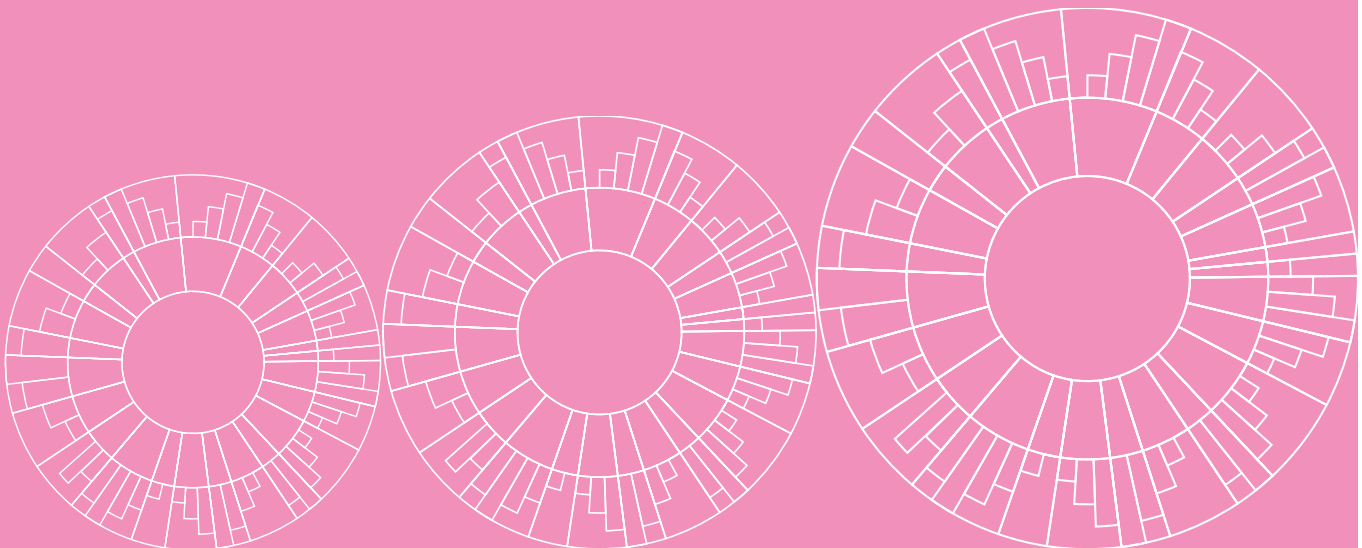


Supporting Your CEO and Their Decision-Making Around Sustainability

A TACTICAL INVENTORY



Tips and tactics for success

This inventory is derived from interviews with over 100 global CEOs and corporate change agents. In the course of doing research on CEOs and strategic decision-making, we found that successful change agents were consciously looking for opportunities to support their CEOs in their journeys to embed sustainability. They used a portfolio of tactics that included building momentum through small proof points, capitalising on quick wins, and having the courage and the preparation to push for big wins when the moment was right. While we focus on tips and tactics to influence your CEO, remember that many of these tactics could be employed in your interactions with other senior leaders.

We describe these tactics in more detail in our [Supporting your CEO guide](#).

This inventory has been designed to help you reflect on these tactics and to think about how they might be applied in your own setting. We encourage you to discuss your reflections with trusted colleagues or outside peers to help you to gain further insights into your answers. You may also think about whether others in the organisation may be better positioned to undertake some of these actions and what role you could play in supporting them to do so.

In reflecting on what we heard, we found that the following tactics helped successful change agents to support their CEOs:



Create opportunities for them to experience the issues first-hand



Help them learn from influential peers



Leverage the interests of key customers



Help board members be better sustainability advocates



Create opportunities for them to make public commitments



Help them create strong business cases



Let the business "fail small"



Create opportunities for them to receive recognition for this work

Approaches to consider

On the following pages, we outline various tactics and approaches. Think about which of these tactics might work in your setting and mark the ones you see as most relevant to your organisation. Once you have had chance to consider all the approaches in a given category, place a checkmark next to those you think are most worth pursuing.

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Create opportunities for your CEO to experience the issues



Identify key community and / or supply chain stakeholders in the contexts in which you operate and consider how to create opportunities for your CEO to personally and genuinely interact with them in meaningful and positive ways.

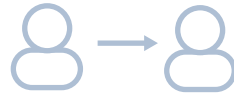
Find opportunities for your CEO to meet with staff who are working on the frontlines to address environmental and social issues.

Create forums for your CEO to meet directly and talk openly with staff from across the organisation about the challenges and opportunities being faced by the company.

Find opportunities for your CEO to experience firsthand the key ecological and social issues facing your company in immersive experiences that challenge or disrupt their worldview.

The top actions that we could take in our company are:

Help your CEO learn from influential peers



Identify respected leaders in your industry, other industries or outside of business and share articles or excerpts from speeches where they describe how sustainability issues have shaped their approach.

Create an opportunity for your CEO and possibly your senior leadership team to engage with these influential peer(s).

Arrange for your CEO to participate in industry and cross-industry sustainability leadership initiatives. Work with your CEO and others to identify the big plays for your company and industry relating to sustainability. What could be meaningful levers that your company could create for transforming your industry, region and / or society towards more sustainable futures? Then find opportunities for your CEO to personally be involved and help drive these initiatives.

Identify emerging and respected leaders in your own company and attempt to support their journeys of discovery as a means to reinforce your CEO's exposure to sustainability risks and opportunities.

The top actions that we could take in our company are:

Leverage the interests of key customers



Learn about the sustainability challenges and opportunities of your key customers and empower your CEO to have constructive discussions with your customers about these issues.

Use engagement opportunities with your key customers so that your CEO can hear their sustainability related concerns and interests first hand.

Document cases where you have successfully earned new business by solving a sustainability problem for a customer.

The top actions that we could take in our company are:

Help board members be better sustainability advocates



Capitalise on opportunities to bring salient sustainability issues framed in the business strategy onto the board agenda – directly, through engaging with board members and / or through sub-committee meetings.

Research your board members' experiences, expertise and interests so you can identify who may be best positioned to champion different sustainability related causes. Support them with the business cases they need to showcase their expertise on these issues.

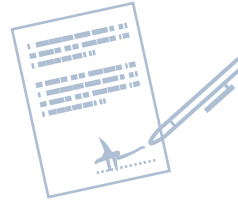
Build trusting relationships with your board and executive team where you can be a valuable resource to them in delivering on their mandates but aren't positioning yourself as challenging or undermining their credibility.

Help the board to be better able to translate and articulate sustainability performance.

Bring in credible and interesting external experts to speak to the board on a range of topics to sustainability.

The top actions that we could take in our company are:

Create opportunities for your CEO to make public commitments



Identify the leading and most relevant standards and accreditations for your industry. Is there an opportunity for your CEO to personally sign up for and participate in high-level forums relating to these commitments?

Create sustainability related strategic goals and targets, as closely aligned to the company's strategy as possible, and leverage opportunities, internally and externally, for your CEO to show their commitment to achieving them.

Identify internal forums or events for your CEO to speak to company employees on the strategic importance of salient sustainability related issues to company employees.

Carefully select an external forum or event you could use in a similar way, making sure that the audience would present an important yet encouraging opportunity to share the work.

Support your CEO in drafting a speech and / or presentation incorporating their perspectives on sustainability and enumerating specific commitments. Empower your CEO to comfortably answer questions that might be raised.

The top actions that we could take in our company are:

Help your CEO create strong business cases



Frame your proposals in language that clearly makes use of your company's existing strategy and how it defines business value.

Communicate your proposals in terms of business risk AND opportunities.

Develop a one page visual road map that shows how sustainability integrates with and supports your company's core strategy then work with your CEO and the executive team to refine it to the point that it works for them.

Show how sustainability can benefit your company's key clients – pick a few and work with the business divisions to understand how sustainability could create solutions for these clients.

Identify your company's current or upcoming 'big projects' and show clearly how sustainability can help improve the business value for the company.

Find organisational stories that you can pass on to your CEO that will help them explain the business case to others.

Help your CEO to demonstrate how investments in sustainability will bring a return to investors.

The top actions that we could take in our company are:

Let the business “fail small” ✓ ⊗ ✓

Identify small failures as they occur and demonstrate the value in learning from them by tying them to larger failures in other companies or industries.

In certain situations, look out for and allow small failures to happen in order to have the organisation feel the reality of the issue at a small scale, learn from the experience, and adopt new strategies going forward.

Help foster a culture of learning from failure by inviting others in the organisation to share their sustainability setbacks and engaging in a psychologically safe process to help them understand and prevent future issues.

The top actions that we could take in our company are:

Create opportunities for your CEO to receive recognition for this work



Profile your CEO's commitment and work in internal communications.

Create opportunities to showcase your CEO's commitment and work in key external publications and communications.

Nominate your CEO for external sustainability and / or leadership related awards.

The top actions that we could take in our company are:

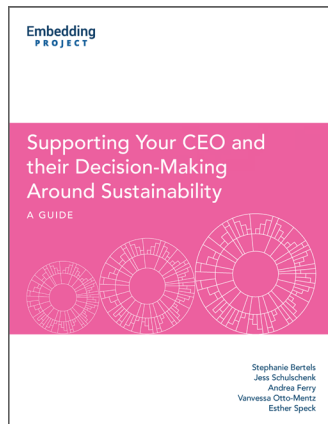
What will you do?

Starting today, I will

Sometime this year, I will

Planning for the future, I will begin to

Other resources



[Supporting Your CEO and Their Decision-Making Around Sustainability Guide](#)

This guide is based on a review of prior academic research on CEO decision-making, combined with practical experiences and insights gleaned from interviews with over 100 CEOs, board members, and sustainability executives.

For more resources to help you embed sustainability, please visit us [online](#).

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