

# SUSTAINABILITY



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## **EMPLOYER BRANDING & CLIMATE CHANGE: 3 WAYS BUSINESSES CAN FIND TALENT AND HELP TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE**

Prospective employees are more and more focused on functional and practical efforts to help reduce human impact on climate change. This means that organisations who want to recruit talent need to make sure that their organisations are doing more than just paying lip service to this key recruitment requirement.

According to SHRM, this has resulted in talented candidates wanting to work for organisations that have purpose-driven cultures that put the planet and the growing risk to the climate front and centre. This is backed up by polling that found 68.4% of employees purposefully consider the “environmental record” of a prospective employer. Therefore, employer branding and climate change are interconnected.

In this article we will explore how climate change jobs or green economy jobs can mean more than narrowly defined jobs in sustainability-specific fields. What this means is that working for organisations that place sustainability and climate-related issues front and centre helps in terms of onboarding and retaining talent in all sectors. Let's find out why?

### **Recruitment & Climate Change - An Ever-Evolving Relationship**

As more and more companies focus the challenge of climate change. Global bodies like the UN Global Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) and other platforms like the DOW Sustainability Index have provided organisations with practical and functional ways to deploy sustainability in the workplace. This has resulted in sustainability and the impact of climate change becoming a central theme within the recruitment process.

SHRM has found that businesses that have placed climate change and sustainability at the core of their organisational culture have helped to build an employer branding offer with a defined and crucially measurable impact that can be quantified and monitored by potential candidates.

### **Employer Branding & The Climate Emergency**

People Management believe business organisations need to place the “Green Agenda” and the very heart of Human Resource Management. However, they also articulate a need to place an employer's branding and culture-building exercises into the context of better recruitment. This is about telling a story. A story that helps highlight not just Net Zero pledges, the installation of recycle bins in offices or social media content articulating your climate pledges, but instead a narrative that provides all stakeholders – including potential employees – with an elevator pitch, of sorts, stating how your organisation understands the climate emergency and what you are doing and how your culture (and employer branding) is making a difference.

### **Onboarding Talent & The “Sustainability Conversation”**

Employer branding is a useful device to help improve organisational culture and help provide the impetus for real change. However, this requires talent onboarding professionals to better understand climate change and how this impacts their business. If your HR and recruitment team are left in the dark in relation to your sustainability goals and objectives, they can't help in leading the conversation with talent. With more and more college and school leavers understanding the impact of climate change, recruitment professionals will need to deliver coherent “sustainability conversations” with talent – and to do this they will need the knowledge, the data, and the leadership and culture to deliver for climate conscious would-be employees.

## FIVE WAYS THAT REMOTE WORK SUPPORTS YOUR ORGANISATION'S SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

The demand for increased flexibility and a new way of working is how the work culture has been growing in the last decade or so. However, up until a few years, it was perceived as an 'occasional thing' rather than routine – such as freelancing, for example, or a side hustle.

Today, remote working is the norm among many organisations, especially since the pandemic, and statistics indicate that 88% of worldwide companies either encourage or have made it mandatory for employees to work remotely after the pandemic.

### 5 top benefits of remote working

#### Less greenhouse gases

One of the most significant advantages of working remotely is that you save a lot of time, money and energy, which is otherwise spent on commuting to the office.

By simply working from home, companies can effectively reduce their carbon footprint. A report released by Global Workplace Analytics showed that due to remote working, 600,000 cars were taken off the road for a year; in the same report, it was revealed that by working from home, carbon emissions can be reduced by 54 million tonnes a year.

#### Lower consumption of fossil fuels

Fossil fuel, a common power source for electricity, heat and transformation, has had a considerable effect on climate change and global warming. Since people started working remotely, there's been a drastic decrease in the consumption of fossil fuels.

In fact, an analysis released by Cyprus Transmission System Operator (CTSO) showed that in the first quarter of 2020, there was a 25% reduction in fossil fuel consumption, so working from home means there's a significant decrease in electricity, fuel and heat consumption, saving our planet's dwindling non-renewable energy sources and cutting down the impact they have on the environment.

#### Better quality of air

Large industrial and commercial businesses allowing their workers to work from home means a temporary reduction in air pollution levels around the globe. In fact, thanks to the digitalisation of work, far less paper is needed – every tree saved can essentially get rid of 6.7 kg of carbon dioxide from the air.

Less greenhouse gas emissions mean we get better, more breathable air. And, even though this temporary reduction may not mean much at first, the amount of air pollution it has reduced since the pandemic has been dramatic, to say the least.

#### Less office supplies

A decreased use of office supplies means a very major reduction of paper use, as we pointed out earlier. Just a single day spent working inside an office can see a lot of physical office resources being used, with paper being the centre of attention.

As a result of reduced paper and general office supplies, we have already seen a highly positive effect on the environment. On average, Great Britain consumes around 5M tonnes of plastic each year. By doing away with that, we are saving our marine life and also playing our part in reducing the global plastic waste crisis.

#### Lower population shift rate

Did you know that at least 5% of all greenhouse gases in the UK are due to deforestation? The main culprit here is the population shift in big UK cities due to career transitions and

opportunities. People in rural areas enjoy a peaceful and healthy lifestyle; however, workers must migrate to metros to reduce their daily commute expenses and time.

With remote working, people can still earn their livelihood while continuing to live in remote and rural areas. This kind of decentralisation improves the quality of life for economic migrants, as well as those living in greener and less populated cities – not to mention the reduction in greenhouse gases.



## 4 REASONS JOBSEEKERS WILL CHOOSE SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATIONS

### 1. A desire to work for a sustainable organisation

There is an ever-growing amount of evidence that suggests many employees are nowadays attracted to companies that operate sustainably, and this appeal can be a significant source of highly competitive advantage, with studies revealing that by attracting a greater number of applicants, organisations that have an eco-first ethos can dramatically increase their chance of hiring top performers.

### 2. Employees feel pride in working for a sustainable company

Companies that have sustainable practices also have a better reputation and a higher status within their industry and, as a result, many jobseekers feel great pride in working for such a prestigious organisation.

To use this in your favour, you can reinforce the anticipated feelings of pride by first creating and then celebrating your reputation for being a sustainable company. You can achieve this by adopting sustainability practices that not only meet but actively exceed those considered normal for your sector, thus distinguishing your brand from other similar employers.

You can link your organisation's sustainability to its prestige by obtaining awards and recognition from reputable and well-known third-party organisations and demonstrate the pride that your existing employees have in working for your company through testimonials.

### 3. A belief that a sustainable company cares about its workforce

Evidence has suggested that for many jobseekers, strong sustainability initiatives within an organisation imply that the company cares about its workforce. After all, if it has genuine consideration for the wider society's welfare, it is surely going to treat its workers well too.

You can reinforce this belief by linking it with the way you deal with your employees. You can showcase sustainability initiatives that are driven by employees in order to illustrate the ways in which your drive for greater eco-friendliness is associated with your efforts to give your employees' rewarding and meaningful experiences.

You can also communicate to jobseekers the ways in which your eco-friendly practices are linked to the ways in which you treat your workforce by giving them the message that you

are trying to reduce the impact your business has on the environment because you care about the planet in the same way as you care for your team members.

#### **4. Your organisational values align with the personal values of jobseekers**

Most candidates these days want to work for an employer with values that fit in well with those that they hold dear themselves. You can tap into this desire by describing explicitly the company values which drive your company's specific eco-friendly actions, for example, those relating to protection of the environment, and taking responsibility as a corporate citizen.

You can clearly demonstrate how your brand infuses sustainability into every element of daily working life, from reward systems to training programs, and from objectives to operational practices.

#### **How to communicate sustainability to jobseekers**

Your messages about your company's sustainability will only bring value to your organisation if they can reach potential candidates, so you need to use several channels in order to inform jobseekers about how eco-friendly your business is.

Careers pages, your company website, recruitment handouts, position announcements, and employee testimonials are some good places to start. It's important, though, to ensure your sustainability messages are true and genuine – they must match up with the experience candidates will have once they join your organisation.

If you can take these tips on board, you should find that you can attract a broader spectrum of highly skilled and talented candidates to your job adverts and have a far greater chance of hiring the most successful applicants for your team.

## **FOUR TIPS FOR A GREENER HIRING STRATEGY**

A Gallup poll conducted in Spring 2021 revealed that at least 70% of US professionals felt that a company's environmental footprint is very important to them, and it is a major consideration for them when deciding to take a job. Moreover, one-quarter of the respondents said that a company's positive environmental records played a major role in their decision.

In the coming years, any organisation dedicated to environmental and climate change issues will continue to become more important to candidates, especially those from Gen Z. Another survey found that 40% of millennials were keener on working for environmentally responsible companies than those who had little to no interest in caring for the environment.

#### **Sustainability and recruitment**

Some recruiters have been smart to make climate change a major component of their process, while others have either not started or say that it isn't really their responsibility to specifically line up environmentally conscious candidates.

Recruiters need to change this attitude sooner rather than later, as companies are taking great strides in becoming more environmentally conscious. Millennials and Gen Z'ers continue to represent a much larger share of the workforce and organisations that hesitate to make sustainability a part of their core business mission risk damaging their reputation.

The same applies to recruitment: those unwilling or hesitant to embrace more environmentally-conscious candidates will likely miss out on opportunities to hire employees, who support their green goals and values.

How can recruiters line up more environmentally conscious candidates?

## Four tips for a greener hiring strategy:

1. Make the environment a key part of your mission, values, and culture. Cite these values on all your social media channels, blogs and particularly your web pages. Make them a part of your day-to-day communications as well.
2. Make sustainability a part of the recruitment discussion. Ask candidates about their key environmental concerns to gauge how aligned they are with your organisations' goals and missions.
3. Let candidates know what actions the organisation has taken in support of its green goals. Share details on what they are doing to cut down their carbon footprint and talk about any projects the organisation may be pursuing to reduce environmental impact.
4. Train hiring managers and other interview-process participants to share green efforts and initiatives in interviews. They should know how to identify a candidate's climate change priorities and address their concerns accordingly.



## HOW AN ATS CAN HELP YOUR JOURNEY TOWARDS HRM SUSTAINABILITY

Methods of early talent acquisition in their current form aren't sustainable in the long term. With large organisations focussed on attracting the best talent from universities and colleges, and therein utilising carbon heavy methods of engaging with talent. This can be seen by merchandise-laden events to recruit early talent within large corporations and private businesses, followed by carbon intensive travel to interviews, open days, and selection events, all of which are driven by the paper-intensive process of recruiting new talent and the regulatory practicalities of storing personally identifiable information.

According to The World Bank, in 2021, the world generated 2.01 billion tons of municipal solid waste - and this is projected to rise by more than 75% by the year 2050. Employees are becoming more aware of the climate crisis the planet faces - and are starting to express that awareness in the way they engage with new employers. A survey commissioned by Reuters found that 65% of prospective employees want to work for an organisation that places sustainability at the core of their business and culture. Therefore, taking little steps to mitigate your organisation's impact is crucial.

### Looking Beyond Net Zero - Culture

Delivering sustainability within the recruitment process and being climate positive as an organisation means that the end result is more important than actively focussing on a net-zero carbon footprint objective. This endeavour requires a wholesale realignment of how businesses operate. In essence, it starts with leadership

who put sustainability at the core of their executive decision-making, which flows into developing new processes to deliver business objectives and stakeholder value whilst balancing the necessity to achieve sustainability. In the context of talent acquisition, this is about harnessing the power of technology to help drive structural change in sustainable recruitment practises.

## **A Sustainable Solution - Application Tracking Systems**

Utilising digital recruitment platforms such as an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) can help provide a utilitarian means of deploying sustainable practises within your recruitment process. There are numerous benefits, all of which interconnect with any organisation's individual strategic sustainability plan, such as reducing the hiring timeframe, streamlining legal compliance, providing a bespoke recruitment process experience, which leads to the final benefit which is a unique onboarding experience for new talent within your organisation.

The average recruiter will spend, on average, six to seven seconds on an individual candidate CV review. Time is critical and using an ATS platform can help provide a sustainable solution for reducing your carbon footprint, increase paperless HR systems, and increasing productivity within your talent recruitment team.

As outlined above, another benefit that requires further discussion is the ability to provide a more bespoke recruitment experience that is underpinned by a toolkit to support legal compliance with employment legislation. An ATS allows users to sort candidates in terms of suitability within a legal compliance framework.

## **HIRE THE BEST SUSTAINABILITY-FOCUSED EMPLOYEES**

Recruiters are increasingly being challenged in the modern world to find the best talent in sustainability and with an increasing talent shortage due to a lack of candidates and high demand for roles, how can you find and hire the best sustainability professionals? Follow our recruiter strategy to hire the top talent for jobs within sustainability.

### **Walk the walk and talk the talk**

If you are looking to hire the best talent within sustainability then you need to thoroughly know your company's eco goals to allow a rigorous interview. Unlike most jobs, sustainability does not just affect one department - each team will need to focus on how they can produce less waste and focus on sustainability targets. If the candidate for a sustainability role doesn't detect any enthusiasm from the hiring manager then that may raise red flags which could ultimately scupper the interview. Hiring managers need to believe in their company's sustainability goals and be able to communicate them effectively as the candidate is interviewing the company as much as the company is interviewing the person.

### **Be part of the new revolution**

A few decades ago, the business world had a decision to make - digitalise their processes or get left behind. Companies that were slow to embrace and invest in technology floundered and could not compete with early adopters. Sustainability is replacing digitalisation as the new workplace revolution. Companies are challenging their workforce to be more waste

accountable – it is the future of business and companies that can't (or won't) get on board with becoming a better version of themselves will find themselves being left behind as consumers and clients makes choices based on a company's sustainability goals. As a hiring manager, ask your company to look hard at their eco-policies and see if they are going to be market leaders and future-proof their business accountability.

## Education vs experience

A decade ago, sustainability wasn't the hot topic it is now and it was unusual to find mainstream degree courses that focussed on this area. Now, there's a whole range of degrees, masters and short courses that prove that you have the dedication, commitment and knowledge to excel in this area. Older candidates are likely to have specialist degrees in other areas and may have worked their way into this sector through other means. These candidates should not be discounted as their career experience is likely to be a great boon to the role as they understand the pressures that the company faces from other perspectives.

## Building back better

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we live and how we work. For a number of organisations this has forced a rethink on how and where we work: to keep the workforce productive and safe. Flexibility, remote technology and home working are now mainstream but now that businesses are opening up again there is pressure, by some, to go back completely to the old ways of working. However, this is a prime time for companies to work on their environmental footprint and establish ways of working that not only meets economic but their ecological targets. Consider a hybrid of working in the office and home to save commuting time, stress and pollution. Working in the office has many benefits to new recruits and to foster good departmental relationships and this

combined with uninterrupted, commute-free homeworking could be a practical way of keeping down carbon emissions. As a recruiter, you can cast your net wider if you aren't restrained by locality and if a job can be done remotely, then it's worth considering hiring talent globally so you get the best brain for the role.

## Practise what you preach

So you've got a great candidate lined up for a sustainability role – how do you impress them? You streamline and make your hiring process more sustainable. Think of every part of the hire from the logistics of the candidate getting there, the coffee/tea they are offered, reusable vs paper cups, the opportunity of having a digital interview, the paper forms they need to fill in – every step needs to be thought through from the sustainability perspective. This won't be an overnight process so start with small changes that can make a real difference. Top talent in sustainability will be able to tackle the bigger issues within the company but you can impress them with thoughtful choices throughout the interview. Small steps that show you care can make a real impact on their perspective of the interview and give you the edge in a competitive hiring market.





## SUSTAINABLE RECRUITING: HOW TO HIRE THE BEST TALENT FROM EACH GENERATION

### Generation Z (born between 1996-2010)

Diverse Generation Z is known for their deep interest in environmental issues and have the passion and drive to want to start their career in sustainability. They've grown up under the shadow of climate change and want to get involved and be accountable. With the increase in Sustainable Degrees, Masters and even MOOCs, Gen Z can take a purely academic route to get their foot in their door. These candidates feel the urgency to create change but may lack work experience. Don't let that put you off. If you want your company to be held accountable for its social and environmental issues then Generation Zers are most likely to be the ones pushing for change.

**Key drivers:** Ownership of projects, diversity, creativity, high expectation of technology

### Millennials (born between 1984-1995)

Socially-conscious Millennials started the big move towards sustainable working and, in fact, they would even take a pay cut to work in a company that values sustainability highly. Their keenness to work at ethical companies encouraged the spotlight to be turned on business practices and highlight areas of greenwashing. They are motivated by ethics and want to be part of sustainable change. They prefer regular communication with their managers so short-term goalsetting are best with this generation.

**Key drivers:** Regular recognition/feedback, work-life balance, regular communication and unique work experiences

### Xennials (born between 1977-1983)

This micro-generation is wedged between two heavyweights but it is significant for many reasons. Old enough to remember an analogue childhood but young enough to embrace the new technology as it was introduced, these digital adapters are increasingly socially and environmentally conscious as they age. They love technology but understand the power of taking a break from it all. Engage your Xennial by appealing to their curious side and use their abilities to think innovatively on sustainable issues.

**Key drivers:** Digital entrepreneurs, challenging work opportunities, communication, digital detoxes

### Generation X (born between 1965-1976)

As digital adopters Generation X has had to adapt to an increasingly changing world. They have seen their over-worked parents and wanted more work-life balance. The expectation towards flexible working has ultimately benefited us more now in the corona lockdowns but this generation started to lay the foundations. Generation X is more environmentally conscious than they baby boomers before them but they value their own role within the organisation. Get the best out of your Gen X by showing them the benefits of their efforts within environmental projects – they like to know what they are doing counts towards the bigger picture. They may have started their careers in other industries before moving into sustainability so they have a rich work experience to draw from.

**Key drivers:** Work-life balance, personal development, clear work goals, autonomy, knowledge-sharing

## **Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964)**

Baby Boomers have been tarnished (rightly or wrongly) with many of the environmental issues today but that doesn't mean they don't have the due diligence to put things right. Hard-working and willing to put the hours in, they are a steady hand with clearly defined goals and deadlines. Unlikely to have started their careers within the sustainable sectors, they will probably have diverse work experience outside of the industry that can enrich their working practise. They will know how to navigate tricky business waters and can use their diplomacy to good effect.

**Key drivers:** Teamwork, loyalty to the company, workaholics, a sense of duty, decision-making opportunities

So, to summarise, the benefits of a multi-generational workforce goes without saying. Even without the broad generalisations about the differing age groups, a diverse team can benefit your company by bringing the age benefit of experience and youthful drive to your sustainable projects. Hiring across the age ranges makes good business sense as it avoids creating an echo chamber. Each generation has unique strengths and they can all learn from one another in the workplace to increase engagement and productivity.



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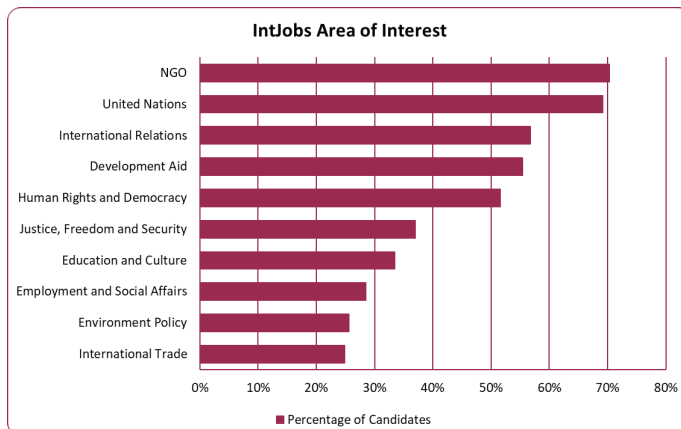
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- Koen Block, Executive Director, European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)



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