



## Resource Guide

# Training Employees on Social & Environmental Aims



## Why Train Employees on Social & Environmental Aims?

Successful businesses need to be efficient, well-managed, and customer-focused. Within this framework they must also fulfill the expectations of their stakeholders, which includes demonstrating their commitment to the environment and society. A company's ambitious environmental policy will not be successful unless its staff know the goals they are aiming for and how to achieve them. Good intentions can be undermined by poor training.

Every day, employees across an organization make decisions that can have far-reaching environmental and social consequences. Informed decisions about such routine matters as: procuring a corporate vehicle fleet; programming heating and cooling systems; adjusting energy settings on computers; commuting to work; and even purchasing paper, printers, or kitchen equipment can reduce a company's environmental footprint and improve the bottom line. Employee insights and creativity are also vital to improve the bottom line by shifting toward more sustainable business models. Providing employees with training to understand a company's standards in relation to its environmental and social intentions could drastically change the ways these decisions are made.

## Developing & Delivering Trainings

When developing a training, start by deciding what the various individuals should understand about the company's social and environmental aims. After clarifying the focus, identify goals and objectives which state what employees should know and how they should utilize the information moving forward. If the company has professional trainers, utilize their expertise. For smaller companies, make sure that the person who conducts the training is experienced in, and knowledgeable about, the content. Once you have completed the training, evaluate its effectiveness by evaluating the employees' satisfaction and their competency with the material.

## Consider Tracking Key Metrics

Track and publicly report metrics about the company's social or environmental performance and report them publicly. The B Impact Assessment is a great start for setting a comprehensive reporting standard that can be made public. The company may consider redacting potentially sensitive information. To go a step further, set and share performance goals in your reporting for the next year.

Companies who transparently share information about their impact on workers, communities, and the environment empower customers and other stakeholders to make more informed decisions. These companies are also more likely to hold themselves accountable for their performance. This public reporting of accountability is not just to show where the company performed well but to provide a complete listing that shows the company's overall performance with targets the company aims to improve. Here is an example:

*eBay's "Green Team" encouraged the company to build San Jose, California's largest commercial solar installation, reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by over one million pounds per year and saving \$100,000 to date.*

# Who Should You Train?

According to [this white paper](#) from the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, informing and training employees on social and environmental aims has numerous business benefits:

## Front-Line Staff

Front-line employees are often in the best position to identify inefficiencies and propose improvements. Environmental education of employees can improve profitability which supports greater efficiency by producing less waste, and using less water and energy.

## Customer-Facing

Customers are increasingly interested in the environmental profile of the products and services they purchase. Employees in sales and marketing and those in other customer-facing roles need to be aware of these aspects of their offerings, and be sufficiently literate in environmental issues to place those attributes in context.

## Innovators

Educating employees on environmental impact can be a source of innovation and savings. This may result from the development of new product or service lines as well as new technologies, materials, or processes that reduce the use of water or harmful materials.

## Supply Chain Managers

Educating employees on sustainability practices throughout the supply chain can lead to greater efficiencies, and help build collaboration to meet sustainability, quality, and other goals. It can also strengthen relationships between a company and its suppliers by aligning values and objectives.

## Those with Community Ties

Companies need good relationships with various constituencies to maintain their license to operate, including neighbors, local communities, regulators and officials at all levels of government. Leveraging employee interest in environmental and sustainability issues can provide a good basis for initiating and strengthening relationships with stakeholders and employees.

## Future Staff and High-Performers

Competing successfully for top talent and retaining high-performing employees are critical factors to a company's success. After all, employee-recruiting and turnover are costly. The findings of the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation support the idea that social and environmental education is an increasingly important factor in attracting and retaining employees.

## Resources

- Ernst & Young shares [The Value of Sustainability Reporting](#)
- [Why Getting Serious About Sustainability Starts at Training](#) according to GreenBiz
- Learn about how the Training Journal believes you can [Train to Sustain](#)

## Associated Resource Guides

- Influencing Industry Social & Environmental Standards
- Corporate Mission Statements
- Corporate Charitable Giving



[Best for Rhode Island](#) is an initiative of [Social Enterprise Greenhouse](#) in partnership with business and community organizations across the state.