

FIVE TIPS FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION.

Introduction

Sustainability is about more than just our physical environment. For me, a sustainable world needs to look after the environment, people and communities. For a thriving world, we need all three parts to be healthy and balanced.



No longer can sustainability just be seen as a 'tick box' by businesses. It's becoming increasingly important across all sectors and it will affect your business whether you're ready for it or not.

"Sustainability is gaining significant momentum and will become a major focus for customers, staff, suppliers and shareholders"¹.

If you think the business world doesn't notice the contribution companies make to their wider communities, take the example of the *Harvard Business Review (HBR)* CEO rankings. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos fell from first place to 87th when taking into account what HBR refers to as "environmental, social and governance performance".

1. Passion

Be passionate about what you do, and why you do it. This passion will help drive your success.

Never be scared to show that passion – use it and share it.

People will get behind passion and become more engaged with your brand. Your conversations will become much wider than just price and technical specifications. You will have an audience who wants to hear your story because they will feel your passion for it.

Remember to recruit with your passion in mind. Will potential staff also be passionate about your brand and 'purpose'? Will they be enthusiastic cheerleaders for your organisation? As the old say goes, recruit for values, train for skills.

Passion is what makes a business more than just a job



2. Be Authentic

Authentic – *"being true to one's own personality, spirit, values and character"*

People believe what they find out for themselves – and they will find any inconsistencies if reality doesn't match your marketing.



The internet has made it so easy for people to find things out for themselves. No longer do they have to rely on your marketing to inform them about your products or brand.

Online reviews are the most obvious example but it's much wider. For example: You say you care about people but available online for all to see are employment court decisions where you were found to have bullied staff. You could say that you care for the environment but one of your subsidiaries is an open cast coal mine.

If you're not authentic, staff will see it first and unintentionally, they can communicate this to customers.

Being authentic to your message should be a key part of your marketing and communication strategy. If you're not what you say you are – or people will know.

3. Don't Get Comfortable

We all know that the world is forever changing.

This new way of thinking is fast becoming mainstream. Millennials already view the world differently. Sustainability, social enterprise, for purpose business, disruptors are common lingo for business people coming through today.



Technology obviously changes so much. Electric cars vs self-driven cars or even electric busses vs electromagnetic trains. Whole of life stewardship for electronic goods has been long spoken about and social giving schemes can be seen in many businesses.

As Jack Welch the management guru says – change before you have to.

4. People

Business to Business or Business to Consumers, the type of business doesn't actually matter. Transactions are always between people.



It's not just about customers. Staff are people as well. Staff buy in will increase productivity and make them enthusiastic sales people. Get it wrong and customers will be able to see the mis-match

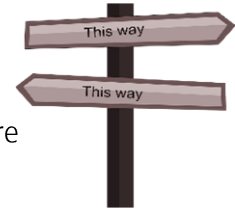
Suppliers can be a powerful ally if they buy-in to what you're doing. They know their products and may be able to help you use them better or overcome issues you may have in, say production. They also have industry knowledge and contacts. Value them as people and who knows what the benefits may be.

Referrals are your best form of advertising – when your customers are behind you, they will bring others along for the ride

People are your sustainability!

5. It Comes From You

Being genuinely interested in sustainability and contributing to our communities has to come from the top. You can't expect your staff to care about sustainability if all you care about is short term gains.



The things that matter to you and your organisation are strategic decisions. Everyone has a favourite cause so just saying we have to have a social purpose will see people moving in different directions depending on what they believe. Just like a mission, your passion needs to be clear, concise and focused. Sustainability and community good doesn't happen by accident.

Once you have identified the passion:

- Own it
- Live it
- Lead it

Own your passions and lead from the front

Conclusion

Bring it back to Community. Everything a business does will have some impact on the communities in which it operates or interacts with.

- Where you operate from
- What you produce
- How you manage your operations
- Who you employ
- Your supply chain and procurement practices
- Where you sell to
- Your corporate social responsibility activity

Never forget your **"why"**, talk about it with a passion and inspire others.

Your actions should prove your words so your values have to guide all that you do.

Lastly I would like to share a quote from someone leading the way for purposeful business in New Zealand

"People are putting business on notice".

"They won't put up with disingenuous, dispiriting or dispassionate experiences from the brands they buy and the organisations they work for.

Therefore, the imperative for a clear and inspiring Purpose in business will continue to grow. This will go beyond 'words on the wall' to something that engages, inspires and motivates people.

In 2017, we'll see more organisations communicating the positive difference they make in the lives of the people they touch, and being held to account for behaving in a way that is consistent with their purpose.

Ultimately, how well an organisation lives its Purpose will be measured by the strength of its reputation. "

Jacqueline Farman – Director, The Purpose Business