

# Employee Engagement in Climate Action

Climate change is a challenge that humanity collectively faces. This global crisis impacts every one of us. And as alarming as this may sound, it's not just a challenge for the future generations; it's a reality we all have to confront today.

Employee engagement around this topic is therefore important, and each action taken makes a difference.

## Climate Awareness

The first step of employee engagement in climate action is raising awareness. Global warming isn't a prediction; it's happening now, and it's not just an environmental issue—it's an economic, social and security threat, affecting every facet of our lives. The signs are unmistakable: from unprecedented wildfires to severe flooding, extreme weather events are becoming increasingly common.

Knowledge is the first step towards change. Many organisations are therefore adding environmental training to their onboarding programme for new joiners as well as training existing employees as part of their carbon management journey.

While it's true that policy changes and technological innovations are crucial, small behavioural adjustments, when multiplied by millions of people, can lead to meaningful impact. Moreover, individual actions can serve as catalysts, inspiring others to follow suit, thereby amplifying the impact.

It's not just about doing good; it's about securing a future for ourselves and generations to come.

## Carbon Reduction Plans

Once an organisation has measured its carbon footprint it will know its emission hotspots and this can focus the discussion in terms of reductions. It is a great opportunity to bring together a team of employees who are passionate about the climate change agenda who can brainstorm all the different options available to you to reduce your emissions. Often these individuals form your environmental group, who are then responsible for reduction and promoting environmentally conscious decision making across the firm.

Once you have all the options, you can then work on prioritisation, based on ease of implementation and impact on emissions (often adding in a cost lens too). Things like moving to solar and 100% renewable energy are really good, viable, short-term projects. Prioritising some of the items which have a short timescale will start to make a difference and are a good way to begin your carbon management journey.

For some categories, such as employee commuting, looking at cycle to work schemes, car sharing schemes or electric vehicle salary sacrifice options may be something the organisation wants to consider.

As the importance of taking climate action grows, we are increasingly seeing progress made on carbon reduction being linked to executive reward packages.

## Energy Saving - Cut Carbon and Costs

When it comes to saving energy, the perks extend beyond reducing carbon footprints. You also save money, for the organisation, but also your employees, making it a win-win situation. Here are some actionable steps and their estimated savings for a household:

- Switch off appliances, not standby: **Save 41 kg of carbon** and £60.
- Draught-proof windows & doors: **Save 205 kg of carbon** and £90.
- Laundry at 30 degrees and one less run per week: **Save 19 kg of carbon** and £27.
- Avoid using the tumble dryer: **Save 41 kg of carbon** and £60.
- Reduce dishwasher use by one run per week: Save 10 kg of carbon and £15.
- Turn down the thermostat by 1 degree: Save 325 kg of carbon and £142.

Even taking one action from this list can make a difference. Imagine the potential impact if each of us commits to making two or more of these changes. As a result, there is an increasing trend towards organisations tracking initiatives to see the combined impact their employees are having.

## Initiatives in the office to engage people in climate awareness

There are a number of initiatives which can be adopted in the office to raise awareness and engage employees in taking climate action.

- 1) If you have a staff canteen you can have plant-based food days (“Meatless Mondays”) and use this as an opportunity to educate around the carbon footprint impact of choosing to eat less meat. The meat industry is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation and water pollution. Livestock farming alone accounts for about 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Even reducing the portion sizes of meat can still result in significant benefits for the planet.
- 2) Reducing waste and recycling. Educating people about the proper waste system in your office helps to reduce the amount of waste which ends up in landfill. Landfill not only contributes to land and water pollution, but decomposing waste also emits greenhouse gases like methane, exacerbating climate change. Simple actions can make a difference:
  - Use reusable containers instead of single-use plastics.
  - Think before you print, if you do need to print do so double sided.
  - Use designated clearly labelled bins for waste and recyclable materials (think about the type of items people will be disposing of when creating the labelling)
  - Think about recycling campaigns where people can bring in hard to recycle items from home e.g. batteries
- 3) Reducing water usage. Believe it or not, water scarcity affects more than 40% of the global population, according to the United Nations. Small, simple actions can have a meaningful impact:
  - Fix leaking taps promptly. A dripping tap can waste more than 5,000 litres of water a year.
  - Only run dishwashers with full loads.

**Individual actions, when multiplied across your entire company, can lead to significant positive changes. However, employee engagement in this critical topic can also help you attract and retain talent. Here's to a healthier and more sustainable you, business and planet!**