooner can get ahead of the game, save costs in the future, and attract a generation of customers switching to greener buying habits.

## FILM 4 – HOW CAN WE PROMOTE IT TO OTHERS?

### LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

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Set the scene for the team before showing the final video clip. Um and Ah are now fully evolved and are delighted with the improvements Michelle has helped them implement to make sustainable improvements. If only their suppliers were on the same page!

### THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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While our industries and workplaces are contributors to the climate crisis, we can and must turn our collective ingenuity to reversing the damage we've done. By being mindful of how we interact with our environment and making informed choices, we can start to safeguard our planet for the future.

At this stage of the journey, measurement, certification and accreditation of your sustainability credentials sends a powerful message to customers, partners and suppliers.

Ask the group if they are familiar with B Corp accreditation or an ESG score?

Explain that B Corp accreditation is awarded for social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability. There are now more than 6,000 B Corps around the world.

An ESG score is an evaluation of an organisation's performance against various sustainability metrics (related to either environmental, social, or governance issues). These scores are studied by financial stakeholders as well as employee groups and the wider business market.

So are your business partners and suppliers as green as they say or are they dinosaurs?! Ask the group to discuss how they might seek out trusted partners who share aspirations and challenges that will allow you to learn and develop together.

Wrap up by saying that the most enlightened organisations reach the interdependent culture stage of workplace sustainability. There is a shared vision and values and a desire to protect the environment. All staff accept responsibility for achieving sustainability goals with 'Green Team' ambassadors promoting for sustainability.

### REMEMBER

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Remind the group of the key messages at the end of the film. It's about shared vision and values and a desire to protect the environment where everyone accepts responsibility for achieving sustainability goals. Seek out trusted partners who share your aspirations and challenges - learn and develop together.

## GROUP EXERCISE

The objective of this exercise is to get the group to discuss where they are on the sustainability journey and to confirm they understand the path they can take. Explain that the film story loosely applies the concept of the Health & Safety Bradley Curve to sustainability.

The Bradley Curve was developed in 1995 by a DuPont employee, Berlin Bradley. It helped organisations understand the importance of taking responsibility for safety and moving towards zero injuries. It is now being used as a tool to help address and shift the culture of workplace sustainability in organisations. (Source: FCDO Services).

Share the following statements in blue on separate cards and ask the group to plot them in the correct positions in the curve from Reactive to Interdependent.

The final result should be this.

Self assessment	Workplace Sustainability Culture											
	Reactive			Dependent			Independent			Interdependent		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Environmental Impact	Impacts are inevitable.			Net Zero goal is unrealistic.			Net Zero goal is possible.			Net Zero goal is achievable.		
Motivation	No motivation			Commitment to compliance.			Acceptance of personal and work impact.			Corporate vision and shared values.		
Motto	My actions don't really matter.			Follow the rules!			My choices matter.			All of our choices matter. We are in this together.		
Responsibility	Responsibility not/ hardly ever displayed.			Responsibility lies with senior management team and sustainability team.			Each individual takes responsibility.			All staff accept responsibility for achieving sustainability goals.		
Activities/Measures	None/ limited (primarily by the sustainability team).			Activities implemented by management			Personal action.			Organised actioned group and team targets.		
Popular opinion	Business requirements constrain change.			The people at the top want sustainability			I can make a difference.			We can all make a difference.		