

The Cleaning & Hygiene Suppliers Association's Roadmap to Sustainability helps members move in the right direction, whatever their starting position. With input from experts within the CHSA membership and detailed research amongst members, the Roadmap to Sustainability offers value by:

- Informing and educating members on the sustainability agenda and associated issues;
- Providing members with a good strategic way forward for developing their approach to sustainability; and
- Helping the membership align on sustainability and so drive the industry forward.

The Roadmap to Sustainability has been built on five key pillars:

1. Product: the product as it is received and disposed of by the end user
2. Packaging: product packaging and packaging used in transit
3. Transportation: encompassing the movement of raw materials and delivery of product to the end user
4. Social value and ethics: encompassing the whole organisation
5. Corporate environmental impact: emissions, waste and water

The Webinar

On Wednesday 29 June 2022 the CHSA hosted a webinar – 'Sustainability and the Cleaning Industry'.

Jo Fairly, co-founder of luxury, ethical chocolate brand, Green & Blacks, was the keynote speaker.

A panel of industry experts from within our industry then answered members' questions. The panel comprised: Amy Carter of Kimberly-Clark Professional, Vikki Morris of Evans Vanodine, Tony Nawar of Berry BPI, and Renee Remijnse of Essity Professional Hygiene.

Key Messages

The following summarises the key messages that emerged during the presentations.

Defining sustainability

Sustainability is creating a product that is not wasteful in its production, in itself or at the end of its life. This means treading lightly in all areas, including the social dimension. For example, maintaining ethical relationships with suppliers. A holistic perspective is needed.

Why an ethically and environmentally sustainable approach matters

The world is waking up to the need for a more sustainable lifestyle. Customers, shareholder and other stakeholders are increasingly demanding sustainable products and services. In a highly competitive talent market, people are looking for work opportunities that offer meaning. True sustainability at the heart of the business magnetises talent and inspires loyalty.

Adopting an environmentally and ethically sustainable approach is also the right thing to do.

The approach

The journey towards a sustainable business can feel like a huge challenge, particularly for small businesses. Thoughts for the approach include:

- It's a journey that can begin with one step.
- Perfect is the enemy of the good; don't let a fear of inadvertent greenwashing create inertia.
- Be transparent and authentic. It can be a difficult journey but remember to celebrate and share the steps you have taken.

Key Messages

Continued...

- Be strategic. A clear strategy will provide the context you need to make the best decisions.
- Seek continual improvement.

The cost

The perceived cost of adopting a sustainable approach can be off putting. However, wherever resources can be saved, money can be saved at the same time. Especially against the backdrop of escalating prices, some of the biggest savings can be made from energy spend. There are other easy wins, for example, switching from ready to use to concentrate formulations.

Certification counts

Certification provides credibility. Customers look for accreditations as a way to shortcut the process of auditing suppliers.

Influencing others down supply chain

It's rarely, if ever, possible to control the approach of distributors and resellers but it is possible to influence them. Lead by example. Celebrate your success and offer solutions they can adopt.

Measuring, evaluating and reporting

Measure what you can. It is a starting point. Review the resources in the Roadmap to Sustainability Directory. There are organisations that can help you understand how to increase your accountability.

Managing change in the business

Achieving effective change is about ownership. The team needs a stake in the process. When people understand the values of the organisation and its purpose they are more likely to engage with and commit to the change.



The CHSA's Five Pillars for Sustainability

Product

- Aim for a circular economy. This means introducing sustainability at the inception of the product, considering the product's impact across its whole lifecycle.
- The long-term goal is to address four areas (responsible sourcing, resource-efficient production, sustainable solutions and products, after-use and circularity) but start by addressing just one.
- Don't use what you don't need.
- Re-use wherever you can.

Packaging

- Think laterally. Be clever with the design to reduce packaging
- Design the packaging to simplify the waste stream, including the post-consumer waste stream.
- Think about collecting waste packaging from distributors and resellers for re-use / recycling.
- Plastic packaging can be the best solution if there is a good recycling scheme.
- Talk to your suppliers about over-packaging.

Transportation

- Design the product and packaging to optimise palletisation and vehicle usage.
- Work with customers so order patterns facilitate full pallets and vehicles.
- Consider options for compressing products, eg concentrates versus ready to use formulations.
- Develop your strategy for migrating to electric vehicles by 2030.

Social value

- Reflect on your current activities. Most businesses are doing more than they realise.
- Empower your team to do more and seek partners who share your ideals.
- You may not have a dedicated sustainability team, but engagement can give people purpose and boost retention, so get your team involved. Look for the opportunities for personal and career development.

Corporate environmental impact

- Talk to your partners. Find out what they are doing and encourage them to move further and faster.
- Review your waste stream. How can it be streamlined?
- Review your water usage. Aim to use less and think about the type (fresh, grey, etc) of water you use.
- Review every area of your business and set targets to achieve zero waste to landfill.
- Set annual targets for reducing your energy usage.
- Seek accreditations.
- Measure and report on your progress. Celebrate successes – every small step helps.

Questions & Answers

1. What does sustainable mean. Can we, as a diverse and complex industry, agree on a simple and all-encompassing definition which can be satisfactory and understandable to all stakeholders?

- a. There are plenty of definitions, but the key is to ask yourself what it means to you and your customers? Identify what matters most to your business and your customers and set your priorities from there. The biggest and quickest impact you can make comes from elements closest to your core business.
- b. People, Planet, Profit. We all need profit, but not at the expense of people (internal and external) and the planet. The economy has to be the subsidiary of the environment. Profit will follow in the business models of the future.

2. How do I avoid greenwashing?

- a. Always look for certification. You want to see the evidence backing up any claims.
- b. If it sounds too good to be true, it is.
- c. Be informed and aware of developments in the market. It will give you the context you need to reflect on and evaluate all claims.
- d. The Seven Sins of Greenwashing is a fantastic resource.

3. How do I research and identify sustainable suppliers and manufacturers?

- a. Look beyond the product specification to the manufacturer / supplier.
- b. Confirm the company has a plan to achieve net zero emissions and is reporting on its progress.
- c. Seek third party accreditation / recognition. For example, look at the EcoVadis rating. It takes a holistic perspective.
- d. In UK and EU, medium to large companies will be required to formally report on environmental issues and governance. The EU's Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD) will be replaced by the more sustainability focussed Corporate Sustainability Directive Reporting (CSRD) and comes into effect in 2023.
- e. Smaller companies will not be covered by this regulation, and it is not always possible to accredit initiatives, so look at the stories the company is telling. This is particularly important for smaller companies that may not have the resources to complete the larger accreditations. What steps are they taking to, for example, reduce packaging and increase recycled content? Look at their website and social media channels for the information.
- f. In the absence of formal certifications giving assurance, for example, that 30% of the content is recycled material, secure legally binding letters confirming the product specification.

4. Customers can resist change. They want the product they know and trust in the format they know and trust. They want same day delivery and can resist minimum order quantities. It feels like our hands are tied.

- a. Everyone is on a three-step journey. Step one is gaining certification. Step two is looking for sustainability to add value to the business and step three is turning the attention to saving the planet. Resistant customers are at the beginning of the journey.
- b. The absolute fundamental is that the new sustainable product works. No one will want it, whatever its credentials, if it does not.
- c. We can all be thought leaders.

Questions & Answers

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- i. Understand your customers' resistance, then work with your suppliers to develop the well-evidenced arguments you need to overcome it. For example, if your new solution produces less waste and uses fewer bins there will be less cleaning so cost savings. Quantify the reduction in CO₂ achieved by adopting minimum order quantities and moving away from same day delivery.
 - ii. Understand what matters most to your customer. Is it, for example, ease of use or cost of use? Then find a compromise.
 - iii. Education counts. Many people will be unaware of the impact of simple switches. For example, one pallet of **concentrate** may equate to 55 pallets of **ready-to-use trigger sprays**.
 - iv. Offer trials and training.
 - v. Produce case studies of good, productive solutions.
- d. Talk to your suppliers for proof points and case studies. They will have switched other customers.
- e. Always look holistically. For example, sustainable products might be more expensive, but they may be future proofed against impending new taxes.

5. Can you offer suggestions for how to respond to customers asking about our sustainability planning?

- a. Start simple. Articulate a high-level strategy with some proof points. The CHSA's Five Pillars of Sustainability offers you a framework for developing the strategy. Don't start from scratch; there are plenty of template sustainability plans on the internet. The website of the UN Sustainable Development Goals has plenty of resources.
- b. Look at your competitors. Look at companies you respect. What are they doing?
- c. Identify what you are doing already, especially in relation to people. You are probably doing more than you think.
- d. Product. People. Planet.
 - i. The easiest response is to tell them about the product. You can evidence what you are doing. If the product is service-led, focus on your contribution to the local community.
 - ii. In terms of the planet, tell them about the framework you are using and offer some proof points. The CHSA's Five Pillar structure offers a framework.
- e. Be kind to yourself. Look for small, realistic goals. And remember to celebrate when you achieve them.

6. The focus is on recycling as the sustainable alternative for products and packaging. However, using recycled materials leads to higher CO₂ outputs in manufacturing than if the materials were all virgin. Either way, it all eventually ends up in landfill. Is the panel looking to reduce the materials used in manufacturing / packaging or to use more biodegradable materials and packaging?

- a. There are misconceptions.
 - i. New research shows up to 75% less energy is used to make a bottle of recycled plastic versus virgin plastic.
 - ii. Reusing plastic and blending it with virgin will reduce CO₂ emissions when compared with solely using virgin plastic, which requires a complete petrochemical process.

Questions & Answers

Continued...

iii. When examining the whole lifecycle, the carbon footprint of plastic options can be lower than alternatives. For example, mixing bioplastics in the waste stream with plastics can prohibit the recyclability.

b. The priority is always to reduce and opt for lightweight options where possible. Less is always more.

7. What about the micro plastics being put into the water system when washing materials that have been manufactured from recycled plastic bottles, for example microfibre cloths?

a. A lot of work is being done to examine the impact of micro and nano plastics on the organism. We do not know enough to make a judgement now.

b. There is pressure on manufacturers to make sure micro plastics do not, intentionally or unintentionally, go into the waste stream or into gutters. Good, basic hygiene is essential.

c. The EU will introduce legislation re. micro plastics and we can expect new standards re. water filtration systems.

8. In my experience about 90% of a modern office can be cleaned with probiotics and vegetable-based detergents. These products fit well into the concept of a circular economy. With the huge recent rise in the price of petrochemical raw materials does the panel consider a move towards cleaning with probiotics as a good option for protecting against inflation of the cost of the raw materials as well as for environment?

a. The priority is: use the right product for the task. Probiotics can be useful but if the task is disinfection, it's likely you need to use a disinfectant with the right accreditation. There are few accreditations for probiotic cleaners.

b. Whatever the product, go back and look at the company to get at 360o perspective. For example, are the raw ingredients being sourced responsibly?

9. How can an S.M.E improve its local community with a small team, budget, and resources?

a. Look to the business first, considering your emissions, waste streams, etc.

b. Identify the basic challenges in the area and be creative, whilst staying true to your core. Options for our industry include:

i. Litter picks

ii. Cleaning a local hospice or other charity

iii. Offer your location as a waste collection point for recycling

c. Other options include:

i. Scatter bee mix on grassland or making your own facility more friendly to pollinators and other wildlife

ii. Host community days

iii. Transform a room

iv. Create an initiative with other local businesses

d. Small things can have a big impact

Resources

The following resources were mentioned during the webinar.

B-Corp certification [<https://bcorporation.uk>]

B Lab is the non-profit network transforming the global economy to benefit all people, communities and the planet.

It was created in 2006 with the mission to inspire and enable people to use business as a force for good.

As part of this international network, B Lab UK leads economic systems change to support the collective vision of an inclusive, equitable and regenerative economy. Its purpose is to redefine success in business through building a community of engaged businesses, raising awareness of the B Corp Movement and influencing change in the UK economy.

Together, participants are shifting the global economy from a system that profits few to one that benefits all.

EcoVadis [<https://ecovadis.com>]

Since its founding in 2007, EcoVadis has grown to become the world's largest and most trusted provider of business sustainability ratings, creating a global network of more than 90,000+ rated companies.

It helps you manage your network both upstream and downstream, either by sharing your performance with your stakeholders or monitoring the performance of your own upstream value chain.

Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme [<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/packaging-and-packaging-waste-introducing-extended-producer-responsibility>]

Producer responsibility is about making sure businesses that manufacture, import and sell these products are responsible for their end of life environmental impact. The regulations require businesses to: minimise waste arising from these products and promote their re-use.

Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging will be implemented in 2024. The focus will be on producer payments for managing household packaging waste and packaging in street bins managed by local authorities.

Seven Sins of Greenwashing: UL Solutions

Sin of the hidden trade-off: A claim suggesting that a product is green based on a narrow set of attributes without attention to other important environmental issues. Paper, for example, is not necessarily environmentally preferable because it comes from a sustainably harvested forest. Other important environmental issues in the paper-making process, such as greenhouse gas emissions or chlorine use in bleaching, may be equally important.

Sin of no proof: An environmental claim not substantiated by easily accessible supporting information or by a reliable third-party certification. Common examples are facial tissues or toilet tissue products that claim various percentages of post-consumer recycled content without providing evidence.

Sin of vagueness: A claim that is so poorly defined or broad that its real meaning is likely to be misunderstood by the consumer. All-natural is an example. Arsenic, uranium, mercury, and formaldehyde are all naturally occurring, and poisonous. All natural isn't necessarily green.

Sin of worshipping false labels: A product that, through either words or images, gives the impression of third-party endorsement where no such endorsement exists; fake labels, in other words.

Resources

Sin of irrelevance: An environmental claim that may be truthful but is unimportant or unhelpful for consumers seeking environmentally preferable products. CFC-free is a common example, since it is a frequent claim despite the fact that CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) are banned under the Montreal Protocol.

Sin of lesser of two evils: A claim that may be true within the product category but that risks distracting the consumer from the greater environmental impacts of the category as a whole. Organic cigarettes or fuel-efficient sport-utility vehicles could be examples of this sin.

Sin of fibbing: Environmental claims that are simply false. The most common examples are products falsely claiming to be ENERGY STAR® certified or registered.

UK Plastic Pact [<https://wrap.org.uk/taking-action/plastic-packaging/initiatives/the-uk-plastics-pact>]

The UK Plastics Pact brings together businesses from across the entire plastics value chain with UK governments and NGOs to tackle the scourge of plastic waste. They are creating a circular economy for plastics, capturing their value by keeping them in the economy and out of the natural environment.

The UK Plastics Pact, led by WRAP, is the first of a global network of Pacts, enabled by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastics Economy initiative.

UN's Sustainable Development Goals [<https://sdgs.un.org>]

The Sustainable Development Goals or Global Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all".