



License to thrive

Next-generation sustainability leaders

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- » Both the corporate sustainability function and the role of chief sustainability officers are changing. In a generation, many companies have gone from checking off a list of regulations to embracing sustainability as part of business strategy.
- » Today, sustainability surfaces in various forms of innovation, from new business models that empower under-served groups, to developing products that directly address difficult challenges such as climate change or ageing.
- » To fruitfully pursue those objectives, CSOs must be able to build rapport at all levels of an organisation: 61% of survey respondents agreed that the ability to collaborate effectively across functions was an essential attribute for sustainability teams.
- » Effective CSOs are also resourceful; conceiving and executing sustainability strategies without the benefit of existing processes.
- » Tone from the top makes a big difference. CSOs who believe their CEO is personally vested in sustainability are more likely to consider their own functions to be high impact.
- » As companies mature in their approach to sustainability, that understanding becomes embedded across each business, heightening its importance for managers and leaders beyond the core sustainability team.

INTRODUCTION

The UN's influential Brundtland Report in 1987 defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". A generation later the private sector is embracing the urgency of sustainability.

It falls to chief sustainability officers (CSOs) to oversee and drive the sustainability initiatives that such recognition of the issue demands. Echoing the rise in corporate sustainability interest, the number of companies with full-time CSOs doubled between 1995 and 2003, and again between 2003 and 2008, although this growth has slowed in recent years.¹

The function is still relatively young, however. Leaders have largely had to blaze their own paths, from reporting on material risks and risk responses, to developing innovative products that help solve large, long-term problems such as climate change, water scarcity or population ageing.

As a result, from company to company CSOs can have very different roles and responsibilities. The scope of the job has expanded steadily to include reputation-building, new product or service development and even defining corporate strategy. Some sustainability functions have evolved to resemble distributed business functions such as marketing, while others remain walled off in risk management, corporate social responsibility, or other such departments.

We set out to explore how much the role is evolving. Based on a combination of interviews and a survey of CSOs, we examined the changing role of the CSO as the sustainability approaches of business evolve, the skills a CSO needs to boost impact, and the ways in which management can support effective sustainability leadership.

We found that the sustainability function is not a technical or public relations role, but rather a role of relationships and resourcefulness. To be effective, CSOs have to connect with people both within and beyond the company. It was also evident that as sustainability thinking matures, and in response to external forces, sustainability objectives are never static, placing the responsibilities of the CSO in a constant state of flux.

What's more, as a company matures in its sustainability journey, the concept moves beyond the core sustainability team to become embedded throughout an organisation, as both staff and line managers come on board and business leaders make it part of overall strategy.

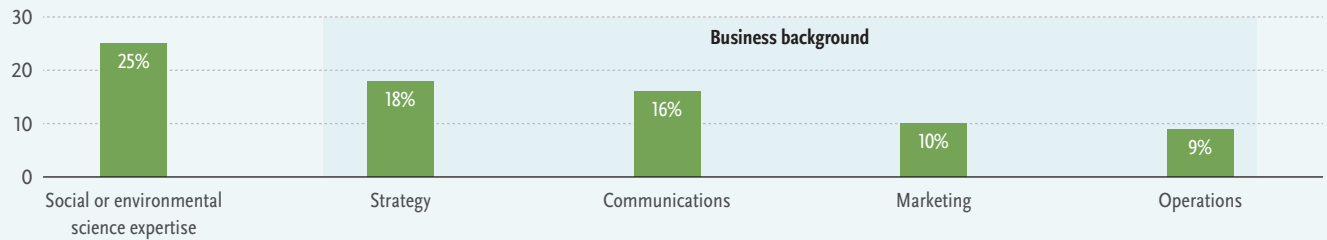
"I think of this as a change process. We need to ponder: What is sustainability? It is not environment or costs; it is about innovation and the impacts of what we do in a wider context"

DAVIDE STRONATI
GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY LEADER,
MOTT MACDONALD

¹ Greenbiz & Weinreb Group, State of the Profession 2016

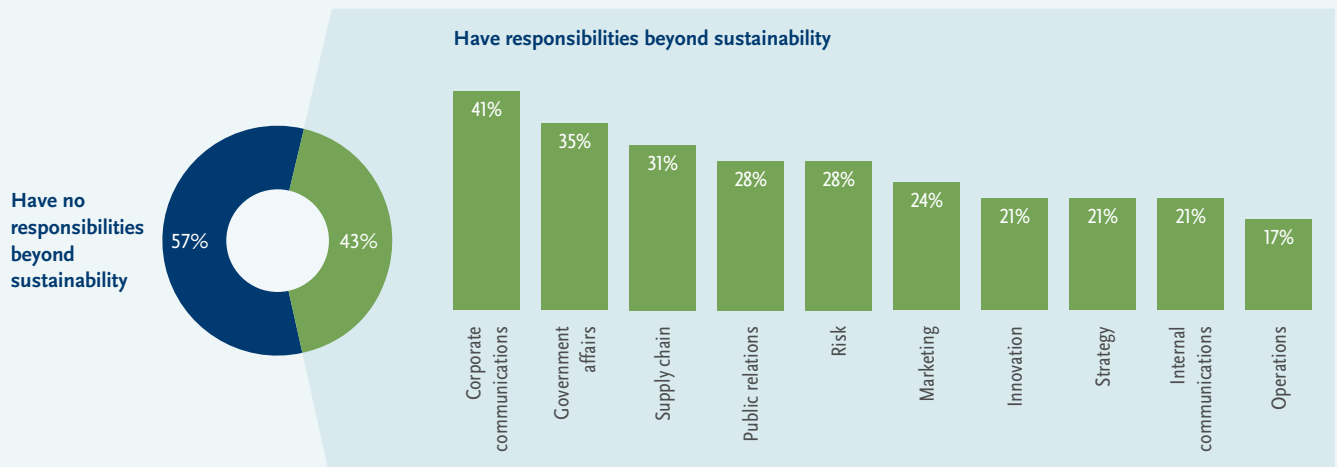
WHO ARE THE CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICERS? IN 4 CHARTS

Sustainability leaders tend to have business backgrounds



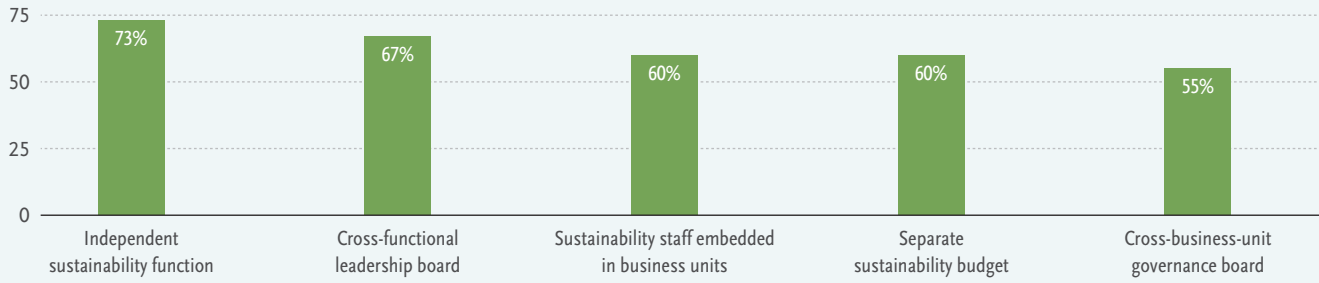
[Survey question: How would you characterise your primary functional background? (n=67) Top-five responses shown.]

Almost half of sustainability leaders have other responsibilities



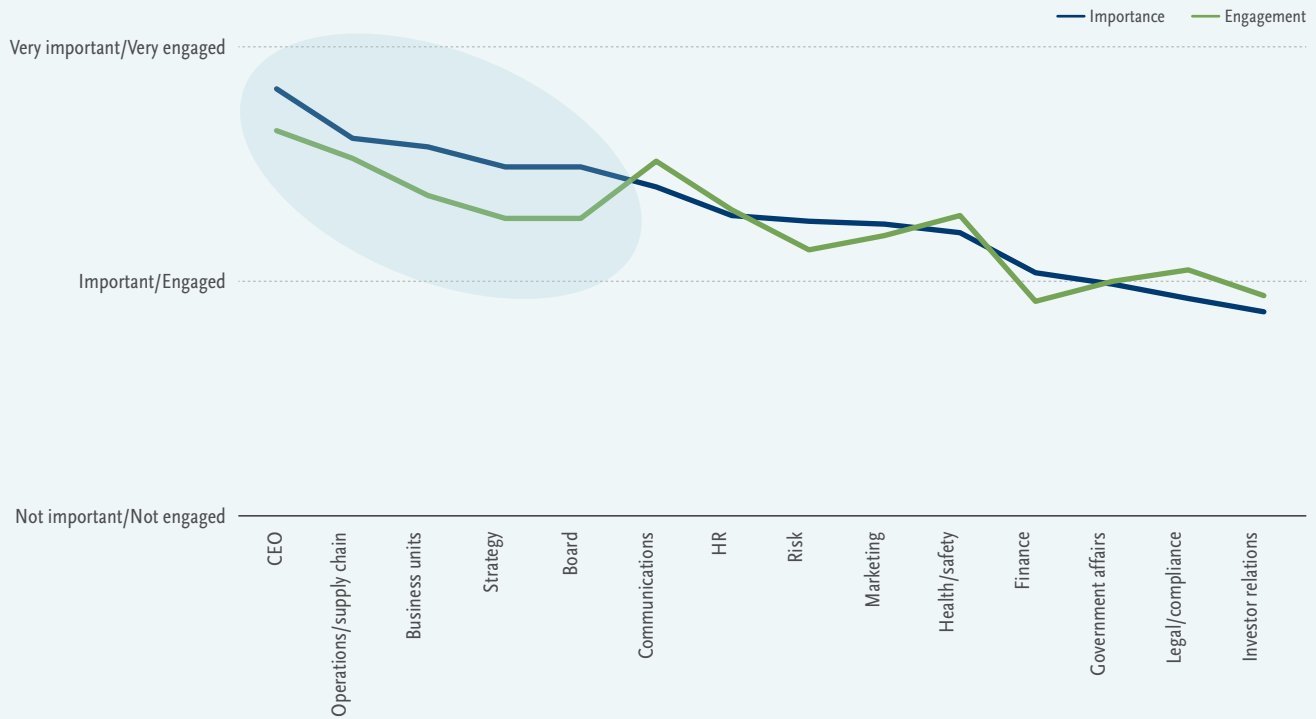
[Survey question: Do you have responsibilities or areas of focus beyond sustainability? If yes, please choose all that apply. (n=67) Top-10 responses shown.]

Different operational approaches to sustainability governance



[Survey question: Which governance/organisational mechanisms does your sustainability strategy have in place? Please choose all that apply. (n=67) Top-five responses shown.]

Gaps in engagement for the most important functions to sustainability



[Survey question: How important are each of the following functions to the implementation of the sustainability strategy? (n=67)]

[Survey question: To what extent are each of the following functions engaged in the development of your sustainability strategy? (n=67)]

WHY SUSTAINABILITY?

Companies don't embrace sustainability out of goodwill. Rather, they have very clear business objectives when they take on everything from workers' health and fair wages to animal welfare and efficient resource use.

Sustainability objectives generally evolve from a "compliance" stage of meeting regulations and securing licence to operate, through an "efficiency" stage of reducing waste and increasing resource efficiency, to a stage of finding new business opportunities² and using relationships and influence to achieve maximum impact. At each stage, the CSO can be an advocate for progress and, when the time is right, outline a vision for transformation. Successful companies will have fleshed out the big picture to different degrees.

Starting with compliance

Chief sustainability officers tend first to be assigned the role from within the company,³ perhaps reflecting the ad hoc nature of how many sustainability departments originate. They may be focused solely on sustainability, as 57% of our survey respondents were, or they may bear other responsibilities such as corporate communications, public relations and government affairs (see box: "Who are the CSOs?"). That could be as a result of the sustainability function's origins within an organisation.

Through our interviews, we found that how companies initiate sustainability varies significantly, but a shared factor is that sustainability awareness tends to be triggered either by crisis or reporting compliance. Sustainability initiatives play a vital function, from addressing compliance with employee health and safety regulations, to reporting on environmental impacts, with a focus on reducing risk for the organisation. These are extensive initiatives: it might take years to develop new processes and to interact with multiple stakeholders, within and outside the company.

At the start of the process, these organisations look for sustainability leaders with relevant expertise such as crisis communications or audit skills. One such leader is Silvio de Girolamo, group chief internal audit and corporate social responsibility officer at food and beverage operator Autogrill. De Girolamo's role originated from audit and reporting requirements but, as he explained in our interview with him, his role quickly outgrew the compliance mandate.

"Talking about sustainability is broader than environment and climate — it is a mindset on how we create value"

PASCALE GIET
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
COMMUNICATION, SUSTAINABILITY
AND SOCIAL IMPACT, REXEL

² Kathleen Miller & George Serafeim, "Chief Sustainability Officers: Who Are They and What Do They Do?", Chapter 8 in *Leading Sustainable Change*, Oxford University Press, 2014

³ Weinreb Group, CSO Back Story II, 20 October 2014

Becoming more efficient

Autogrill's experience is similar to that of other companies, with compliance-related activities transforming into initiatives that focus on returns. Finding ways to reduce operating costs is a common objective for most companies. Sustainability illuminates new opportunities to achieve that — while simultaneously reaping environmental and social benefits.

In common with many businesses, Autogrill had begun to seek ways to respond to stakeholder pressure while improving the bottom line. Under de Girolamo's lead, for example, Autogrill developed a health and safety plan that reduced the number of workplace injuries by 20%. "This important result was achieved by engaging people rather than imposing the activity as a mere matter of compliance", said de Girolamo. The plan also cut absences and improved employees' perception of the workplace, he added, which had a demonstrable impact on financial results.

Moving from compliance to efficiency means improving resources for sustainability initiatives. Investment is required, which demands that sustainability teams build the business case for their budgets. To make that case, CSOs have to call on their relationships with internal stakeholders. For example, Frank van Ooijen, director of communication and sustainability at Dutch dairy co-operative FrieslandCampina, told us how the co-operative's 19,000 farmer-owners were integral to getting sustainability on the agenda. Business continuity works extremely well in the co-operative setting there where farmers are both shareholders and key stakeholders.

Then again, competitive pressures can also drive sustainability initiatives. For instance, inquiries from shareholders and sustainability activity by other companies in the industry provided further impetus for chemical company LyondellBasell on its route to sustainability, as its executive vice president and chief legal officer Jeffrey Kaplan told us.

Efficiency gains pay off, whether measured in energy cost savings, employee productivity or some other impact. When Wal-Mart set out to improve fleet efficiency, it did so through better routing, truck loading, driver training and advanced automotive technologies and fuels; in 2014 alone, these strategies resulted in 15,000 metric tons of CO₂ emissions avoided and nearly \$11 million in savings.⁴ Successes help to legitimise sustainability initiatives, and embolden many sustainability teams to expand their remit even further.

⁴ Tensie Whelan & Carly Fink, The Comprehensive Business Case for Sustainability, *Harvard Business Review*, 21 October, 2016.

To innovation and beyond

Nearly three-quarters of our survey respondents said they needed to embed sustainability into their business model and 84% felt their sustainability strategy would become more closely aligned with business strategy in the next three years. This indicates a marked shift away from mere compliance and efficiency, into more strategic thinking about sustainability.

In AkzoNobel, business leaders report to the board on how sustainability is integrated into their business plans. Sustainability is not a separate skillset but rather a part of our DNA, built into our competencies as well as innovation and R&D.

MARTEN BOOISMA
CHIEF HR OFFICER, AKZONOBEL

Sustainability isn't marketing hype — it's a business imperative



[Survey question: Why did your company develop a sustainability strategy? Please choose up to three responses. (n=67) Top-six responses shown.]

That thinking begins with a sustainability strategy, which 96% of our respondents have in place. As with any strategy, a sustainability strategy involves making choices, and understanding both the organisation's market positioning and its unique capabilities.

When Davide Stronati took office as Global Sustainability Leader at Mott MacDonald, he met with his executive committee members one-on-one; all wanted growth and more business. To then work out how the company's sustainability strategy could deliver those objectives, Stronati ran a workshop with the executive committee — together they settled on a strategy and a roadmap, outlining actions, accountabilities, performance measurement and quick wins for the next five years.

At this stage, a company's emphasis shifts from "sustainability" to "strategy". Once past the compliance and efficiency stages, sustainability strategies become more idiosyncratic, with unique sets of objectives reflecting that company's unique market positioning and capabilities. Objectives may range from product innovation to pursue sustainability and growth at the same time, to redesigning a supply chain to be more risk resilient. Companies' sustainability strategies become as unique as their business strategies.

And those strategies should be tightly meshed: including sustainability at the strategy table creates all sorts of opportunities. Indeed, the more closely linked sustainability is to a company's broader business strategy, the greater its potential to increase revenues, says a 2015 report by Ethical Corporation.⁵

An example: at Norwegian telecommunications firm Telenor, its sustainability chief was instrumental in developing a business model aimed at reducing inequalities in an emerging market. "Before we launched in Myanmar in 2014 a SIM card would cost over \$100," said Mai Oldgard, Telenor's senior vice president and head of group sustainability. "We launched at \$1.50. You can imagine what that meant to people. Our focus has since been on adapting to the needs of the mass market — and to roll out a good mobile network that will soon reach almost every city, town and village."

Many companies have also found that their sustainability objectives can be achieved only if other companies come along on the journey. Thus, a company's sustainability strategy might include requiring suppliers to submit to having their labour practices audited, for example, or to invigorate their packaging, in order to preserve the commercial relationship.

Or a strategy might be predicated on convincing competitors to join in changing their procurement practices, in order to move an entire industry towards sustainable practices. Each time a major organisation pledges its commitment to reporting standards such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition's Higg Index, or to a sustainable sourcing initiative like the Palm Oil Innovation Group, momentum is built for others to follow. If one company acts alone, however, potentially it could find itself at a competitive disadvantage. So sustainability strategies might call for the outreach required for competitors and entire industries to make the change together.

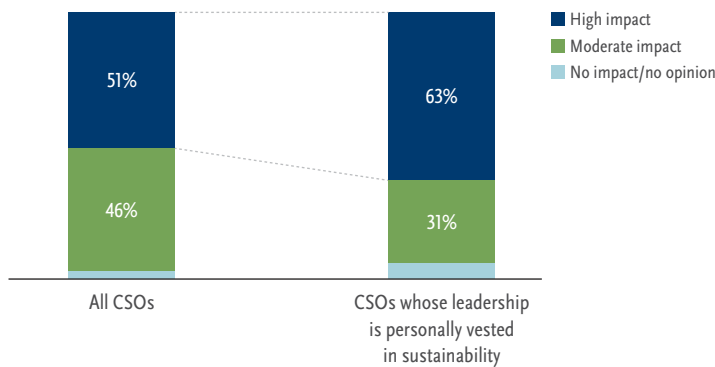
HIGH-IMPACT SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

Along the journey from compliance to efficiency to innovation and beyond, certain traits stand out amongst CSOs. In our survey, 51% of respondents

⁵ Ethical Corporation, *The State of Sustainability Report 2015*, 1 April 2015

described their sustainability functions as “high impact”. One key trait of these high-impact sustainability leaders: their own top leadership teams are more likely to be described as “personally vested” in sustainability.

Sustainability leaders who have top leadership support deliver high-impact strategies



[Survey question: How would you rate the impact of your sustainability strategy over the past three years? (n=67)]

Survey question: Why did your company develop a sustainability strategy? “Our leadership is personally vested in sustainability.” (n=67)]

Other points also emerged. CSOs have some natural affinity for sustainability, for the belief that a company’s social and environmental impact is part of its footprint on society. The technical capacity to parse those impacts, however, is not necessarily the key requirement for a high-impact CSO. Rather, other aspects of the role emerged through our interviews: relationship-building, resourcefulness and business acumen.

Relationship-building

Overwhelmingly, survey respondents and interviewees highlighted the importance of building relationships at all levels within their organisation, across functions, and with external stakeholders such as clients, investors, NGOs and public sector agencies.

Relationship-building can mean making the business case for sustainable behaviour to middle managers, or helping investors understand the material issues at hand. The impact of sustainability leaders can be broad-based and ground-level, such as Statoil’s sustainability e-learning programme. Rolled out in 2015, thus far more than 7,000 employees have attended it. “One man can’t make the change”, Bjørn Otto Sverdrup, senior vice president for

corporate sustainability at Statoil, told us. “But he can be part of the method of mobilising 22,000 employees. I say our business doesn’t need one chief sustainability officer, but 22,000.”

Sustainability is a relationship function



[Survey question: Which of the following personal attributes do members of the sustainability team need to possess to implement your sustainability strategy successfully? Please choose up the three responses. (n=67) Top-five responses shown.]

Sustainability is a question of enterprise culture. Culture is set at the top: no further step in the right direction is possible unless strategies, targets, performance and management commitment are clearly tied to creating long-term value

ALBERTO PIATTI
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE
ENTERPRISE, ENI

And CSOs must build strong relationships with top-level leaders — their support is vital. The survey found that 63% of companies whose leadership is personally invested in sustainability report their sustainability initiatives have high impact, compared to 51% of the overall sample.

The CEO and the board — not the CSO — must drive strategic change. As Isabelle Kocher took the helm as CEO of French energy business ENGIE in May 2016, for example, the company unveiled a transformation plan that included phasing out coal projects and focusing on low-carbon energy.

Building bridges

CSOs must also build relationships externally in pursuit of the mission. Mott MacDonald’s Stronati described how he needed to make the case to senior management that they should pay concerted attention to sustainability. To do so, he met with the firm’s top 20 clients and asked them about their sustainability expectations to help him to identify objectives that would also drive business strategy — a creative exercise in setting up sustainability targets.

In some cases, companies must collaborate with others — and convince them to do so — to achieve their desired impact. Unilever’s Sue Garrard, senior vice president for sustainable business development and communications, explained why the company has to drive external conversations and actions: “Unilever — indeed, any company — cannot change things on its own. Companies need to link their business agenda with other businesses, NGOs, governments and other external stakeholders in order to be successful.”

Resourcefulness — passion is not enough

Sustainability mandates are diverse, particularly as they mature. As we have noted, processes may not yet exist. As a result, CSOs need to be resourceful and creative. Even at the compliance stage, resourcefulness is required. For example, companies typically have well-established systems in place for financial reporting. But similar systems for sustainability reporting, which covers many different sub-areas, may have to be set up from scratch. It takes creativity to develop materiality maps and to find ways to measure sustainability impacts that are often intangible in nature and dispersed throughout facilities around the world.

Business acumen

A facility with the business end of sustainability is as important to sustainability teams as technical expertise in social and environmental issues. This is reflected in our survey respondents, who expressed a need for more communications and strategy skills in the future. Indeed, industry expertise and operational skills are both almost in as much demand as social and environmental expertise.

Shell executive vice president for safety and environment Monika Hausenblas is an example of a sustainability leader with business acumen. Hausenblas has held a range of technical, commercial and management positions at the energy company and daily juggles a range of problems, all of them demanding a keen business sense. At one level, she must balance shrinking Shell’s carbon footprint, especially in a period of low oil prices, and making a defensible profit for shareholders. At another level, she might have to keep an eye on supply chain sustainability.

THE FUTURE OF CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

As companies mature in their sustainability journey, sustainability becomes embedded in the culture, with responsibility diffused across line managers and business leaders rather than confined to a core

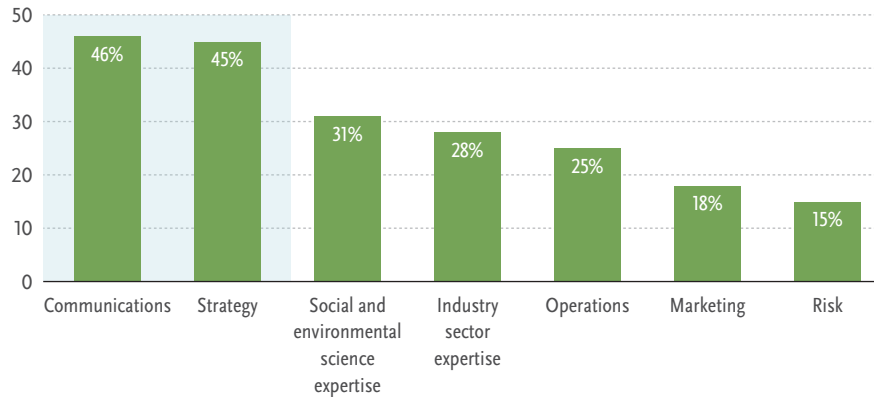
Leaders have to be innovation-driven as well as open to creating connections and building the strategy with a proactive listening approach to all relevant stakeholders.

STEFANIA LALLAI
SUSTAINABILITY AND EXTERNAL
RELATIONS DIRECTOR,
COSTA CRUISES

I am proud that we as a company are embracing the dilemmas and opportunities of the energy and climate challenge, recognising the need for both more and cleaner energy, and seeking collaborative solutions for a changing world.

MONIKA HAUSENBLAS
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT, SHELL

Communications and strategy skills most needed in the future



[Survey question: Which of the following skills will your sustainability team need more of in the future? Please choose up to three responses. (n=67) Top-five responses shown.]

sustainability team. Some wonder if the CSO role will recede ultimately, because sustainability will be so ingrained in all decision-makers that they then become the ones driving the sustainability agenda. Indeed, 49% of survey respondents indicated that leadership should assign sustainability responsibility to people in key leadership positions across the organisation as one of the top three ways to get the job done.

But there are those who are sceptical that the CSO role may become extinct. Social and environmental issues are complex and unpredictable; companies will continue to need to devote specialised attention to material issues such as human rights and environmental laws. In time, as the sustainability mindset becomes more normalised, the CSO role may evolve into one of a co-ordinator and specialist resource.

More immediately, nearly all of the survey participants felt they could usefully pursue new sustainability objectives. But they were bullish about their companies' future ability to deliver sustainability strategy: 73% of CSOs surveyed said their company was well positioned to deliver its sustainability strategy over the next three years.

Sustainability leaders do aspire to greater influence in business and investment decisions. When we asked those in our survey to rank one top objective that they would like to pursue in this arena that they are currently unable to initiate, almost 20% of them said they would like to introduce sustainability criteria into new business development or investment

decisions. Connecting sustainability initiatives to customer-facing business investment processes might require still more bridges to be built internally.

A further 13% would like to redefine the brand around sustainability initiatives. As brands are the sum total of customers' experiences with a company, sustainability is but one part of that experience. Most companies aren't ready to put sustainability at the centre of those experiences.

Wish list: Sustainability criteria in business/ investment decisions



[Survey question: What objective would you like to pursue that you are not able to right now? Please select one response. (n=67) Top-five responses shown.]

Why is this important? Again and again, we heard that passion is not enough to bring about true impact, be it transforming supply chains or bringing financial products to under-served markets. Rather, building the business case and using sustainability to drive business development speaks to something all employees share: leaders, managers and workers seek to serve a company's bottom line. "While a 'business case' focus is not the only one, said Frank van Ooijen of FrieslandCampina, "[it] is the best way to get top management buy-in and [elicit] change from other functional leaders, from finance, marketing and supply chain".

Measurement drives action

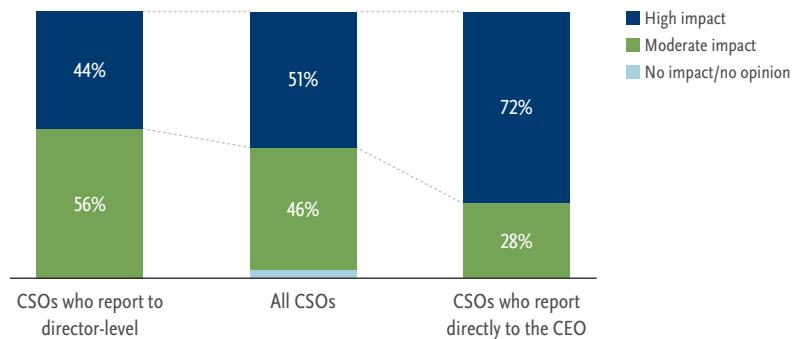
Part of achieving sustainability impact is by measuring progress — and then putting those metrics into action. Survey participants and CSOs suggested incorporating sustainability metrics into leaders' remuneration. We believe

this is best achieved by a commitment to transparency in performance and using that for benchmarking. Such a commitment can spur external competition and a race to the top, as well as nudging all leadership to be able to argue the business case for sustainability.

Sustainability attracts talent

It is well-documented that a convincing sustainability strategy and purpose is vital to attracting and retaining talent, especially future leaders. A positive feedback loop then results: the sustainability push is helped along by younger and newer employees for whom it is a core value. To maximise the potential of younger employees, Pascale Giet, senior vice president communication, sustainability and social impact at Rexel, suggests that those in the driver’s seat need to entrust younger employees with sustainability.

Sustainability leaders with direct access to the CEO deliver high-impact strategies



[Survey question: How would you rate the impact of your sustainability strategy over the past three years? (n=67)]
 [Survey question: What function or leader do you report to? “CEO” (n=10); multiple director-level responses (n=9)]

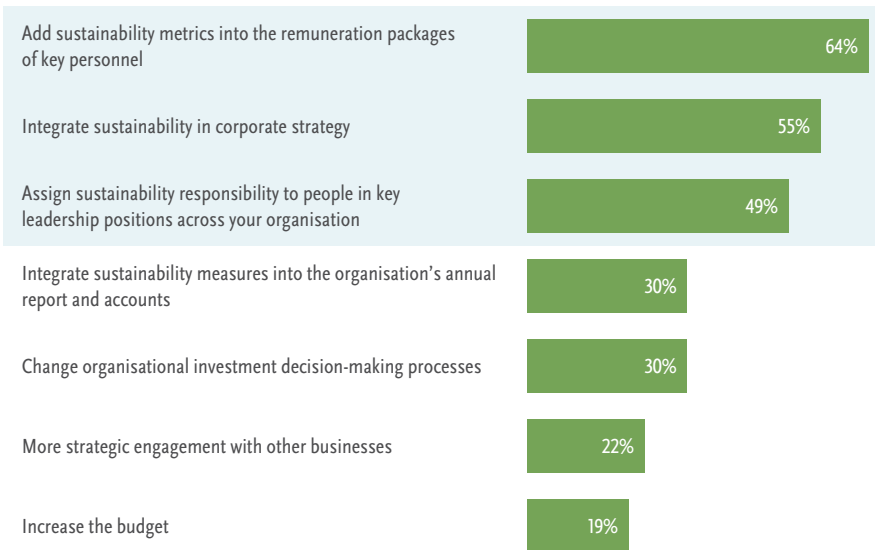
Tone from the top

Our interviewees agreed that the momentum for lasting sustainability ultimately must come from the top: the CEO. At Spencer Stuart, we have found that sustainability skills, or personal investment on the issue, are not yet a common requirement in CEO job specifications. We expect to see this change as recognition grows that a CEO is integral to sustainability, and as sustainability ambition increases. Already, one quarter of CSOs in our survey report directly to the CEO — and those CSOs were more likely to describe their functions as “high impact.”

Interviewees also often acknowledged that due to some companies' long institutional histories and entrenched attitudes, an internal cultural shift is needed for sustainability to mature. For their part, CEOs will need to foster the right skills in people throughout the organisation to help sustainability leaders achieve broader impact, and help sustainability leaders build the relationships and expertise they need to drive business growth.

For instance, survey participants said that operations and supply chain, along with business units, are very important to the implementation of sustainability strategy, but are not sufficiently engaged in developing sustainability strategy. And half of sustainability leaders would like to see leadership assign sustainability responsibility to people in key leadership positions across their organisation to improve the impact of their strategy.

Three clear asks from leadership



[Survey question: In what three ways could leadership help you get your job done? (n=67)]

HOW TO GET THERE:

FIVE WAYS TO LEAD THE SUSTAINABILITY JOURNEY

1

Assess where your organisation lies on its path to sustainability. Is it at the compliance stage of meeting regulations, the efficiency stage of increasing resource and cost effectiveness, or that of identifying new business opportunities in sustainability? What do you need to achieve your goals? Remember though that the road to sustainability never just comes to a halt: companies can always strive for more.

2

Identify precisely how sustainability can help your company achieve its goals. Many businesses set out to find ways to reduce operating costs. Sustainability can shine a light on ways to achieve not only that, but other opportunities such as top-line growth.

3

Sign up top-level leaders to the sustainability project. CSOs who report directly to the CEO are more likely to describe their functions as high impact — and strategic change is driven by the CEO and board. It follows that it may be useful to prioritise sustainability awareness and skills in searches for top executives and board members.

4

Connect and build relationships throughout and beyond the organisation. CSOs recognised operations and supply chain, business units and strategy as vital to implementing sustainability, but noted that these functions could be more engaged in developing sustainability strategy. CSOs can draw on their creativity and resourcefulness to build relationships across departments and units, as well as leaders at all levels, including middle management. They can also connect with peers beyond the organisation.

5

Commit to measurement and transparency. Make a commitment to measuring sustainability performance and progress, and make that performance transparent. Committing to transparency on performance can spur external competition and a race to the top, and help make the case to leadership for sustainability.

CONCLUSION

In today's complex business environment, a company's sustainability journey responds to shifting external circumstances. Thus, both top-level management and sustainability leadership set the sustainability agenda.

The role of the CSO is strategically important to the business, and requires a mix of technical, managerial and particularly relationship-building skills to get sustainability on to the agenda of top leaders, middle management and ground-level employees.

If sustainability is driven by the top of the organisation, and if sustainability strategies come to resemble business strategies, then could the CEO become the new CSO? After all, sustainability impact draws on all the leadership, relationship, influence and listening skills of a chief executive; he or she must be both passionate and commercially minded to lead the business — and its sustainability strategy — into the future.

There are no more than a handful of companies today about which we could credibly describe their CEOs as CSO. But it's possible the roles may converge over time. The role of the sustainability function has already evolved significantly in just one generation. Something extraordinary could happen in the next.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- » Anne Chassagnette, Group Head of Environmental and Social Responsibility, ENGIE
- » Patrice-Henry Duchene, Head of Sustainable Development, Groupe PSA
- » Sue Garrard, Senior Vice President, Sustainable Business Development and Communications, Unilever
- » Pascale Giet, Senior Vice President Communication, Sustainability and Social Impact, Rexel Group
- » Silvio de Girolamo, Group Chief Internal Audit and CSR Officer, Autogrill
- » Fabienne Grall, Sustainable Development Director, Verallia, S.A.
- » Monika Hausenblas, Executive Vice President, Safety and Environment, Shell
- » Jeff Kaplan, Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer, LyondellBasell
- » Stefania Lallai, Sustainability and External Relations Director, Costa Cruises
- » Birger Magnus, Chairman, Storebrand ASA, Norway
- » Mai Oldgard, Senior Vice President, Head of Group Sustainability, Telenor Group
- » Alberto Piatti, Executive Vice President, Responsible and Sustainable Enterprise, Eni
- » Henry Sténson, Executive Vice President, Group Communication and Sustainability Affairs, Volvo Group
- » Davide Stronati, Global Sustainability Leader, Mott MacDonald
- » Bjørn Otto Sverdrup, Senior Vice President, Corporate Sustainability, Statoil
- » Frank van Ooijen, Director, Communication, Sustainability at FrieslandCampina Institute for Dairy Nutrition, FrieslandCampina

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- » Hege Norheim (Copenhagen)

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About the study

We made contact with sustainability heads of large global companies through an email campaign, and received 70 responses out of 400 contacts. (Their exact titles may vary, and we sought those who had primary responsibility for sustainability in their organisations.) More than half were C-level sustainability leaders. 69% of respondents were from companies with an annual turnover of more than \$5 billion.

Interviews: To complement our survey data, we interviewed 15 senior executives, including 13 chief sustainability officers, of large global enterprises. Our aim was to gain a better understanding of the skills and attributes needed to drive the sustainability agenda, the challenges in creating and implementing a sustainability strategy, and where sustainability sits in the organisation.

A note on limitations

Our survey sample is largely comprised of, but not limited to, large western European companies, which made up 75% of the sample; other perspectives may differ by geography and firm size. We expect some sampling bias — the companies polled in qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys have, in general, an above-average level of sustainability maturity. Not all industry sectors are represented; the sustainability issues that are salient to each company and CSO may vary by sector.

About Kite Global Advisors

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ABOUT SPENCER STUART

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