Could you be doing more to deal with environmental issues?

This tool will help you think about your organisation's progress on tackling environmental issues and possible next steps. The purpose of this is to challenge you not to judge your performance to date.

Spend 10 minutes or so going through the questions, noting a few points, on your own or with others.

When you've finished, take a look at the accompanying notes. They won't tell you whether your answers are right or wrong but will help you situate your responses within a wider discussion, and prompt further thoughts.

PART A: Asking the questions

1 You are looking to do more on environmental issues but how much of a priority is it?

1. Low priority for you and for others
2. High priority for you but not for others
3. High priority for you and those around you

2 How would you best describe your motivations for taking action around environmental issues? If you have highlighted more than one reason think about the least/ most important

- Not compliant with legislation or don't understand what applies
- Demanded by customers and / or suppliers
- Concerned about regulations that might impact in the future
- An opportunity to save money
- Need to manage business risks better including environmental risks
- An opportunity to develop the organisation
- To make the organisation fit for the future
- Feels right to do more
- Something else...

3 If you have taken action on environmental issues what has been the most successful thing that you have done and why?

4 **What has been done to better understand environmental impacts (+ve and –ve) of your organisation?**

- Not explored impacts yet
- Looked at energy, waste, and/or water
- Investigated impacts of all internal operations e.g. office, logistics, processes
- Assessed where pollution might arise
- Investigated the impacts of materials, goods and services procured
- Considered the impacts of products in use and at the end of their life
- Fully thought through the environmental impacts in the design of products / services
- Identified priorities for action using risk assessment
- Something else...

5 **How far have discussions on environmental issues reached in your organisation and who is involved?**

6 **Do you have end goals or a vision on what you or your organisation might achieve with respect to the environment?** If there isn't anything formal or written, write down what you would like it to be. If others look what you have written would they agree?

7 **If there is an environmental vision or goals how widely shared are they across the organisation?**

Not much   1   2   3   4   5   fully embedded

8 **What is the main purpose of the organisation as a whole and is it captured in a mission statement that you can write down?**

PART B: Exploring responses

Q1 You are looking to do more on environmental issues but how much of a priority is it?

What are the possibilities here?

2. Environmental issues have a low priority for you and for others
3. Environment issues have a high priority for you but not for others
4. Environmental issues have a high priority for you and those around you.

If it is the **first** option then that will be a barrier to action and you should think about why it is such a low priority. It might be that the timescales your organisation focuses on are short, that you aren't fully aware of the issues or impacts or perhaps that you feel that you can't make much of a difference anyway. Think about the different motivations set out in question 2 – is there anything there that might provide a hook to help raise the priority level?

If it is the **second** then you are not alone. It is common to have individuals or teams that have environmental issues on the agenda but for then not to be shared across the organisation. You will need to raise the level of its importance, drawing on motivations that might be important for others – try thinking about it from their perspective exploring what might help them consider things differently. You must also involve other people in the process of understanding the issues facing the organisation and working out what to do.

Congratulations if you think it is the **third**. You have done a lot of hard work to get to this stage or you are lucky enough to work in a really progressive organisation. The scale of the challenge means you can't rest on your laurels and ambitious longer term goals will provide the focus. Steve Howard, Chief Sustainability Officer at Ikea recently said, "Incrementalism doesn't light people up. It is radical change that excites people".

Q2 How would you best describe your motivations for taking action around environmental issues?

Motivations for action can come from two directions. Those that involve an external pull and are reactive, and those involving an internal push and are proactive. If we take the list of answers we can see how these fit:

External pull

- Not compliant with legislation or don't understand what applies
- Demanded by customers and / or suppliers
- Concerned about regulations that might affect you in the future
- An opportunity to save money
- Need to manage business risks better including environmental risks
- To make the organisation fit for the future
- An opportunity to develop the organisation
- Feels right to do more

Internal push

If you are looking to make significant changes then there must be some **internal push**. Motivations that are external take you so far but won't necessarily promote the degree of change required. For example, a customer may demand that you have an environmental policy if you are to supply them. That may push you to develop a policy but it does not push you to do what it says. It can easily become about ticking a box. The further you go towards internal push the greater the opportunity for real change.

When considering current motivations you should remember that they aren't fixed. You may begin at the external end because someone is demanding action and, as a result, save money so do more, people become more motivated, customers like what you are doing, Directors see the benefits, business plans reflect these opportunities , and so on. Everyone has to start somewhere and taking action and seeing benefits is one of the most powerful means of motivating people. At the same time you can work on bringing the culture and values of the organisation in line with positive environmental action. More on that later.

If the motivation for action is still principally **external** then there is work to do. Think about how you might move towards more internal motivations and how these relate to what you have done so far (question 3), impacts (question 4) and ways that addressing these might lead to cost savings. Consider the risks that the business might face if it doesn't tackle specific environmental problems and about the opportunities that being proactive could bring.

Q3 If you have taken action on environmental issues what has been the most successful thing that you have done and why?

It is important to reflect on actions that you have already taken. This tends to happen more when things go wrong. Understanding why something went well is just as important. It can provide valuable information around the type of initiative that succeeds in a particular organisational culture and the processes needed to make this the case. Highlighting success is also an excellent way of maintaining momentum.

Q4 What has been done to better understand environmental impacts (+ve and –ve) of your organisation?

Looking inside the organisation – Understanding the issues that apply is a first step to taking action. The place to begin, if you haven't done this yet, is with your direct impacts. These are the things that you, or others in the organisation, do that lead to some kind of pollution or demand on resources that might have an impact on the natural world or other people.

When thinking about this remember that impacts can happen in two main ways: 1) as a result of accidents or incidents where something goes wrong; or 2) through everyday things that go on in the organisation. Consider both.

Take a look at *Environmental Impacts – Getting Started* to explore your activities and impacts.

Looking outside the organisation – In an ideal world we could stop there as everyone else would be doing the same thing. Alas this isn't the case. If you are serious about doing something then there are other things to consider. Think about what is happening to 'things' before they come into your organisation, and what is happening to things (products or services) after they go out. This means considering how goods that you buy are produced and what goes into making different components. Unless you are a big customer your opportunities to influence suppliers may be limited but if you don't like what you see then there could be alternatives. Designing a procurement procedure that reflects environmental criteria will guide purchases. A key question to ask is whether purchases need to be made at all.

If you deliver a product or service that others use then think about how they use it and the potential impacts. When Unilever did this they found that the biggest impact associated with particular products was in their use – e.g. people using energy for showers to then use Unilever shampoo. If the item you produce uses energy, find ways to make it more energy efficient to reduce the users' impacts (and costs). You can design products that can be reused, dismantled and components recycled rather than thrown away. This is a little harder to think about for services but is certainly doable and you can start to be creative and design them to actually reduce the impacts of customers.

Q5 How far have discussions on environmental issues reached in your organisation and who is involved?

Without a significant number of people involved, or at least on-side, it is hard to generate significant momentum. John Kotter, one of the leading experts of organisational change has said "In an organisation of 100 employees at least two dozen must go far beyond the normal call of duty to produce significant change"[1]. Of course, ideally, everyone is involved to some degree, whether it's around discussions on what can be done, telling others what's happening, delivering an action, helping collate data or whatever.

Engagement and behaviour change doesn't come easy and there is a tendency to focus on one offs. The art is thinking about how best to get the flow of information going both ways. Starting with the tools and media you already have makes sense. The next step is to do some research as there are plenty of ideas in the public domain.

Q6 Do you have end goals or a vision on what you or your organisation might achieve with respect to the environment?

The reality is most organisations don't have such a vision. They may have a policy and some commitments but typically haven't thought about what they want to achieve in the medium or long term. Those that do have a vision generally fall into two camps; those set up specifically to take positive action on environmental issues (or tackle an issue); and those that get how the environment is inextricably linked to organisational longevity or protection of the planet.

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[1] From Leading Change, p. 35

Sometimes goals are based on what you think can be achieve, or reflect what others are doing or what you think you should do. If you have taken this approach then think about how challenging the goals are and if they are appropriate to the scale of the challenges that climate change and material scarcity bring. If you are thinking about setting goals, or about revising existing goals then the most forward thinking approach is to develop science-based goals, based on what is seen as required to address the problem. You can find more information on this here. This may seem overly complex but it can be simplified in many cases to one much simpler target – zero. This is embodied in an innovative new tool called Future Fit for Business that outlines a set of goals that help define what a 'sustainable' business might look like.

Q7 If there is an environmental vision or goals how widely shared are they across the organisation?

If you want to achieve something ambitious it is important that everyone works towards the same end. The starting point is for the goal to be shared; that people understand the reasoning behind it and the importance of achieving it. Then you must ensure that each person can see their role in contributing towards reaching it. This isn't always easy but giving everyone a chance to input in some way, making sure you mean it, having actions that are moving towards it and reporting on progress, are good ways to build a suitable culture.

Q8 What is the main purpose of the organisation as a whole and is it captured in a mission statement that you can write down?

Mission statements can be powerful tools in guiding the direction that an organisation moves; a means of motivating people; and they can provide a framework for day to day decisions. If the purpose or mission is, in some way, at odds with proposed goals on the environment then it is usually an impediment to progress. For example, if the primary purpose of the organisation is to grow, then this could be a barrier to decisions on longer-term investments linked to goals. This isn't to say that decisions are to be made at any cost, more that a longer term view is required. Alternatively, if vision for environmental change is embedded in the core purpose it will guide all that is done. Take this example of Patagonia's mission statement, "*Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis*". This might be exceptional but it shows what can be done.

What did you think of the exercise, has it helped you think more about how you might start or progress your environmental ambitions? If you have any comments about the content of this tool or would like to know more about what we do then please contact us.

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