



FACTSHEET

MOBILISING EMPLOYEES TO TAKE ACTION ON YOUR NET ZERO JOURNEY

It is often said that 'employees are our greatest asset'. Mobilising employee action is key to meeting your net zero carbon goals. Good engagement can enable employees to connect with the ambitions of your organisation and create a motivating environment. Behavioural and cultural change can enable rapid carbon reduction with higher levels of engagement shown to correlate with higher levels of innovation¹.

Over the past few months, we have seen that employee engagement has become even more important both in terms of staying connected to a remote workforce and ensuring that there is a safe working environment for employees. Businesses have been reaching out through different approaches, providing support mechanisms to check in on the health and wellbeing² of employees and also offering support on reducing their environmental impacts whilst working from home³.

Trust in business has also risen during the pandemic⁴ with employees more likely to listen to guidance and advice from their employer than before the current health crisis. Communicating your organisation's ambitions to your employees

has become even more important to further mobilise action.

With diverse perspectives from our [Net zero Carbon Taskforce](#), this factsheet outlines some of the key recommendations to successfully mobilise your employees to take action on your net zero journey.

ENGAGE

Employees are a key stakeholder and in many cases account for thousands of key opinion formers and advocates to help spread the message and embed a culture of transitioning to a low carbon business.

Galvanising employees makes great business sense too. A more engaged workforce impacts on recruitment and retention, increased wellbeing, brand reputation and bottom-line savings.

10%

in reduced energy costs can be achieved through workplace behaviour change programmes⁵.

Failure to engage employees on sustainability could also hamper recruitment and engagement. For example, 78% of millennials want to work for an organisation that makes positive social impact⁶.

It is critical to engage employees with carbon target setting prior to announcing a net zero carbon target, as this will ensure transparency and make it





easier to embed ownership across the business. With public demands for action on the climate crisis growing all the time, there is a huge opportunity to crowdsource ideas and innovations to help you cut carbon across your company.

In the run up to launching your climate action plan share with all employees why the company is committing to net zero and clearly outline everyone's role in achieving the target. C-Suite leadership is vital to demonstrate commitment to accelerating the transition to net zero to your employees.

72%

of individuals stated that it is important that their employer's CEO speaks out on climate change⁷.

Examples of communications that work include a call-to-action video from the CEO, an infographic to explain the target and scope of commitment or an all-staff email.

Trying to navigate the complex terminology around this topic can also be a barrier to communicating more widely with your employees. Business in the Community (BITC) has developed a [jargon buster](#) which can help with this.

Embed strong governance

Key to any business transformation is embedding a culture of responsible business, accountability and ownership of the business' target to be net zero carbon. Having a strong governance structure from the start is key. Executive sponsored working groups across key business areas contributing to the company's carbon emissions will be important to ensure ownership and responsibility across the entire value chain. An Executive steering group should be used to review on a regular basis the

pathway and plans tracking progress against carbon reduction in line with a science-based methodology.

IMPACT STORY

At TalkTalk the internal engagement scheme is called #netzeroheroes, which has featured roadshows in person and over video call, and a series of ambassadors across the business focusing on one key net zero metric per quarter.

Engagement at all levels

It's important that accountability for meeting your net zero goals doesn't just sit with your CSR or Sustainability teams. Meeting net zero targets goes beyond incremental changes and to meet your ambitions transformational change will be crucial.

This will involve engaging with all departments of your businesses from facilities, procurement, product development, HR and customer service etc. Everyone has a role to play. Processes within key roles may need to be refocused to meet your net zero goals.

This could include:

- Engaging with your product development teams to incorporate design principles that consider low-carbon factors or adopting circular economy principles for your product portfolio.
- Engaging with HR teams to build a pipeline of skills and talent needed for the future to enable positive behavioural change and meet net zero ambitions.
- Establishing a take-back scheme for products at the end of life with your customer service teams.
- Incorporating low-carbon initiatives or adopting circular economy principles within your workplace with facilities. Please see [BITC's Circular Office Guide](#).





- Engaging your procurement teams to embed [responsible practices within your supply chain](#) and address Scope 3 carbon emissions.

All departments of your business should be engaged to embed net zero ambitions within the activities of their role.

INSPIRE

Launch communications are essential. It is important to explain to staff what net zero carbon is and why the company is doing it. Start with your current environment journey, the past successes the business has achieved so far and lead up to the company's ambition to be net zero. Use key employee engagement assets including: a message from the [CEO to all staff](#), intranet site takeovers, email signatures and infographics to explain the scope of the ambition, what the business will be doing to reduce its carbon footprint and what it means to employees working at the company.

Share the message - roadshows across the business are a good way of engaging employees and videos from people in different roles describing the part they will play in the transition can really bring the messages to life.

IMPACT STORY

Jacobs initially launched their Climate Action Plan internally with an online webinar covering what it meant for the company and the measures already undertaken. It was then publicly released on Earth Day with a message from the CEO.

ACT

Supporting employees to reduce their own carbon footprint

Another helpful role that businesses can play is to help employees understand and reduce their own carbon footprints. Practical actions you can take could include:

- Using employee benefits to support employees to make low carbon choices including [cycle to work schemes](#), train subsidies and loans.
- Reviewing company pension funds to align with a commitment to responsible business and low-carbon investments. BITC is a supporter of the [Make My Money Matter](#) campaign which aims to ensure pension funds are invested responsibly.

68%

of UK savers want their investments to consider people and planet alongside profit⁸.

IMPACT STORY

BNP Paribas is ensuring that its company pension funds are aligned with its vision and purpose to be a responsible business. BNP Paribas is investing £600m into ESG funds recognising that responsible investment leads to better long-term outcomes and they are one of the original partners of the Make My Money Matter campaign. To demonstrate its commitment to BNP Paribas employees, they ran an employee engagement campaign - gaining insights from surveys, developed a social media campaign including animations and produced engaging videos to highlight the positive and long-term changes the company is making to invest in a sustainable future.

- Support employees in the office to reduce their footprint at work by using a [personal carbon calculator](#). This can will help them understand their own footprint and the impact positive environmental choices can make.
- Offer employees low carbon choices at work including vegan and vegetarian food options, [communicating carbon savings alongside nutritional content](#).





IMPACT STORY

Sky has a network of Sky Zero Champions across the business and engages with them sharing tips and ideas on Yammer. This group also helps identify how the business can support them to reduce the carbon footprint of the company and its employees, with people sharing what they are doing using #LifeAtSky. Sky also has carbon literacy training for all employees in production, supporting the business to measure and reduce the carbon resulting from programme making.

Supporting colleagues at home

Businesses have been reaching out to their employees on how to reduce their environmental footprint at home. This has become particularly prevalent as 27% of UK employees were reported to be working exclusively from home in July 2020, up from 14% in 2019⁹. BITC has developed a factsheet on [living sustainably](#) - a practical guide to share with teams whilst they are homeworking, with actions people can take at home to help build positive environmental behaviours.

Many businesses are also considering providing a more holistic package of sustainable benefits to homeworkers, including financial contributions towards renewable energy tariffs, loaned office furniture and interactive platforms to monitor energy and waste at home to help address the movement of environmental impacts from the workplace to the home.

IMPACT STORY

Following the lockdown, PwC reshaped its employee engagement campaigns into a Sustainable Living at Home programme that delivered environmental, personal wellbeing and business benefits. A digital library was created with

ideas and information on how to tackle food waste, utility costs, carbon footprints and making the most of a lockdown holiday. It's been hugely popular: thousands have made use of the support and it's contributed to increased engagement scores throughout the pandemic.

Shift in environmental impacts

Many businesses have experienced a substantial move to homeworking due to COVID-19. This will inevitably impact on carbon emissions reporting and net zero goals reducing energy consumption within scope 1 emissions but increasing scope 3 emissions due to more energy consumption coming from employees working from home.

470,000t carbon

is estimated to go unreported by business in the UK in 2020¹⁰ from emissions generated by increased homeworking.

Businesses setting net zero targets will need to consider this shift in working patterns within their ambitions if it's to become the new norm.

BITC has produced a [Building Back Better Workplaces](#) factsheet which provides basic principles for businesses to follow, on how to improve workplaces after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Top Tips for businesses engaging their employees to reach net zero:

1. **Engage employees as early as possible**
- This will ensure transparency and educate employees on the measures being taken to





reduce carbon before investing in offsetting. If employees are engaged from the outset this will help put the best processes in place to measure your carbon footprint, review existing systems and potentially identify carbon hotspots.

2. Launch a communications campaign

- Launch a campaign using key communication tools across all different platforms. Discuss your aims to reach net zero and why this is important to the business.
- Share your business's environmental journey so far and its past successes.
- Harness [existing channels](#) (intranet sites, training sessions, drop-in sessions, online forums, videos, and roadshows) to share consistent messages and celebrate progress.

3. Establish a strong governance structure

- Establish a [strong governance structure](#) and enlist senior leaders to communicate ambitions, demonstrating commitment from the top and the role everyone in the organisation can play.
- An executive steering group with representation across the business which meets regularly will drive action and help ensure that progress against net zero goals continues.

4. Ensure employees at all levels can contribute

- A two-way communication channel to feed into senior management will ensure employee ownership of activities and drive rapid action towards your net-zero goals.

- Support and incentivise employees to make positive environmental actions both within the workplace and to translate this at home.
- Ensure that actions can be incorporated in existing processes to meet your net zero ambitions and engage with all departments to embed net zero principles.

Next steps

At BITC, The Prince's Responsible Business Network, we want to help our members understand the risks and opportunities of climate change and put them at the heart of business strategy. Our '[Challenge 2030](#)' Campaign, will do just that.

How BITC can support you

- We are supporting BITC members to set net zero carbon targets that align to the UN target to limit temperature rises to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and develop climate action plans. If you haven't already – [join BITC](#). We have a wealth of resources, access to experts and support from other members to help you.
- Sign up to our [series of webinars](#) that will take you through the steps in more detail, learning from leading companies and having the opportunities to develop your own action plans.
- Speak to your Relationship Manager about an environmental advisory services package to get bespoke support for your business or email environment@bitc.org.uk to find out more about how we might be able to support you.
- Join our [Net Zero Carbon Taskforce](#) to collaborate with other businesses at the forefront of the journey

¹ McLeoud, D and Clarke, N, (2009) Engaging for success: improving performance through employee engagement. Available [here](#).

² BITC (April 2020). COVID-19: employee health and wellbeing. Available [here](#).

³ BITC (May 2020). Living sustainably in lockdown. Available [here](#).

⁴ Edelman (2020). Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report on COVID-19 Demonstrates Essential Role of the Private Sector. Available [here](#).





⁵ Carbon Trust (2018) Better Business Guide to Energy Saving. Available [here](#).

⁶ Kin & Co (2016) The importance of work with purpose for generation Z. Available [here](#).

⁷ Edelman (2020). Edelman Trust Barometer 2020. Available [here](#).

⁸ Department for International Development (2019). Investing in a Better World: Results of UK Survey on Financing the SDGs. Available [here](#).

⁹ Office for National Statistics (July 2020). Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain. Available [here](#).

¹⁰ Edie (12 June 2020). Remote working means UK businesses will underreport 470,000 tonnes of carbon in 2020. Available [here](#).

