



Of the Greater Philadelphia Area

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Sustainability Reporting

A sustainability report is a report published by a company about the economic, environmental, and social impacts caused by its everyday activities (profit, plant, people).

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) establishes guidelines for reporting to ensure consistency and trust.

Sustainability disclosure can serve as a differentiator from competition and foster investor confidence, trust and employee loyalty. Reporting may, in fact, be expected of the top companies in our modern business world.¹

More information can be found at the Global Reporting Initiative (www.globalreporting.org).

¹ *Value of sustainability reporting*, A study by EY and Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship (2013)

Your partner for solving environmental compliance requirements and beyond!



Is Sustainability for Me and My Company?

I heard a comedian say that calling something “sustainable” is like calling food “gourmet.” What exactly does sustainable mean, what’s the big deal, and isn’t it expensive?

Here are seven ideas to consider that can lead toward making your business more sustainable – having positive impacts on profit, people, and planet!

There are so many definitions for sustainability; and if you are focused on making a good product profitably how can you *also* focus on something like improving water resources in Africa?

It may be true that your operations have no impact on water resources in Africa, but that doesn’t mean that your company can’t take steps toward being sustainable.

One definition of sustainability you might consider is - **using less resources and creating less waste during your process.**

With this type of focus on sustainability, your company can look at operational efficiencies, seek waste reduction opportunities, and identify energy use or overuse. Addressing any shortcomings in these areas ultimately reduces operational costs.

I would recommend that you **start small and cheap!** Here are a few ideas to consider to get started.

- **Focus on you.** Figure out what is important to your company and your customers. Your operation may not have a significant carbon footprint, but it may generate a large quantity of waste that is expensive to manage and dispose. Then you can set a goal that benefits both you and your customers.

“Calling something “sustainable” is like calling food “gourmet!””

About the Author

Donna Switzer is the founder of Beyond Compliance LLC Consulting of the Greater Philadelphia Area, a woman-owned sustainability and environmental, health and safety (EHS) consulting firm that partners with industry to solve regulatory compliance requirements. Donna is passionate about reducing risks associated with air emissions, wastewater discharges, waste management, and workplace safety. She has worked with a broad range of companies in chemical, pharmaceutical, manufacturing, and power sectors in developing, implementing, and evaluating key sustainability and EHS programs.

Donna is a Certified Professional Environmental Auditor and a Certified Hazardous Materials Manager.

- **Start at the beginning of a project.** Include a question (or a few questions) on your CapEx authorization documents that requests project designers to identify equipment, parts or materials made with recycled content, or less toxic chemicals, or greater energy efficiency.
- **Whole life cost.** Focus on the whole life cost of a project. Along with the cost of the initial investment, add the costs associated with continued operations and maintenance. Include consumables, waste disposal, and cost to maintain an environmental permit over the life of the project. This focus may show you that the cheaper investment might yield higher operating costs or more regulatory burden.
- **Think local.** Look for local talent or materials. Transportation costs from local suppliers should be lower. Supporting local suppliers may also boost the local economy and reduce your Scope 3 carbon emissions (See Greenhouse Gas Protocol in Resources Section). As always though, the supplier must meet your vendor specification with regard to technical qualifications.
- **Inhouse resources.** Ask your employees for input. An operator who has been running a machine for years may have a unique way to save time and materials without compromising product quality.
- **Look at data.** Track energy usage, determine who is using the most water, summarize waste disposal activities, evaluate your chemical inventory, look for patterns in incident/injury rates. Most of the time you have most of the records that are required, they just need to be looked at in a different way. Figure out if you have adequate monitoring equipment to get a total picture of your resource use (e.g., gauges on your water lines to identify where water is being used).

The picture that data provides may point to a project or process change that can save costs.

- **Non-equipment changes.** Sometimes you can make small changes that result in significant savings (by either using less resources or generating less waste) without having to buy something. The change could come in the form of an updated SOP, personnel training, amended contract language, adjusted maintenance scheduling, or new recordkeeping process.

In conclusion...

Choosing to use less resources or to generate less waste can have a significant effect on profit, people and planet. Creating a sustainability program that is right for you and your customers does not have to be as onerous as preparing a gourmet meal. Take one step at a time and you will realize the business benefits.

If you would like more information about how to implement a sustainability program that is right for you, please contact us.

Resources

Greenhouse Gas Protocol:
<http://www.ghgprotocol.org>

EPA Resource:
<https://www.epa.gov/sustainability>

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