



# ENGAGING YOUR SENIOR LEADERS AND COLLEAGUES



# BUILDING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR NET ZERO

The science clearly tells us that we need to act urgently if we're going to slow down climate change and limit the earth's temperature rise to 1.5°C. Reaching net zero as a company is an integral part of this challenge and is an exciting journey. But without the support and buy-in from your senior leaders and colleagues, progress can stall, and it can become a challenging process!

That's why we've pulled together some top tips on how to encourage colleagues right across your business and achieve real change.



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# ENGAGING YOUR BOARD AND SENIOR TEAM

Becoming net zero is part of a longer-term strategy and not an immediate fix. It's important to be sure there's an appetite from the business as a whole and that you have the support of your senior leadership team. That support is important in making sure your net zero journey:

- is authentic and links to your business goals and overall purpose
- gets embedded throughout your business rather than being a stand-alone activity
- is visible to others - your senior leaders' time, endorsement and participation means activities have more impact
- has dedicated resources and budget
- gains momentum and appears in external and internal comms
- is recognised as valuable to the business

Here are our tips for engaging your senior team and board:

## Find a sponsor

When you're engaging senior team members, it's valuable to find a climate action or net zero sponsor. Watch Hannah Arcaro, Regional



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Environmental Manager EMEA at UBS, highlight the importance of finding someone who'll champion the cause at senior meetings and help to move change through the system. You should also think about if there are particular ways you want to involve the most supportive leaders. You could ask them to launch any employee competitions or new initiatives.

### **Understand the challenges facing your business**

Speak to your colleagues to find out what issues need to be addressed. For example, have your sales colleagues/bid team noticed they're being asked about net zero targets when pitching for new work, and missing out? Or is HR being asked how you're taking climate action in interviews, and they don't know the answer? By understanding these challenges, you can present your senior leaders with business ideas and solutions through a net zero plan. Being a leader can improve brand reputation and give your business a competitive edge.

### **Find out what your competitors are doing**

How large are your competitors' carbon footprints? Do they have net zero plans? What date have they pledged to be net zero by? With this information you can see if you're falling behind and need to catch up. Or maybe there's an opportunity to be an industry leader. Collecting this data to show how you compare to others in your



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industry could persuade your senior team to take notice!

### **Back it up with figures**

Include relevant facts and figures to back up your case - it adds credibility to your argument. For example, can your bid team share the number of times they've been asked about net zero as part of a tender? Climate action will lead to cost efficiencies in the medium to long term. But sometimes you need short investment, which can be an obstacle. Where you can, calculate payback periods to show the return on investment and aim to contextualise the cost in terms of offsetting longer term risk.

### **Show that you've considered the risks and rewards**

It's important that senior leaders know you're aware of what the challenges could be and that you'll create policies and procedures when they're needed. This could be around employee resistance, resource availability, training, loss or gain of revenue - show you've thought each step through to inspire confidence.

### **Have a clear call to action**

Before you pitch to your senior leaders, think about what it is you want them to say yes to. Do you have a board member in mind who you want to be a sponsor? How much money are you asking for and what will you use it for? Do you want them to promote your activities internally and externally? Do you need help bringing in



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people to contribute ideas to your net zero journey?

### **Have a plan**

Presenting a clear and achievable plan of what the business wants to achieve and integrating this into your company policies will help drive the net zero agenda forward. Watch James Ross, CSR Executive at Buzzacott, [highlight the key considerations you can focus on when presenting to your senior management or board.](#)

### **Keep them engaged**

Once you've got your senior leaders on board, keep them updated with your progress. It's important to integrate net zero into your existing business structures. There's no need to set up a new structure - use what's already in place so the activities get fully integrated. For example, instead of setting up a net zero board sub-committee, include updates at all board meetings and other sub-committees, from finance and marketing to governance.



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# ENGAGING YOUR COLLEAGUES

Engaging colleagues is just as important! Some of your net zero changes will require a shift in employees' behaviour, which means you'll need to convince them to adjust their behaviours and shift their mindsets. Your colleagues will have invaluable knowledge about the day to day running of their departments and the business which can be harnessed to drive change.

Here are some top tips for engaging your colleagues:

## **Just start!**

Get people engaged as early and broadly as possible. It's tempting to wait for that perfect moment to fit in with communications plans but if you want to drive change across the business then you need to get out there as soon as possible and start talking to people, as it can be a long process.

## **Know their drivers**

Different people will be interested in and motivated by different things. Some will just want to know it's 'in hand' whilst others will want to help drive and shape your climate action and net zero programmes. Try and be flexible with your engagement, sharing information but also giving colleagues a chance to input into



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decisions. Watch Hannah Arcaro [share a great example](#) of how UBS has engaged colleagues through creative programmes.

### **Find passionate employees**

Setting up a climate action network or net zero champions allows people who are really passionate to contribute more to your net zero plan. The network can come up with ideas for improvements, you can use them as a sounding board and they can set up newsletters and events so you can work together to keep colleagues informed. Having a network will help you to reach more employees and help colleagues to feel more engaged. Watch James Ross [talk about the benefits of this approach](#).

### **Make it business as usual**

Add climate action practices into job descriptions and review them at appraisals. For example, Office Managers could be responsible for regularly measuring and reporting on resource usage across the business. That could incentivise them to increase efficiency and reduce consumption and waste. Ask managers to help support your efforts to collect emissions data by integrating them into KPIs. This will keep it consistent and increase take up. And try to get relevant climate action points on all meeting agendas, no matter how small. The more this happens, colleagues will start to expect updates and contribute ideas. If you can't, ask your net zero champions to voice climate action points at the meetings they attend.



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## Keep them engaged

Sharing data can really help to engage colleagues. Run an awareness campaign and find a way to measure the 'before' and 'after'. Paper usage can be an easy one to measure, or perhaps you could do a bin audit and see what proportion of recyclables ended up in the general waste bin? Then run an awareness campaign to encourage behaviour change and remeasure against your baseline. And share the results with everyone - you could even make it a challenge with prizes for the teams that have done the best.



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