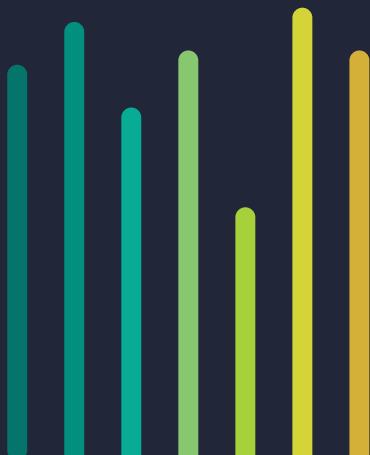




2022

**THE
SUSTAINABILITY
MARKETING
SKILLS GAP
REPORT**



CONTENTS



03 FOREWORD - GEMMA BUTLER

04 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

05 TIGHTENING REGULATIONS AND
THE FEAR OF GREENWASHING

06 THE SUSTAINABILITY SKILLS GAP

08 CONSUMER'S EXPECTATIONS OF MARKETERS
AND VIEWS OF SUSTAINABILITY

11 SUSTAINABILITY IN CAREERS

12 MARKETING'S ABILITY
TO DRIVE CHANGE

13 CONCLUSION

14 TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

FOREWORD

One of the immediate priorities for both business and society at large is the need for sustainable transformation. With climate change, over consumption and the need to build back better- it is clear that organisations who do not have a solid sustainable development plan now risk consumers disengaging, employees leaving and investors refusing to invest.

Marketers have a great opportunity to champion getting back to the 'core of what marketing is' - exploring, uncovering, and sharing what their organisations do, how they can make a difference while showcasing what needs to be done and supporting it with a strong business case.

CIM's purpose is to represent the marketing profession. Delivering change, and setting the standards by which the profession operates, driving ethical working practices in order to deliver a more sustainable future.

Yes steps have been made but there is still much more that can be done as a profession to drive the sustainability agenda.

The past 18 months have certainly been a challenge for everyone, but as the pandemic recedes, I believe we have a real opportunity to build back better. That isn't to say the road ahead won't be challenging, and our research highlights some of the barriers marketers are facing.

For a start, whilst the pandemic may have highlighted the fragility of the planet, 37 per cent of marketers report it's slowed the progress of their sustainability agenda. It also finds a critical tension between business objectives and ethical drivers, with six in ten marketers (60%) claiming their company or clients find it tricky to achieve their sustainability commitments without compromising on commercial needs.

One of the most pertinent take outs from COP26 was that future economies will be reliant on sustainable business practices- doing well for business and doing good for the planet are intertwined, and successful strategies will include both.

Sitting at the centre of brand, communications, stakeholders and product development, I believe that marketers have a significant role to play at this critical juncture – both at an organisational and societal level.



”

IGNORING THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS NO LONGER AN OPTION

However, if the marketing profession is to deliver meaningful and tangible change then we must address the current sustainability skills gap and equip marketers with the skills they need to encourage and drive the positive behavioural changes within society.

Marketers also need to recognise that we are part of the problem. The products and services we market inevitably require energy or create waste, which is why we also need to look at being the “forces for good” within our own business and drive positive organisational change from the top down.

We live in an age of growing authenticity and our research shows consumer demands for transparency on sustainability practices has never been more important. Ignoring the environmental crisis is no longer an option, and this report shows that marketers who chose to do so, risk falling behind in their own careers.

- Gemma Butler, Marketing Director, CIM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



METHODOLOGY

- The research included in this report was undertaken by award-winning strategic insight agency Opinium on behalf of CIM. The report explores the views of marketers and consumers, so is made up of two different samples.
- The first survey looks at the views of 210 marketing professionals, and the second of 2,000 UK adults aged 18 and above. Both fieldworks were undertaken between 15th - 20th September 2021 and were carried out online. The results from the general population have been nationally weighted to be representative.
- An additional online survey was undertaken by CIM between the 7th-13th September via the CIM LinkedIn channel. There were 1,193 respondents including CIM members and those that follow CIM on LinkedIn.


The first chapter of this report looks at the current industry landscape, primarily the tightening of regulations to combat 'greenwashing' and the knock-on effect it's having on marketing professionals' attitudes towards sustainability campaigns. The data reveals that 49 per cent of marketers are weary of working on sustainability marketing campaigns due to the fear of their company or clients being accused of 'greenwashing'.

Next the report looks at how equipped marketers are to carry out sustainability marketing campaigns. The research finds that 2 in 5 (40%) of marketers don't currently have marketing qualifications relating to sustainability, but promisingly are interested in receiving one. Despite a lack of formal training, three quarters (76%) of marketers say they have been involved in sustainability work in the last five years, and nearly half (45%) feel under pressure in their role to communicate their company or clients' sustainability credentials.

The third chapter of this report examines consumer attitudes towards sustainable business practices. It reveals consumers expect companies to be doing more when it comes to sustainability, with over six in ten (63%) adults agreeing that brands should increase communications around the sustainability of their products and services. The research also uncovers an element of scepticism surrounding sustainability efforts, with 63 per cent believing that many brands only get involved with sustainability issues for commercial reasons, as opposed to ethical reasons.

The fourth chapter looks into the impact marketers can have in driving change within their organisations and society. Reassuringly, 71 per cent of marketers feel they already have a voice within their company or with their clients when it comes to sustainability, demonstrating the positive impact they could have within businesses when armed with the right skills.

The fifth and final chapter concludes the research and outlines our recommendations on how marketing leaders can drive more effective change within their organisations and create more impactful sustainable marketing campaigns.



TIGHTENING REGULATIONS AND THE FEAR OF GREENWASHING

In recent months, we have seen industry regulation tighten and a positive move towards holding brands more accountable for their sustainability claims. For instance, the Competition and Markets Authority recently introduced the [‘Green Claims Code’](#) and has warned that next year it will launch a review of misleading green claims online and offline, as well as those made in-store or on packaging.

This regulatory change comes following a number of recent high-profile ASA rulings against global brand giants such as Ryanair, BMW and Royal Dutch Shell, who have all been accused of ‘greenwashing’ through misleading advertising.

According to our research, this has had a negative impact on marketing professionals’ attitudes towards sustainability campaigns, with half (49%) saying they are weary of working on them due to fear of their company or clients being accused of ‘greenwashing’.

CIM welcomes this new supporting legislation, but we also passionately believe that marketers

should not shy away from communicating on their sustainability credentials out of fear of being labelled as ‘greenwashing’. If anything, it should encourage them to upskill immediately, so they have the tools and knowledge to feed into effective sustainability-led organisational strategies.

Despite these fears, over half (55%) of marketers recognise that sustainability is an increasing business priority, and 51 per cent go as far as to say that climate change could threaten their existence, raising alarms about the impact the climate crisis will have on businesses.

Although it’s clear that sustainability is a key topic in board rooms across the country, three in five (60%) marketers say it’s a challenge for their company or clients to achieve sustainability commitments while not compromising on commercial needs. This suggests that there is still a way to go in convincing marketers and business leaders that commercial and ethical objectives aren’t at odds, but can, in fact, complement each other.



THE SUSTAINABILITY SKILLS GAP



According to our research, three quarters (76%) of marketers say they have been involved in sustainability work in the last five years, and nearly half (45%) feel under pressure in their role to communicate their company or clients' sustainability credentials. But of course, if marketers want to instigate effective sustainability-led organisational strategies then they need to be equipped with the right tools and knowledge.

Our findings show that 2 in 5 (40%) marketers currently don't have marketing qualifications relating to sustainability but would like to. Businesses and marketing

agencies must make addressing this skills gap a priority, offering marketing departments relevant training, internally or externally.

We believe prioritising sustainable marketing skills' could unleash a multitude of benefits. Marketers will of course be more effective and confident in their role- alleviating many of the pressures they're currently reporting and inspire positive consumer behavioural changes. This in turn will not only help the planet, but in some places enable businesses to reap commercial rewards.

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

BEST-IN-CLASS EXAMPLE 1:

Putting sustainability at the heart of our further education

With younger generations becoming increasingly aware of the sustainability issues we face as a society, it's crucial for educational institutions to act responsibly and demonstrate their work to minimise their impact on the planet. Loughborough University is doing just that- by weaving sustainability into the heart of its purpose, it's a key example of a place of higher education paving the way for a greener future.

At a strategic level, policies and commitments have been put in place to ensure everyday practices across the university are sustainable. These include:

- **A building excellence strategy** - a process enabling the institution to run a green campus, with buildings working to be as sustainable as possible.
- **An environmental management system** - a tool that aims to reduce the impact of the university's operations on the environment. It encourages the allocation of resources, assignment of responsibility, and ongoing evaluation of practices, procedures and processes with a view to continual improvement of the system.

- **A campus-wide energy strategy** - a development framework has been put in place to cover the university campus for a thirty-year period from 2020-2050.

As well as these overarching macro commitments and strategies, the university has implemented a number of smaller-scale changes to improve sustainability at a grassroots level. For example, it has installed a 'Fruit Route' - a unique project and art installation made up of over 150 trees providing a habitat for people and wildlife alike, as well as a location for cultural activities and outdoor learning. In 2013 the campus also welcomed its very own honey bees. This was done with the aim of reducing the declining population whilst increasing pollination and biodiversity in the area- with the added bonus of being able to produce 'Loughborough Gold' honey.

Crucially, a key driver of Loughborough University's approach to sustainability is that they have not become complacent. Students are able to run projects on campus to keep adding sustainable features- ensuring the technology is constantly improving and growing towards greener alternatives. The institution's previous sustainability strategy has recently come to an end, but with a new Vice-Chancellor and an even more ambitious and fresh strategy in the pipeline, Loughborough University is set to provide some more exciting changes in years to come.

WEARE8

BEST-IN-CLASS EXAMPLE 2:

Scientists agree that we have eight years until the damage we have done to our planet is irreversible. In an age where consumers and brands are suffering in a flawed digital advertising environment, WeAre8 is set to transform the face of social media forever, for the benefit of people and the planet.

WeAre8 makes it easy for brands to redirect part of the \$100 billion they currently spend on Facebook ads every year, back to people and the planet. It works by giving users a fun and easy way to make a positive impact in just two minutes a day. Users can look at exclusive content and adverts, and part of the revenue of this content gets donated to charities.

Every time a brand advertises on WeAre8, 5% of its media spend goes straight to charities and carbon offsetting, so every campaign on WeAre8 is carbon neutral. By shifting just 6.5% of a brand's digital budget to WeAre8, they can offset enough carbon to make their entire digital campaign carbon neutral. Brands can deliver against their ESG and sustainability goals, while at the same time getting the attention of their key target audiences.

WeAre8 is also focused on developing its team internally to deliver success. In order to keep the team engaged and offer them the opportunities

to learn and grow, upskilling and training in sustainability has been a priority. As well as standard training, the whole team is currently completing the 'Ad Net Essentials Training'. This helps give them a better understanding of the climate crisis, gives an overview of the marketing and advertising industry's role to take positive climate action and shares techniques to measure carbon emissions.

And WeAre8 does not stop there- the business is also looking out to the wider industry to engage other professionals. It has made it a priority to educate agencies and marketers on the impact advertising has on the planet, and is working with them to move media spend to WeAre8, the 'People's Platform'. To do this it hosts regular media agency roadshows to showcase the results brands are seeing from advertising on the platform, and what impact moving 6.5% of their marketing spend to WeAre8 delivers in carbon offsetting.

WeAre8, despite being a relatively new, already works for some of the world's largest brands - including Mondelez, Nestlé and eBay. With its founding belief that big tech and social platforms are threatening democracy, fuelling hate and climate misinformation and stripping people of economic value- its motivation to produce a new means for brands to interact with consumers in a sustainable way has seen huge growth since launching. And it seems as though the only way is up from here.

For marketers looking to upskill in the area, the Chartered Institute of Marketing offers **three programmes**:

- 'The Sustainable Marketer' course provides marketers with the opportunity to rethink how their business approaches sustainability whilst helping to leverage it as a source of brand loyalty, competitive advantage and commercial success.
- The 'Sustainable Transformation Programme' which has been designed to equip marketers and businesses to take the lead in developing transformational sustainable, and responsible business and marketing strategies for their organisation.
- The 'CIM Level 6 Diploma in Sustainable Marketing' is aimed at marketers who wish to develop their knowledge and skills around how marketing can lead and support the business in responding to the sustainability challenges we face.



CONSUMER'S EXPECTATIONS OF MARKETERS AND VIEWS ON SUSTAINABILITY

This need to tackle the skills gap and prepare our industry for the future is further compounded by an increasing expectation amongst consumers for companies to be doing more when it comes to sustainability.

According to our research, 63 per cent of all UK adults agree that brands should increase communications around the sustainability of their products and services. Despite this, only two in five (41%) marketers report that their companies or clients have publicly available sustainability commitments.

As we see consumer demands for further action and transparency grow, it's more important than ever for brands to communicate their sustainability efforts, and crucially, follow through on the promises they make. In fact, our research finds that over three in five (63%) adults believe that many brands only get involved with sustainability for commercial reasons, as opposed to ethical reasons, highlighting the need for authentic and meaningful marketing to build consumers' trust.

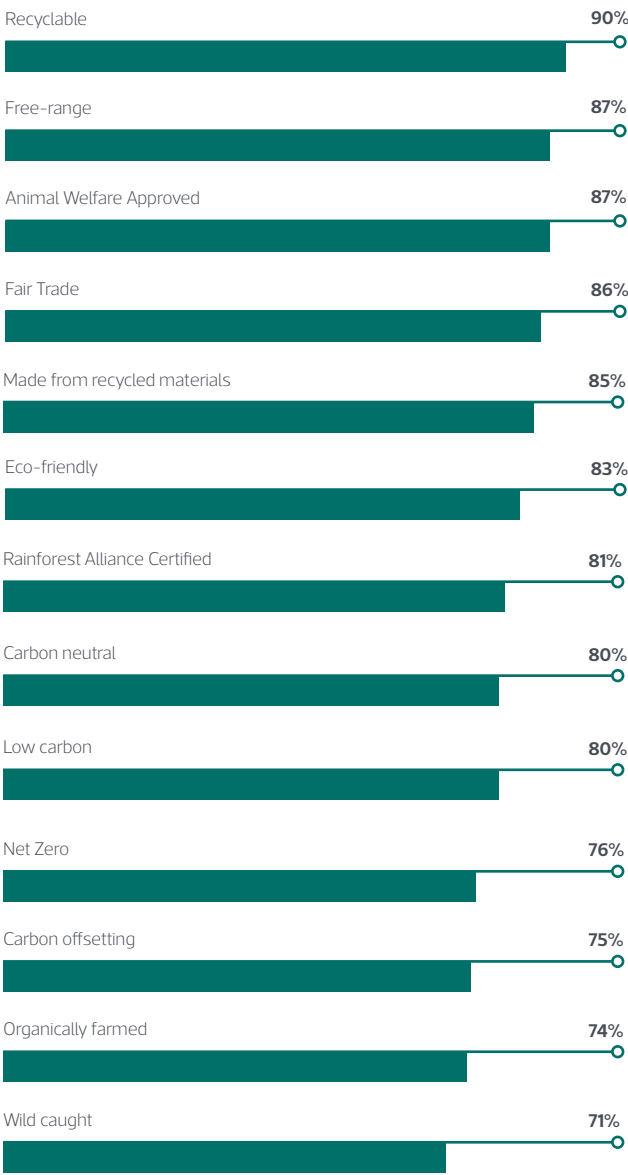
When asked who is responsible for checking the sustainability claims made by companies, over half

(56%) of consumers say they believe it should be Independent Trade Bodies- such as the ASA or CMA - to take the leading role. This compares to just 36 per cent who feel it should be the responsibility of the companies themselves, further demonstrating a lack of consumer trust in businesses.

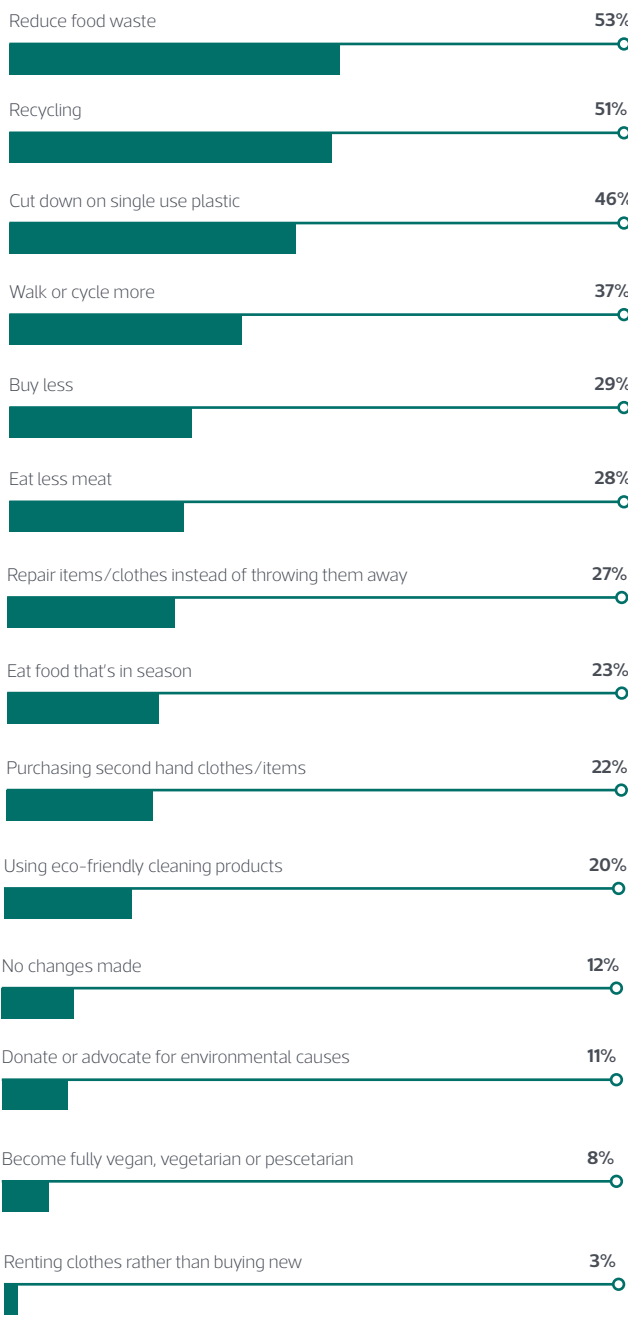
Recently, we've seen younger age groups passionately demand action against climate issues, emerging as a key demographic for marketers to engage for sustainable products and services. Our own research reinforces this, and finds that 18-34 year olds are:

- More receptive to sustainable marketing- six in ten (59%) say they are more likely to buy products or services from a brand that advertises how sustainable they are, as opposed to just 31 per cent of those aged 55 and above.
- More trusting of brands that communicate sustainable efforts- 53 per cent are more likely to trust a brand that advertises and markets how sustainable they are, as opposed to just 33 per cent of those aged 55 and above.

MOST IMPORTANT SUSTAINABILITY CLAIMS FOR THE PRODUCTS PEOPLE BUY ACCORDING TO UK ADULTS:



WAYS UK ADULTS HAVE MADE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO BE MORE SUSTAINABLE OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS:





53%

of all UK adults don't always purchase sustainable products because they are more expensive than non-sustainable products

Recent adverse weather headlines and social conversations about climate change have made nearly half

49%

of adults consider how they can adapt their behaviours to be more sustainable in their day-to-day lives



TOP THREE BRANDS ADULTS BELIEVE ARE LEADING ON SUSTAINABILITY:



Reasons given included because the company proactively discusses its efforts across sustainable products, packing and delivery, and its efforts with electric vehicles.



Reasons given included because the company promotes Fair Trade items and its efforts with recycling.



Reasons given included because the company has reduced food packaging and aims to give out of date food to those in need.

SUSTAINABILITY IN CAREERS



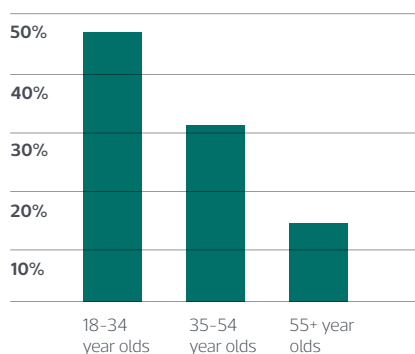
As we become more focused on sustainability as a society, jobseekers are starting to pay more attention to a company's sustainability efforts. In fact, we find that nearly half (48%) of adults would be more willing to work for a company that they know has strong sustainability credentials.

It's clear from our research that adults also expect their current employers to be doing more when it comes to sustainability. Nearly half (48%) would like their employer to be more transparent about the impact their business has

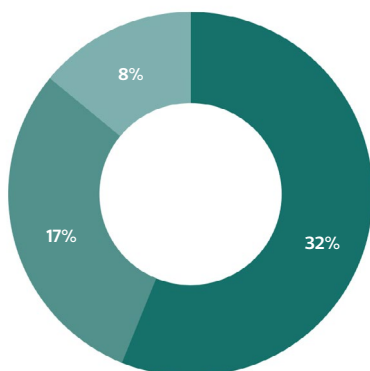
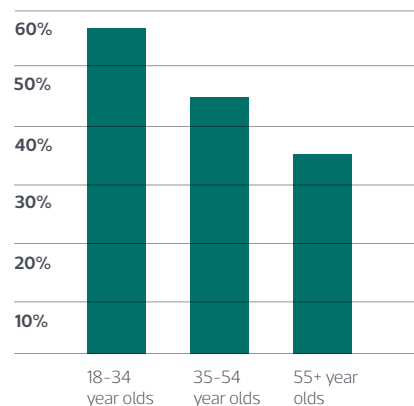
on the environment, while only a third (32%) say they are proud of their company's current sustainability credentials.

There is therefore a real opportunity for businesses to increase internal and external communications to demonstrate their sustainability efforts, talking openly about the journey ahead and the challenges they may face on the way. In doing this, businesses can not only retain top talent, but attract new talent too.

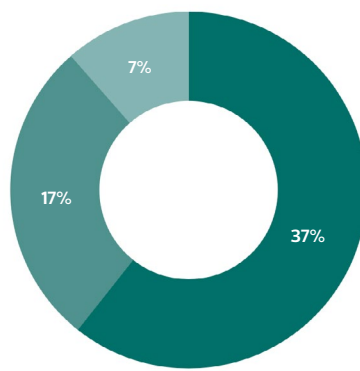
Percentage of those who will actively seek out industries which do not have a harmful impact on the planet the next time they look for a job:



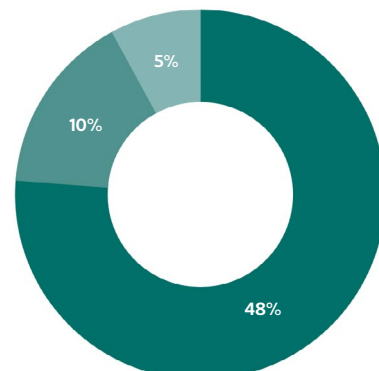
Percentage of those who would be more willing to work for a company that has strong sustainability credentials:



- UK adults who are proud of their company/ employer's sustainability credentials
- Are not proud
- Don't know



- UK adults who wish their employer worked harder to be more sustainable
- Do not
- Don't know



- UK adults who would like their employer to be transparent about the impact its products'/ services' have on the environment
- Do not
- Don't know



MARKETING'S ABILITY TO DRIVE CHANGE

“

Every marketer should remind themselves that their job is not just about driving click-throughs or marketing a product. They are in a unique position to influence social change, mediating the relationship between brands and their customers. They should act as a catalyst for positive change and have an important role to play in making sure that brands have sustainability high up on the priority list.

- Gemma Butler, Marketing Director, CIM

”

“

An online poll of almost 2,000 people we ran found that 71 per cent of respondents feel that marketing now plays a significant role when it comes to driving sustainability initiatives, and an overwhelming 97 per cent think marketing has the power to drive through change.

The good news is that marketers are already, to an extent, influencing businesses to put sustainability at the heart of discussions. Seven in ten (71%) marketers feel they have a voice within their company or with their clients when it comes to sustainability, demonstrating the positive impact they could have within businesses when armed with the right skills.

In a list of marketing activities ranging from raising awareness of sustainable business activity ahead of COP26- to sustainability reporting- educating themselves on sustainability and climate change was the most common priority for marketers, with nearly a quarter (23%) saying it was a focus for the next twelve months.

Whilst our research uncovers a sustainability marketing skills gap in the industry, it's encouraging to see that marketers are aware of their shortcomings and willing to take the necessary steps to understand the more practical and technical aspects of sustainability. Prioritising training will no doubt lay the foundations for more successful sustainable marketing campaigns, and ultimately drive change.

- James Delves, Head of PR and External Engagement, CIM

”





CONCLUSION

As a society, we can no longer say that we're not aware of the scale and challenges of climate change. The IPCC's recent report which highlighted that we're 'code red for humanity' is the final warning that businesses can no longer ignore.¹

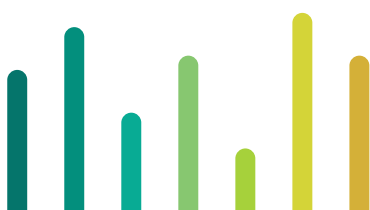
While it's true that tackling climate change is not just down to one sector, we must recognise the critical role our industry can play. Our ability to inform and educate not only enables us to raise awareness of sustainability issues to mass audiences, but importantly our positioning provides a unique, direct link between the C-suite and consumers.

As we've demonstrated throughout this report, positive steps have already been taken - with many marketers already working on sustainability campaigns, and others showing an interest in securing the relevant training to be more effective in their role. However, we appreciate that there is still hesitancy and fear of wrongdoing within the industry.

The next section of this sets out CIM's top recommendations for the 49 per cent of marketers who say they are weary of working on sustainability marketing campaigns due to the fear of 'greenwashing'. From staying on top of the latest news and regulations - to internal actions to increase employee engagement - these recommendations aim to help marketers feel confident in increasing businesses' communications around sustainability efforts, and address consumers' demand to see more action from companies.

Climate change is complex, and the road ahead will be challenging. Marketers will have to learn, adapt and evolve within an ever-changing landscape - but at CIM we are confident that the talented individuals of the marketing sector will drive and support greener business models that give consumers the power to make more sustainable choices.

¹ IPCC, 2021: Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*; <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-i/>



TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SET AND REVIEW YOUR GOALS AND ESTABLISH A CLEAR TIMELINE

Any ambition needs clear targets, but it is especially important when looking at a strictly regulated area like sustainability. No matter how big or small your organisation or clients are, everyone can make a difference through making more sustainable choices. Make sure to also factor in a review period at the end of the timeline to encourage discussions in the business on how to improve for the future and to reflect on learnings.

2. EDUCATE YOURSELF

Read up on the latest developments in sustainability by subscribing to relevant newsletters from publications such as Edie.net, Sustainability Magazine and BusinessGreen. These media outlets also regularly host webinars and events where you can engage directly with industry experts. Make sure you are also clear on the UN's SDGs, the Paris Agreement and the outcomes of COP26. They will all be central to businesses' and governments' sustainability efforts in the coming years.

3. KEEP UP TO DATE WITH REGULATIONS

This will help to ensure you are confident of the guidelines you need to work within. Communicating to colleagues regulatory changes can also provide valuable insights to the wider business.

4. TRAINING IS KEY

Set aside a budget and time for the marketing team to undergo relevant training externally, or host a training afternoon internally where people from other areas such as internal comms can also join.

5. UNDERSTAND YOUR COLLEAGUES AND BOOST ENGAGEMENT

Lead an internal sustainability marketing initiative with your HR department to understand what employees want to see from the business on CSR. Following this, establish an internal sustainability action group with workers from all levels to ensure there is buy in for sustainability efforts from the top down. This group can lead sustainability initiatives for the company internally, such as recycling, newsletters sharing sustainability news, and town hall meetings, ensuring everyone is involved.

TO LEARN MORE:

For marketers looking to upskill CIM offers **three programmes:**

- **'[The Sustainable Marketer](#)'** which provides marketers with the opportunity to rethink how their business approaches sustainability whilst helping to leverage it as a source of brand loyalty, competitive advantage and commercial success.
- The **'[CIM Level 6 Diploma in Sustainable Marketing](#)'** is aimed at marketers who wish to develop their knowledge and skills around how marketing can lead and support the business in responding to the sustainability challenges we face.




For more information on sustainable marketing and how marketers can drive sustainability change across the business visit the: CIM **'[Sustainable Transformation Hub](#)'** or the **[CIM newsroom](#)** for the latest research.



THE SUSTAINABILITY MARKETING SKILLS GAP REPORT

CIM
Moor Hall
Cookham
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 9QH
United Kingdom

Call: 01628 427250
Visit: cim.co.uk/content-hub
Email: editorial@cim.co.uk

 facebook.com/TheCIM
 [@CIM_Marketing](https://twitter.com/CIM_Marketing)
 CIM | The Chartered Institute of Marketing

Authored by:
Gemma Butler, James Delves & Opinionium.

© CIM 2022. All rights reserved.

Permission to reproduce or extract material from
this publication must be sought from CIM.