



Image: Peninsula Hotels

Setting your green initiatives up for success

With increasing ESG reporting requirements, greenwashing legislation and consumer interest, engaging in environmental sustainability is no longer just an option for hotels and tourism providers, but rather a requirement. Unfortunately, research shows that a lot of these typical initiatives fail due to employee disengagement. So, what can you do to make sure yours is a success?

98% of sustainability programs in organisations fail¹.

In % of situations employees avoided engagement in sustainability.

A lack of organisational support and empowerment lead to disengagement.

Failure is not an option


The sustainability landscape in tourism and hospitality is changing dramatically, largely driven by evolving legislation and consumer demand. Failure of sustainability initiatives comes at increased cost:

 Mandated ESG reporting impacting organisations worldwide

With the introduction of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive in Europe, large organisations (and smaller ones in 2025) are required to adopt the European Sustainability Reporting Standards. The standards require detailed ESG reporting, which has wide-ranging implications for business travel and events, both within Europe and internationally.

 Greenwashing legislation increases chances of prosecution

Increasingly across the globe, larger tourism companies (i.e. airlines) are prosecuted for greenwashing. More than 50% of organisations provide concerning environmental claims², for example nearly 50% of airline voluntary offsetting communications are considered misleading³.

 Business and leisure travellers make more sustainable choices

Increasingly, travellers are considering more sustainable options. 76% of travel managers are adding sustainability clauses to supplier contracts⁴. In leisure, 74% of travellers want to make more sustainable travel choices- a number that has increased by nearly 10% from last year⁵.

Why do sustainability programs fail?

Resourcing, culture challenges and competing priorities have previously been identified as the top three reasons for sustainability initiatives not achieving their targets.

New research has illuminated that these barriers lead to lower employee engagement with environmental initiatives. This disengagement was found to be the main contributor to failure given the important role that employees have in implementing sustainability programs. The following reasons were cited by employees for avoiding the implementation of environmental initiatives:

- Employee engagement is about green skills (the how), but current organisational training focuses on green attitudes (the why).
- Environmental initiatives are not integrated into existing processes, making them easy to avoid.
- Organisations are not clear about how important environmental initiatives really are in comparison to other priorities.

The solution

The most effective environmental initiatives take a bottom-up approach. The following key elements should be considered when developing them for your business:

- **Design solutions cooperatively** – employees know how to best do their job and value providing their input, so ask them how they think their tasks and processes could be more environmentally friendly.
- **Review work processes comprehensively** – incorporate environmental action into all tasks, not just as an add-on activity.
- **Focus on skills not awareness** – ensure that your employees know how to do their job in environmentally friendly way rather than just explaining to them why they must behave in an environmentally friendly manner.

These careful considerations will also ensure that you are sending the right signals about the importance of your environmental efforts.

Want to implement more sustainable solutions to your business operations? Contact Antje Martins for help:

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¹ [Bain.com ACCC](#)

³ [Guix et al. \(2022\)](#)

⁴ [GBTA Foundation](#)

⁵ [Booking.com](#)