

Guide to taking steps towards a more sustainable business

More than three quarters of SME leaders say they've yet to implement a decarbonisation strategy. For many, the pandemic, recession and cost of living crisis has caused sustainability to be deprioritised in 2023. In the UK, only a third have publicly committed to a net zero target. This is a situation playing out across Europe.

If SME leaders can get this right, sustainability can lead to real growth and profitability – it's considered the fourth biggest growth driver among companies looking to expand over the next two years. Customer expectations, investor pressure, and changing legislation from governments around the world means sustainability should be kept front of mind.

But when we talk about ESG, net zero and the SDGs - what do we mean?

What is ESG? ESG stands for Environmental, Social, Governance

- ESG describes the effort to make businesses, of any size, more environmentally and socially responsible.
- Part of this means ensuring that any work and the processes behind that go some way in slowing climate change, and that the work adheres to ethical standards.
- It can include having a diverse workforce, not using exploitative suppliers, ensuring fair pay and working conditions through to looking at the impact, positive or negative, that the business has on society as a whole.

What is Net Zero?

- Net Zero is about achieving a balance between the greenhouse gases put into the atmosphere and those taken out.
- Many international governments have committed to targets, and the UK Government has committed to a legally binding target of net zero by 2050 – smaller businesses will be pivotal in this race.

What are the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

- It's a framework that acts as a call to action set by the UN in 2015
- There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed at country level - they range from gender equality, to building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation.
- They rely on every business to play their part, with a target delivery date of 2030

So, what should you do?

Know that it's a journey - there are quick wins and there is longer term sustainable planning. It may feel insurmountable, but it is possible. Skating Panda can help bust these common myths:



- It's just for big businesses – it isn't
- It's very costly – it doesn't need to be
- It requires a full team – it doesn't - and we can work with you to help
- It will negatively impact my business and distract my team – it won't, in fact it can help to strengthen employee engagement
- It won't make a difference – it will

Some initial starting points include:

- Read up on the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework, and understand what issues you can map back. There are 17, and overall their aims are to address climate change, improve health and education, reduce inequality, and have economic growth. You might find that you and your business are already helping meet them – whether that's through the energy efficient way you run the office, to the ethical supply chain you already have, to the equal pay policies and reviews you have in place.
- Look at how you can start in the office – from ensuring recycling bins are available, going paperless, practicing low energy use where possible, to a flexible, consultative approach to workplace policies and benefits. And this needs to apply to all, not only the leadership team. It needs to become embedded in the company culture
- Talk to the experts – Skating Panda will give you a free consultation to understand where you are in your ESG journey. Drop us a line at info@skatingpanda.com

There are a host of resources and links available to help, including

- [Business Climate Hub](#) - Government UK business climate hub specifically for SMEs
- [Green claims code](#)
- [British Chambers of Commerce](#)
- [Experienced Energy Solutions](#) - an Azets partner
- [Azets Risk Assurance](#)
- Also read the sustainability press, as well as the small business press as these often contain helpful tips and articles

What we do - Skating Panda

We are a creative environmental and social impact consultancy, and we help businesses turn intent into real impact. In fact, as a B Corp, we live and breathe this as we have to formally report on the real impact we create and hold ourselves accountable.

We are also an SME ourselves, so we understand many of the challenges you face. We can help you plan your ESG strategy, work with you to make sure it is credible, tell your sustainability story in an engaging way, and do it all affordably. Drop us a line at info@skatingpanda.com