

Realising your Sustainability Ambitions:

Identifying the Enablers & Blockers of Success

by GARY ASHTON & MIKE THACKRAY

It's an exciting time for the Sustainability movement.

Previously, many sustainability experts operated on the periphery, but now there's a real shift to embed sustainability across the entire business and take a more systems-wide approach to delivering sustainability targets.

Exciting times indeed ... and yet there's a common underlying tension around delivering on ESG initiatives:

"We are not acting as one team"

"We have our business-as-usual jobs to do, and now we have this to deliver on as well"

"We are spending all our time on reporting, and not enough on delivering"

"ESG regulation is only increasing, and we are not setting ourselves up to be ready for this"

In our experience, the frequent themes are:

- Frustration about slow progress towards sustainability ambitions
- Anxiety about not delivering on publicly stated goals
- Feeling like the organisation hasn't yet got a grip of both delivering its short-term profits *and* at the same time delivering on the long-term sustainability goals.

The root cause to these feelings is often that the organisation hasn't yet fully defined their ESG ambition as a transformational change programme. The UK's Transition Planning Taskforce has now published its Disclosure Framework; whilst the focus to date has been on reporting metrics, the emphasis now is all about taking action – moving from 'Ambition' to 'Action' through to 'Accountability' through an iterative process.

This will require:

- The **change architecture** to ensure the ESG plan is clear and integrated, with all the resources it needs
- The **senior leaders** actively supporting the sustainability goals and visibly tackling the big trade-offs needed to make progress
- The organisation being **culturally ready** and wanting to deliver on its ambitions
- The people having the right **capabilities and capacity** to deliver all that needs to be done.

Critical to success will be **cross-functional collaboration** and an ability for leaders to think across the short, medium *and* long-term at the same time. It requires a bias for action. To be bold, to make critical trade-off decisions between sustainability and business as usual goals, thinking in agile ways and a culture that supports working with complexity, uncertainty and potentially conflicting objectives.

As plans get underway, it will be important for leaders to quickly and continuously assess the progress of key indicators towards sustainability goals across the ESG system and identify and address enablers & blockers for success.

Within that context, OE Cam has developed a **Sustainability Success Indicators Framework** (see model).



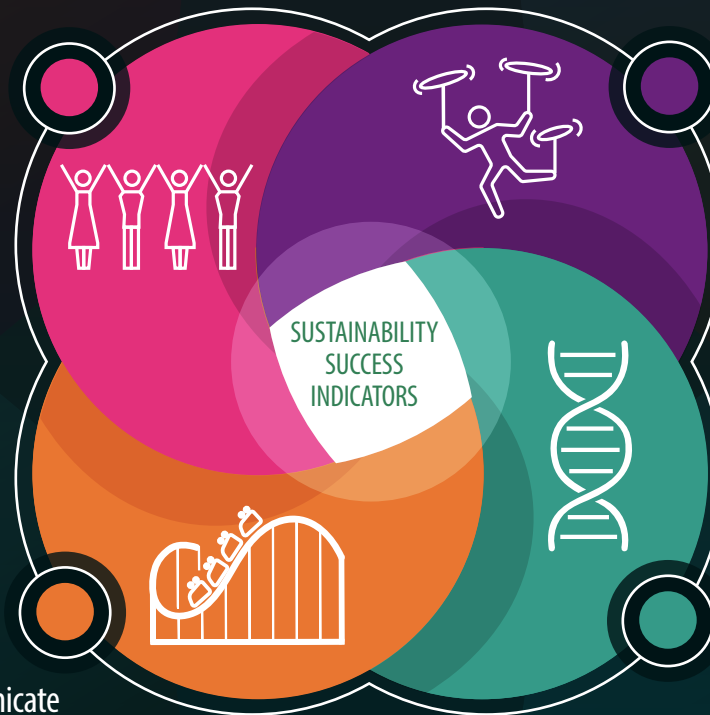
PEOPLE

- Shared responsibility towards Sustainability
- Sustainability knowledge & skills
- Attract & retain the right talent
- Performance management includes sustainability targets
- Collaboration across functions
- People development to support Sustainability



CHANGE ARCHITECTURE

- Scale of change understood
- Measurable environmental & social targets are integrated into the business plan
- Plan & capability to measure, deliver & communicate
- Compatible structures & clarity of accountability
- Aligned incentives & rewards
- Barriers identified & addressed



LEADERSHIP

- Champion delivery of Sustainability targets
- Trusted to do the right thing
- Have appropriate Sustainability knowledge & skills
- Thinking, Influencing, Adapting & Delivering competencies
- Demonstrate resilience in delivering the Sustainability goals



CULTURE

- Transparency of communication
- Colleagues can articulate the Sustainability vision
- Demonstrable signs of commitment
- Continuous recognition of Sustainability progress
- Sustainability innovation prioritised & encouraged
- A history of delivering the required level of change
- People able to balance delivering both BAU & Sustainability innovation



Diagram 1: OE Cam's Sustainability Success Indicators Framework

Our framework has four pillars which cover the key areas needed to have a solid foundation for achieving sustainability goals.

We start by working with you to **establish the degree of change required** for your organisation to achieve its ESG ambition; are you embarking on a transformational change that fundamentally shifts the way in which the organisation operates, or is the plan for more *incremental* improvements?

1. **Change Architecture:** how does your organisational structure support your sustainability goals? How are your individual and team targets and rewards aligned? How do you balance short and longer-term goals? How do you make trade-offs between all your strategic goals, including ESG? Does it have the capacity for the level of change required?
2. **Leadership:** Do leaders have the right skills and attitude to support and deliver their ESG targets? Do they champion Sustainability?
3. **Culture:** To what extent are your people engaged with your sustainability goals? How do people know that sustainability is important? Is your organisation used to such levels of change?
4. **People:** Do you know what skills and knowledge are required? What development activities help support the goals? How effective are you in recruiting the new types of talent required? How will you ensure that the new talent will be accepted rather than rejected by the organisation?

We use this framework to help you understand the interconnected elements of the system and **assess the enablers and blockers in delivering your sustainability goals**. Insights from interviews and focus groups will inform recommendations that build on your strengths and address any areas for development in order to realise your sustainability ambitions.

For more information about OE Cam's services to support Sustainability ambitions, please contact:

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GARY ASHTON, PARTNER

Gary is a Partner at OE Cam and leads the Organisation Development practice. With over 25 years' experience in delivering transformational change, he facilitates senior leadership teams to think through organisational challenges with a particular focus on operating models, sustainability and power dynamics.

His area of deep expertise is understanding 'where people meets process', balancing the hard with the soft elements of organisation development. He draws on this perspective to lead projects such as the re-design and implementation of organisation structures, organisation reviews, cultural change and improving cross-functional working to drive progress of sustainability ambitions.

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MIKE THACKRAY

Mike is an experienced Principal Consultant and engaging Occupational Psychologist. He has extensive experience in designing and delivering bespoke solutions around individual and team development, selection and assessment, organisational development and cross-functional collaboration to deliver ESG ambitions.

With more than 20 year's experience, Mike often works with senior leadership teams to develop behavioural frameworks designed to articulate and promote new ways of working, and also diagnosing existing systems and practices to ensure cultural fit.

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