

Plan it with

**PURPOSE**

# BUSINESS SERVICES

SECTOR GUIDE

# Sector-specific guide:

# Business services

The future is in flux. Social injustice and the climate crisis are increasingly important concerns for consumers, and lead to them changing their behaviour. Customers want to buy from businesses that have a clear purpose and positive impact on society and the planet.

With this in mind, Enterprise Nation has launched the Plan it with Purpose campaign. There are six million small businesses across the UK. Together, they represent a powerful collective that can make a significant dent in the challenges facing our world. If each business made a small, conscious change to the way it operates, the effect would be game-changing, nationally and globally. This kind of impact could be a crucial weapon in tackling climate change and changing society so people can live fairer, better lives.

Over the course of the campaign, we'll be launching a number of sector-specific guides to help you understand how you can increase your business's social and environmental impact.

**This guide looks at the business services sector.**

Business services covers a broad range of businesses, including advertising, accounting, insurance and IT. All share a common theme in that they (1) serve businesses and (2) offer services that go beyond one-off product transactions.

To make this guide clear, we've created an "average" business services company to use as an example, based on three characteristics.

### 1. Skilled workers:

Business services companies tend to consist of large teams of highly skilled employees, and market this as one of their main selling points, along with whatever technology, branding and/or intellectual property they offer too.

Full of ambitious and intelligent people, business services companies can be exciting and dynamic places to work, as staff commonly push forward new ideas and interests. However, having such a highly skilled workforce does carry high fixed costs, meaning slow sales periods have to be managed carefully.

### 2. Service not product-based:

Typically, business services companies aren't selling physical products, but are instead offering software as a service (SaaS), advisory services or financial services such as banking or insurance that are tailored to the client's needs. There are, of course, examples of businesses where this isn't the case.

### 3. Business to business (B2B) sales:

Business services companies are more likely to focus on larger, more lucrative sales rather than sales in greater number. As a result, they invest more time and energy in activities like account management and proactive customer care. Making sure current customers are satisfied and identifying opportunities for ongoing sales is the key priority, as is spending time and money on acquiring new customers.

For business services companies that broadly fit the characteristics above, there are not only opportunities to have a positive effect on those around you, but clear benefits to your business as well. For instance:

- the size of your workforce means that being proactive in doing the best by your teams has a scaled effect, helping you retain more staff
- the tailored services you offer means you're meeting the customer's needs
- the deep relationships you're able to build with your customers gives your business the opportunity to gently influence their actions

### In this guide we will cover:

#### The business case:

Why investing in your social and environmental impact is good for business services companies

#### Opportunities for impact:

Where and how you can start thinking about social and environmental impact across your business

#### Case studies:

Real businesses in the business services sector that are innovating and leading the way in how they manage and increase their positive impact

#### Actions you can take:

Measures you can put in place now to make your own social and environmental impact

#### Supplementary resources

## BUILD A THRIVING TEAM

Your employees are itching for greater purpose in their day jobs, and 70% of them are more inclined to work for companies that have social impact initiatives. Happy and engaged staff produce better work and help you avoid expensive recruitment costs.

“I can barely keep up with the droves of highly qualified, passionate, values-aligned millennials who want to work for TMI. I am in the process of creating opportunities for several highly engaged millennials, and I meet more of them on a monthly basis. I no longer search for high-potential staff; they now come to me.”

**Tiffany Jana, CEO of TMI Consulting**, speaking after TMI became a certified B-corp

## FIND YOUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

Standing out from the competition is vital in today's rapidly changing markets. Stories about environmental and social responsibility are the [most significant type of news](#) affecting people's decision to buy. Consumers are one-third more likely to try a product or service from a purpose-driven organisation, and [50% more likely](#) to switch to a purpose-driven company. To grow your current customer base and reach new markets, it's crucial that customers recognise their values in your company.

[Mark Read, chief executive of WPP](#), said recently that his company's focus on positive impact has led it to now screen out companies that don't reflect WPP's environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices. This, along with other impact credentials, has helped the organisation stand out from other agencies and has given it a competitive edge.

## INNOVATE

Making commitments that not only benefit the people who hold an interest in your business but have a net-positive impact on the environment too will encourage new ideas and innovation. Organisations have used their sustainability goals to develop new, innovative products, disrupt traditional business models and access new markets. They are choosing to be proactive in the face of new social and environmental challenges.

[The Information Lab](#) is an expert in business intelligence. The company makes sure it remains at the cutting edge of the technology by dedicating a lot of time to training its employees. The Dublin-based business uses this training time to partner with charities and public-sector bodies at discounted fees or pro bono. Through these mutually beneficial partnerships, the partner organisation receives expert support and insight, and the Information Lab's staff get training on live clients. As a result, the company has developed its expertise in public-sector and third-sector work and expanded its activity significantly in these areas.



# THE BUSINESS CASE



# OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPACT



# 1. BUILDING STRONG TEAMS

**With proportionally large workforces, one of the best places to start considering your impact is by examining your team.**

## 1.1. RECRUITMENT

To build a diverse, thriving team, you need to identify and attract the right people. Traditional recruitment methods are often laced with unconscious bias, and it takes proactive practices to find the talent you need in a fair and inclusive way.

### Writing a good job description

- How you word your job descriptions can significantly affect whether a prospective candidate applies for a position. Check for biased language and correct the wording to make sure candidates who read it don't exclude themselves from applying. Kat Matfield has created a [Gender Decoder for Job Ads](#) to help employers write more balanced job adverts.
- Best practice also includes [publishing salary bands](#) on adverts. This allows applicants to make sure the job is the right fit before they go through the application process.

- It's also worth considering the impact of your person specification on applications you receive. Many organisations are conducting blind applications (when you remove the candidate's name and other identifying characteristics that aren't relevant to the job) or making other changes such as:
  - doing away with the requirement for candidates to have a university degree
  - removing the need for applicants to disclose prior criminal convictions at the application stage (part of the [Ban the Box campaign](#))
  - stopping blanket bans on hiring individuals with convictions

### Where to look for candidates

- If you're actively looking to hire from under-represented groups, where can you advertise your vacancies so a diverse pool of applicants will see them? There are dedicated sites and organisations that promote opportunities to different communities and alternative marketing channels so companies can find new talent. Visit the [Human Rethink](#) website for places to broaden your reach in the UK.
- Your surrounding community could be another untapped resource for talent. Local and council publications and local community groups could help you access under-represented people right on your doorstep. [Localwise](#) is a service employers can use to identify and hire great talent from their local area.

## 1.2. EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

It's one thing to have a diverse team, another to make your business's culture truly inclusive and fair.

### Inclusion

- At every level, your business should represent the society in which you operate and the community you serve. Set goals for your ideal situation and then work towards them. Don't set targets by comparing yourself with other organisations or using your own previous levels – be ambitious and set the goal where it should be.
- The main difference between equality and equity (being fair and impartial) is in recognising that people should be treated differently depending on their needs.
  - Do your working practices, team values, social activities or communication methods favour certain groups?
  - Could you be excluding people unintentionally?
  - Are you making sure under-represented groups feel safe to contribute once they've been included? Get the most out of your team's diversity by offering different options, gathering ideas from all of your team, and taking the time to understand each person's strengths.

### Support and development

Your employees aren't just cogs in a machine. Getting the best out of them means understanding their specific ambitions, priorities and commitments outside of work. When someone feels like they aren't sacrificing their personal goals and are getting what they need from their job, they'll remain loyal to your business and do their best work. Invest meaningfully in their wellbeing, development and working preferences to see them and your business thrive.

### Autonomy, mastery and purpose

Your staff want to own their work, develop their expertise and feel a sense of purpose. Build this into their roles and ongoing development and assess frequently. [Author Dan Pink](#) explores employee motivation, leading to some counterintuitive but powerful ideas.

### Ongoing relationships with former staff

Employees continue to have a stake in your business long after they leave. When a staff member moves on, there is still so much for both sides to gain if you manage that transition thoughtfully. According to recent [CareerBuilder research](#), 39% of employers said they plan to hire people who have worked for them before. So maintaining a good relationship can create easy access to tried and tested talent.

## 2. ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY OPERATIONS

Climate change is one of the **greatest threats** facing civilisation today, and to overcome it every business needs to **recognise and reduce its contribution to the problem**. However, it is not the only warning sign that we're on an unsustainable path. We're also having devastating effects on our planet when it comes to **species loss, pollution of air and water, and deforestation**.

Every organisation has a responsibility to be aware of the damage it causes and to make changes to limit its environmental impact. If we're to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) by the target date of 2030, as well as the ambitious targets that came out of COP 26, it's crucial that all businesses not only neutralise their negative impact but go further and find opportunities to have a net positive impact. This means supporting initiatives to [increase biodiversity, capture and store carbon](#) from the environment, and reverse human damage to our environmental ecosystems.

While gauging your environmental impact is often linked to how you create and distribute products and services, your general operations can have a massive effect too. When [PwC](#) moved into a new office in London, it documented the process to show the difficulties and successes it had in reducing its teams' environmental impact.

- The first step is recognising where you're currently having a negative impact on the environment. A good place to start is to write down all your activities that contribute to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. But remember: environmental impact doesn't stop at GHGs and climate change. You also need to consider other negative effects, such as pollution, the waste you generate, and your encroachment on local plant and wildlife.
- Identify where you can reduce GHG emissions. Below, we go through some common sources of GHGs and ideas for making changes. We look at five actions you can take:

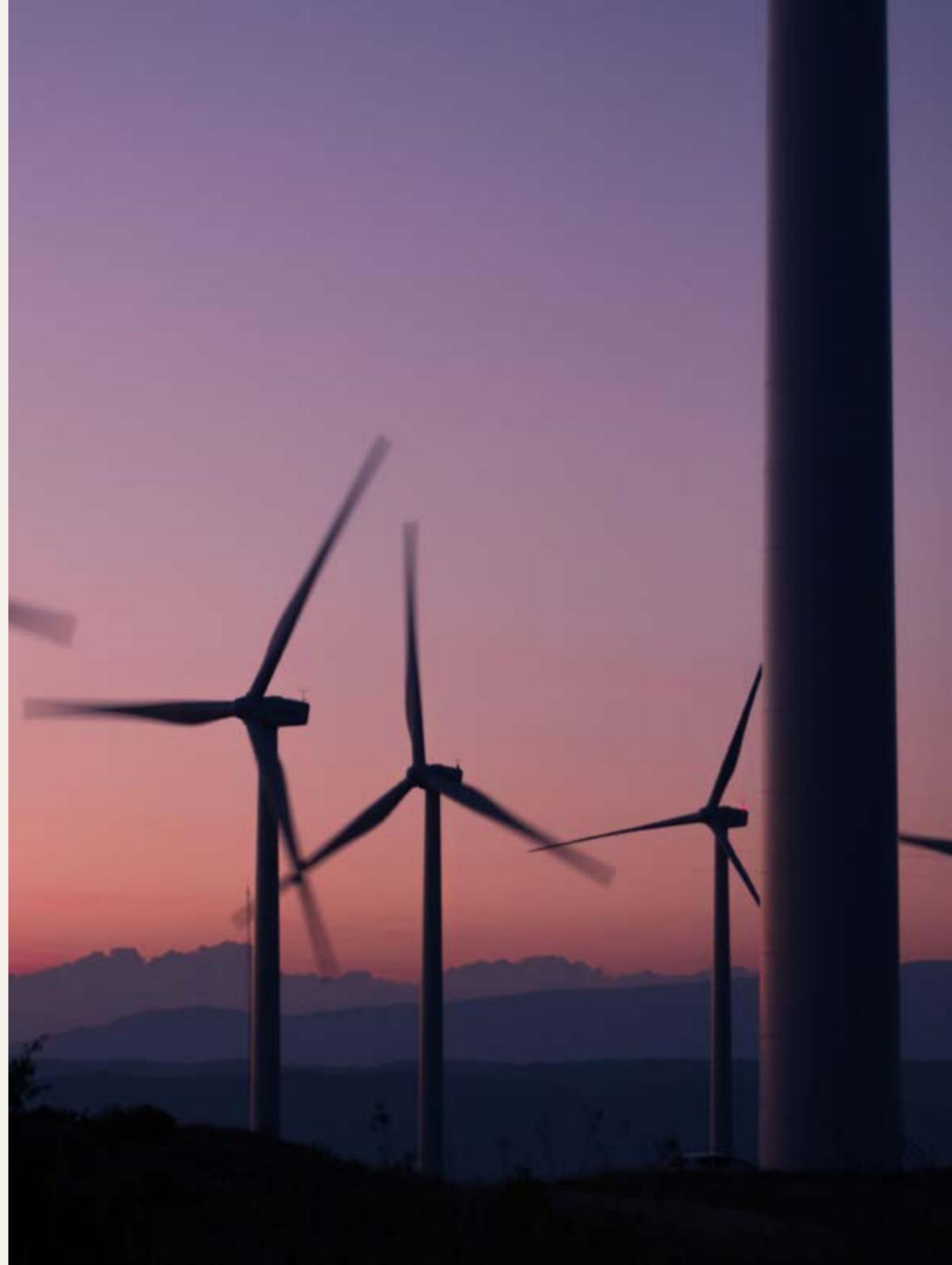
**Eliminate** – find emissions you can remove completely. [Eton Bridge Partners](#) has moved to fully remote working, taking away the need for a physical office.

**Reduce** – identify emissions from processes you can use less or more efficiently. This [guide by the Department of Energy & Climate Change](#) explains how businesses can be more energy efficient.

**Switch** – find greener alternatives. [Eco Hosting](#) is a service that helps businesses host their websites on servers powered by renewable energy sources.

**Recycle/reuse** – build [circular waste systems](#). [Turing Trust](#) is a charity that helps businesses donate old IT equipment to schools.

**Supplement** – find innovative ways to have a positive effect on the planet. [This blog by property organisation JLL](#) describes the trend of corporate offices adding beehives to their roofs.



## 3. ADOPTING TECHNOLOGY

**Providing a hands-on service tailored to your clients can help those clients succeed. For example, the government's [Business Productivity Review](#) shows that SMEs in the UK underperform on productivity and international competitiveness partly because few have adopted the relatively gradual but proven solutions that are available.**

Research commissioned by the Enterprise Research Centre (ERC) has shown that by adopting a range of basic technologies, businesses could see [an improvement in productivity of 7% to 18%](#) (depending on the technology). At the same time, an analysis by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) shows businesses that use of two or more business management technologies could [increase productivity by up to 25%](#).

These technologies include [accountancy software](#), [customer relationship management systems \(CRMs\)](#), and software for supply change management and enterprise resource planning. These are all activities that business services companies do frequently.

Going the extra mile and supporting your clients to make the right strategic decision for themselves can have significant knock-on impacts in terms of their future success.

## 4. IMPACT ON CLIENTS

### 4.1. IN-DEPTH RELATIONSHIPS

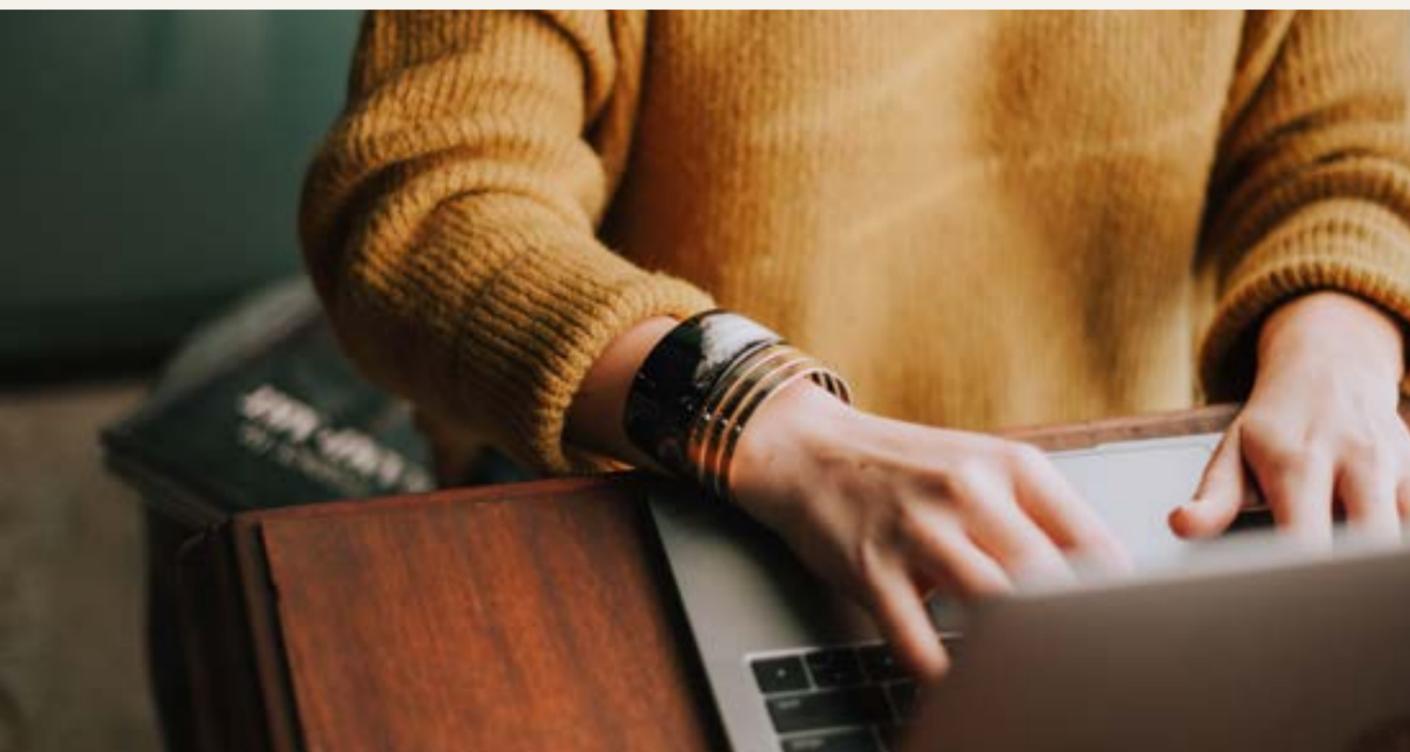
Business services companies tend to have long-term, close relationships with their clients, and gain a certain level of influence with clients as a result. There are a range of ways to have a positive influence in this way, from inviting members of the client team to events or workshops, to creating accountability by signing up to shared improvement goals.

### 4.2. BEING SELECTIVE ABOUT CLIENTS

Another impact business services companies can have with clients is by screening which ones they work with. Again, this selectiveness can take a number of different forms:

- **Screening out:** When a company has a policy of not working with certain types of business – for example, oil companies or tobacco businesses. Usually, this goes on within most businesses, where there is an unspoken selectiveness based on the values of the leadership (such as refusing to work with illegal operators). However, formally writing down the guiding principles and discussing them with staff can improve understanding and encourage more people to buy in to them.

- **Screening in:** When a company will only work with a particular subset of clients (for instance, only businesses that are working to protect the planet, or only charities and social enterprises). This can be true for an entire business's client portfolio or just a specific department or product, although restricting it to only certain areas of business can be seen as lacking integrity, especially if the company trades on the positive images that one department creates.
- **Pro-bono:** Many business services firms offer their skills and expertise to charities, social enterprises and other public-good organisations for free. By combining this with staff training, you can help build up skills while supporting causes you care about.



## INSIDE YOUR BUSINESS

### Energy

#### Eliminate

- + Shut down your computers or put them in sleep mode.
- + Turn your lights off at night.

#### Reduce

- + Install motion-sensor lights in rooms you use only infrequently (such as bathrooms, car parks, stationery cupboards).
- + Use energy-efficient lighting (natural light, compact fluorescent light bulbs, occupancy sensors, daylight dimmers, task lighting, etc.).
- + Use energy-efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) (programmable thermostats, timers, occupancy sensors, shading sun-exposed walls, double-paned windows, etc.).

### Transport

#### Reduce

- + Monitor the reasons for business travel, and create a decision-making process to help decide when travel is and isn't needed.
- + Encourage more environmentally friendly business travel – trains and even cars are far better than planes.

### Waste

#### Reduce

- + Limit printing to only what you need on paper.
- + Reduce the use of everyday disposable objects such as disposable coffee cups. Provide staff with reusable cups.

#### Recycle/reuse

- + Put out different bins for recycling waste: paper and cardboard, plastic, glass and metal, composting.
- + Put up posters explaining how to separate waste and which bins to use.
- + Reduce the number of small bins in the office, so people have to use the larger bins where they are able to split out recyclable waste.

### Home office

#### Reduce

- + Share resources with employees about how to limit their environmental impact in home offices.

#### Switch

- + Have a written policy encouraging employees to use environmentally friendly products and practices (for example, recycling).
- + Provide employees with a list of preferred vendors for office supplies.
- + Consider the clients you choose to work with.

### High level of engagement

- + Create a decision-making tool to help you understand which clients you want and don't want to work with. Screen in and out based on whether they reflect your own social and environmental impact ambitions. Include questions such as 'What percentage of your employees come from under-represented communities?' and 'Do you have a modern slavery statement?'
- + Offer reduced rates or pro-bono services to charities and social enterprises.

### Medium level of engagement

- + Create a decision-making tool you proactively use when speaking to new clients. Share the list with them and ask for their responses. Hopefully, this will not only help you track and work towards having a client list with similar ambitions, but this may encourage them to think of their own practices and creating a similar checklist.

### Low level of engagement

- + Create a decision-making tool you keep internally and consider when speaking to prospective clients.

# ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

## WITHIN YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

### Energy

#### Eliminate

- + Switch energy providers to one that uses renewable sources.
- + Switch to green website hosting (for example, [Eco Hosting](#)).

### Waste

#### Reduce

- + Make sure those single-use items you need are biodegradable and/or compostable or made from recycled materials.

## Supply chain products

#### Switch

- + Non-toxic janitorial products
- + Unbleached/chlorine-free paper products
- + Soy-based inks or other inks low in volatile organic compounds (VOC)
- + Recycled/environmentally friendly office supplies (paper, pens, notebooks, business cards, etc.)
- + If refurbishing office space, consider how to make the new space, and the refurbishment itself, as green as possible (for example, [Rype Office](#)).

## Consider your suppliers

### High level of engagement

- + Create a procurement checklist which outlines your core social and environmental criteria. Switch to companies, or social enterprises, that meet your criteria.

### Medium level of engagement

- + Create a procurement checklist which you share with your suppliers and contains a long-term plan to switch suppliers based off your list. This will hopefully influence your suppliers to investigate their own practices.

### Low level of engagement

- + Create a procurement checklist and review against your current and prospective suppliers.

## OUTSIDE YOUR BUSINESS

### Energy

#### Reduce

- + Do you have roof space? Could you install solar panels or other renewable energy systems?

### Transport

#### Eliminate

- + Sign up to the cycle to work scheme.

#### Reduce

- + Encourage carpooling.

### Waste

#### Recycle/reuse

- + Donate old hardware. There will be local charities (for example, [Turing Trust](#)) that can use old laptops, computers or other useful office supplies.

#### Talk to your clients about impact

- + Encourage them to begin their own review of their social and environmental impact.
- + Support them with resources, advice and sharing goals and ambitions.

#### Share with your wider community

- + Post on your social media about the steps you've taken, in the hope that it will inspire those around you.

#### Offer your support

- + Many charities are constantly looking for trustees who have specialist skills. Look out for opportunities that align to causes important to you and to which you could bring your expertise

# ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

## SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

- Energy efficiency guide from the [Department of Energy & Climate Change](#)
- [UK Business Climate Hub](#)
- Guide to [PWC's experience opening a new office sustainably](#)
- Corporate standards for the [GhG protocol](#)
- Drive: a book on how to support and empower your staff by [Dan Pink](#)
- Identify great talent in your local area with [Localwise](#)
- Write more balanced openings using Kat Matfield's [Gender Decoder](#)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### About Enterprise Nation

Enterprise Nation is a business support platform and provider. The company is on a mission to support one million founders each year, in the UK, Ireland and the rest of the world. We help small business owners understand where their business needs support and then connect them to that support, attracting founders back with relevant recommendations according to their sector, location and stage of business. Founders come to Enterprise Nation to get their questions answered, and to join a vibrant and friendly community.

Plan it with Purpose is designed to help owners of small and medium-sized businesses develop a better understanding of environmental and social issues in the UK. By providing tailored resources, action plans and recommendations, and highlighting role models people can relate to, the programme aims to encourage business owners to consider the impact of what they do and make positive changes for the future.