

# Accelerating Your Career in Sustainability

Navigating career challenges and opportunities in the sustainability field





## Welcome & Introduction

Welcoming remarks and 🧊 Ice Breaker 🧊



## Part 1: Core Competencies

Identifying core competencies and an action plan for a company's sustainability challenge.



## Part 2: Building a Business Case

Crafting a compelling business case for sustainability and practicing a pitch to stakeholders.



## Part 3: Overcoming Career Challenges

Working in sustainability can come with individual and organizational challenges, but reflection and peers can help.

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# Introduction

- **Bard College** and the MBA in Sustainability
- **Rochelle March**, Co-Founder and Principal at PPWA | Adjunct Professor of Data, Analytics & Decision Making at the Bard MBA | Bard MBA/MS alum



# Ice Breaker

**Made the sustainability business case!** Choose one of the products featured below and pitch the business case to your partner for 'your company' to develop it.



A "green" toaster



Building made from recycled plastic



Disposable cup that can be thrown anywhere and transforms into habitat

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# Core Competencies in Sustainability Careers

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# Key Competencies

## Hard Skills

*Mastering technical expertise*

- Systems Thinking
- Financial Acumen
- Domain Expertise

## Soft Skills

*Navigating interpersonal dynamics*

- Stakeholder Engagement
- Change Management
- Communication

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**Systems Thinking** is essential for identifying connections between different aspects of a business, leading to more comprehensive sustainability solutions.

**Toyota's** "Toyota Production System" looks at its production process as a whole system, identifying how every element—from supply chains to production lines—interacts. This view allowed Toyota to implement a **lean manufacturing process**, which focuses on reducing waste, optimizing resource use, and **enhancing efficiency throughout the entire production system.**



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**Financial acumen** helps align sustainability initiatives with profitability, ensuring long-term viability.

**Unilever's Sustainable Living Brands** continue to be a significant driver of the company's growth. As of recent reports, these brands account for **70% of Unilever's overall turnover** and have been growing **46% faster than the rest of the company's portfolio**. Brands such as Dove, Ben & Jerry's, and Hellmann's are key contributors, demonstrating that sustainability-led initiatives can effectively boost business performance.





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Having deep **domain expertise** enables companies to lead with innovative solutions in their sector and drive industry-wide change.

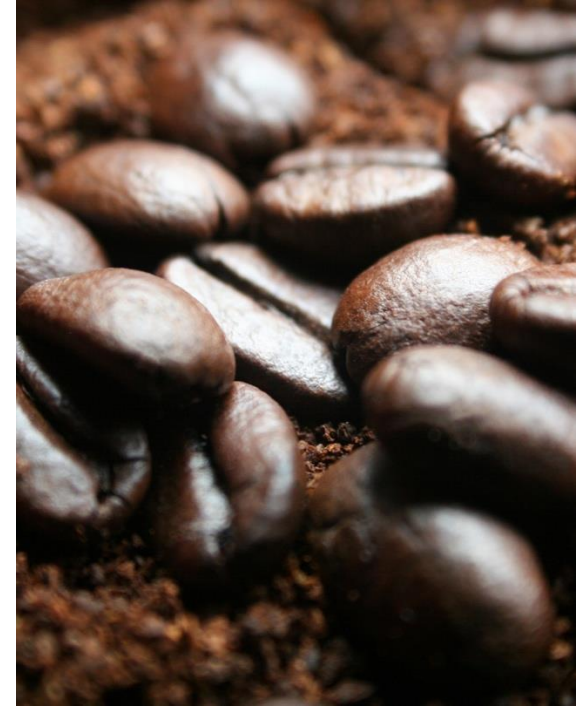
**Tesla's** deep expertise in electric vehicle (EV) technology has positioned it as a leader in sustainable innovation. By mastering **battery technology, energy storage, EV manufacturing,** and **autonomous driving,** Tesla has disrupted the automotive industry and accelerated the transition to **low-carbon transportation.** By focusing on high-performance electric vehicles, Tesla demonstrated that EVs could be both practical and desirable, effectively overcoming the long-standing skepticism around electric cars.



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**Engaging stakeholders** ensures that sustainability efforts align with broader societal values, increasing credibility and support.

**Starbucks**, which relies heavily on stakeholder engagement to maintain its **C.A.F.E. Practices** program, which certifies coffee farms that meet high social and environmental standards. The company also engages customers through its **My Starbucks Idea** program, allowing them to submit suggestions for improving products and services, many of which have been implemented to enhance the customer experience and align with sustainability goals.



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**Leading sustainable change** involves managing internal transitions and aligning various stakeholders with new sustainability strategies.

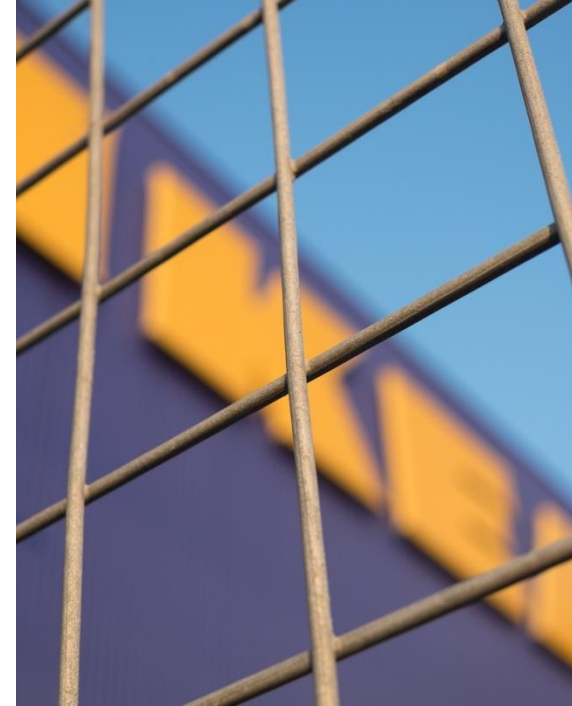
After a major merger, **Newmont Goldcorp** faced increased scrutiny from shareholders and its board to improve its sustainability practices. Newmont responded by **forming a centralized sustainability team**, tasked with driving the implementation of global environmental standards across all its operational sites. The company gave its central sustainability team decision-making authority, enabling it to set clear sustainability goals, allocate resources, and **coordinate sustainability efforts** across various business units.



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Strong **communication** ensures that sustainability goals are conveyed effectively, creating accountability and support from all stakeholders.

**IKEA** uses comprehensive and user-friendly sustainability web pages to highlight their goal to source all materials from renewable or recycled resources by 2030. IKEA uses the **“Live Lagom” initiative** to empower customers with practical sustainability tips, making the information accessible and actionable for a wider audience. By consistently sharing progress and providing transparent updates, IKEA **builds trust** and reinforces its sustainability commitments to customers and partners alike.



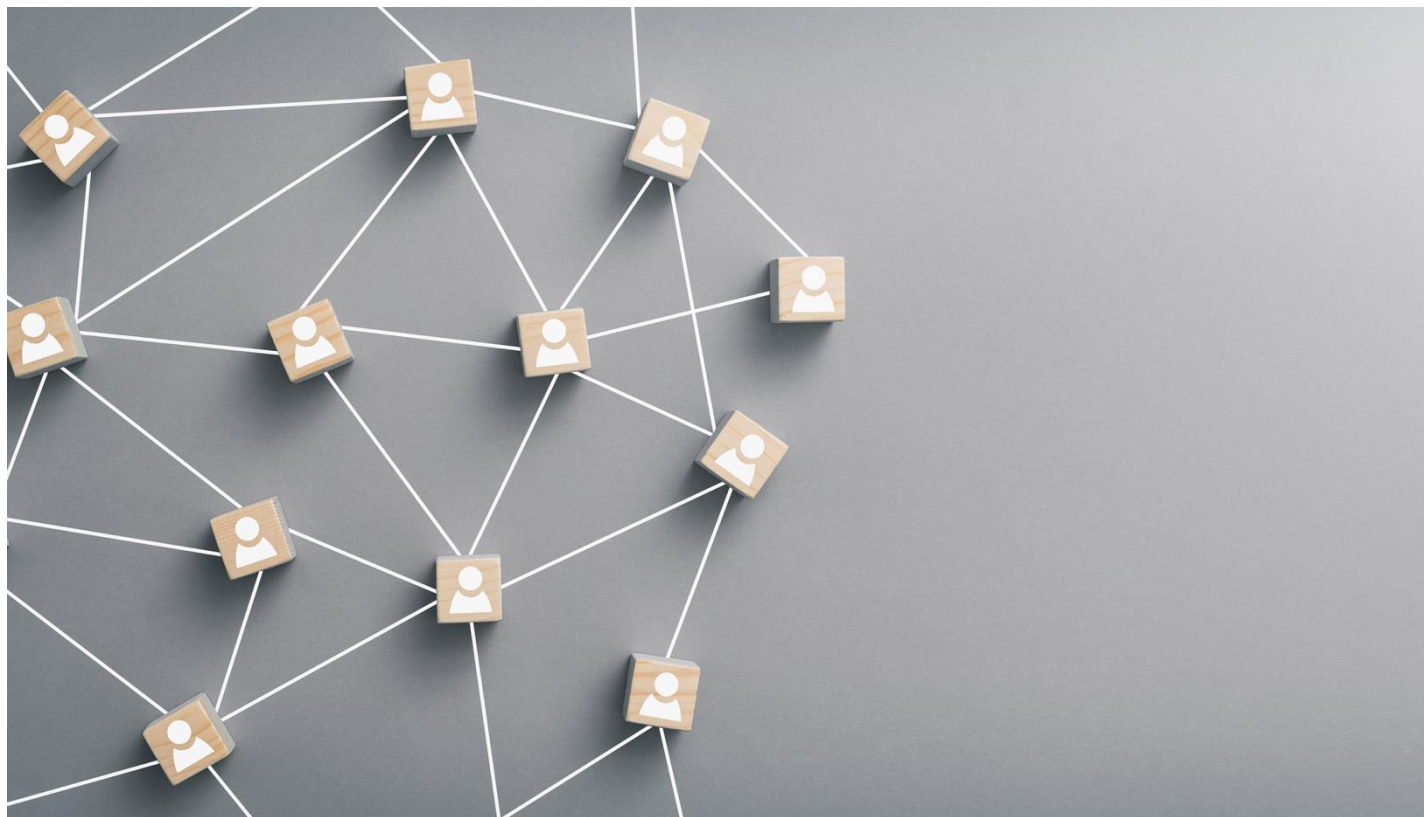
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# Case Study with Analysis Framework

Each group follows these steps with prompts provided on [Case Study & Analysis](#) handout:

1. 🔍 **Identify the challenge:** What is the sustainability issue?
2. 📌 **Match competencies to solutions:** Which 2-3 competencies are most crucial for resolving the challenge?
3. 💣 **Action plan:** Create 2-3 actionable steps the company could take using these competencies.

Afterward, groups quickly present their solutions, focusing on what competencies they identified and why.



Report Out: Key Competencies & Action Plan

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# Building a Business Case for Sustainability

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# Business Case Framework

## Identify the business opportunity

- What sustainability challenge or opportunity is being addressed?

## Connect it to financial metrics

- What are the potential financial benefits of this initiative?
- What metrics can you use to quantify these benefits?

## Align it with company goals

- How does this align with the company's overall strategy or goals?
- How does this align with regulatory or customer trends?



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# Company Examples

Frame the business case by highlighting a sustainability challenge or opportunity.

**Unilever** has leveraged the growing demand for sustainable products by prioritizing brands with strong environmental credentials. Their “Sustainable Living Brands” now drive 75% of the company's growth, showing how sustainable innovation opens new market opportunities.

Tie the opportunity to critical financial metrics such as savings, ROI, and risk reduction.


**IKEA** invested in renewable energy and energy-efficient operations, which led to \$1 billion cost savings while also reducing their carbon footprint, showing how investments can lead to financial gains while also improving long-term resilience.


Ensure the business case aligns with corporate goals or regulatory pressures.

**Microsoft's** commitment to becoming carbon-negative by 2030 is not just about environmental impact—it aligns with broader corporate objectives to mitigate future regulatory risks as more governments implement stricter climate policies.

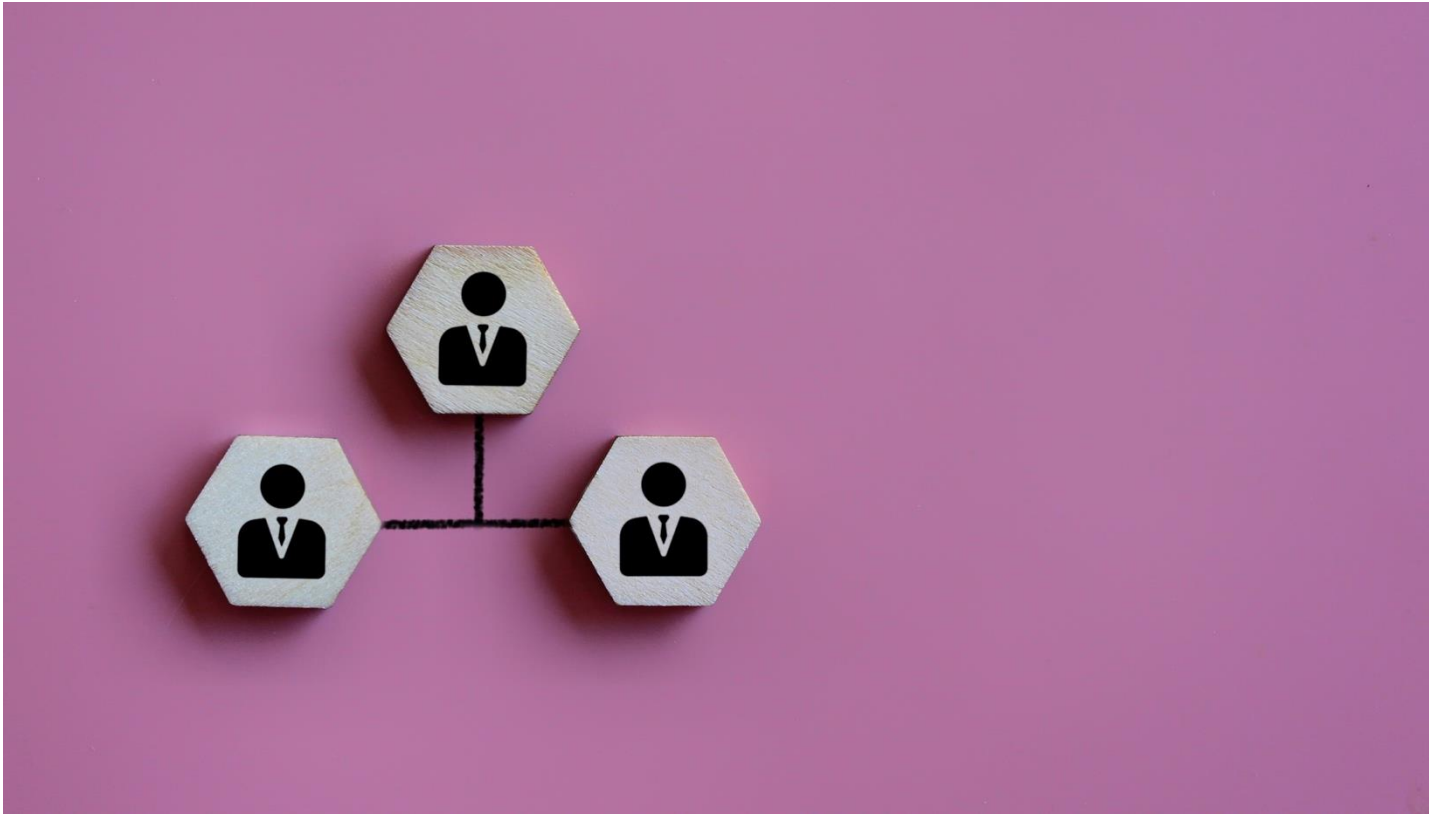
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# Business Case Pitch

 **Business case building:** Each group of participants will use the [Business Case Pitch Template](#) to fill out based on the case study scenario. The template includes several prompts to fill out and concludes with asking the groups to craft a 2-3 sentence summary of the business case.

 **2-minute pitch:** After completing the template, groups can practice delivering a 2-minute pitch using the template.

 **Present back:** A few groups can volunteer to present to everyone for feedback.



Report Out: Business Case Pitch

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# Overcoming Career Challenges in Sustainability

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# Common Career Challenges

## Breaking into leadership

Align sustainability goals with business outcomes to demonstrate leadership potential.

## Balancing business needs with sustainability values

Develop a business case showing how sustainability aligns with long-term profitability and brand loyalty to win over business stakeholders.

## Staying updated with rapidly regulatory changes

Build cross-functional teams that stay ahead of regulatory trends and ensure constant learning and adaptation through professional networks and ongoing education.

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## Quick Poll

**What is the biggest  
barrier to advancing your  
current role or career?**

[https://www.menti.com  
/al7iamkwnooe](https://www.menti.com/al7iamkwnooe)



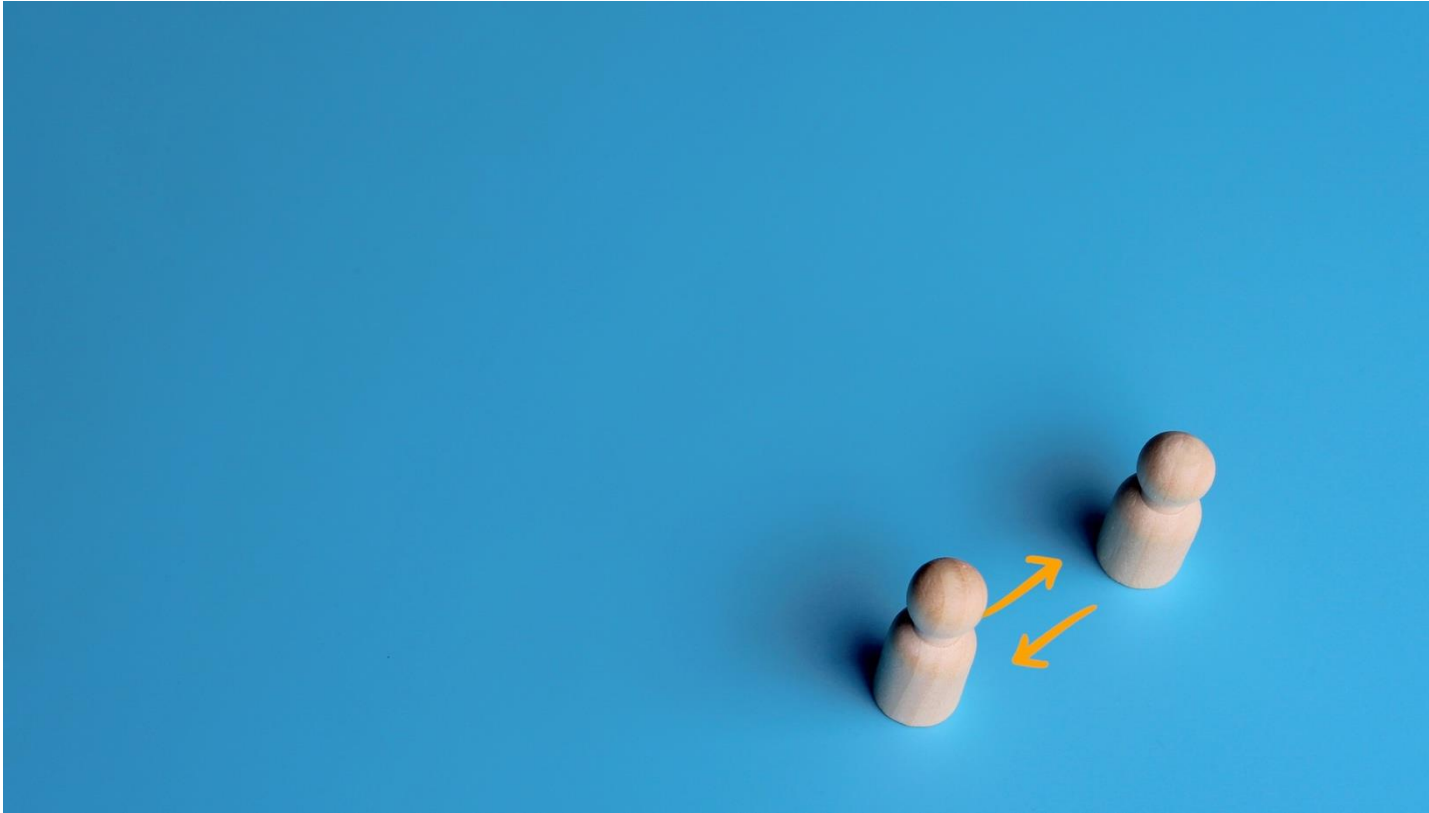
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## Group Reflection & Peer Advice

In your groups, discuss with each other:

1. 🔍 **Identify a challenge:** Each person can share their biggest barrier identified in the poll. 👤 **Discuss personal experiences:** Participants briefly share related experiences or challenges they've faced.
2. 👍 **Generate peer advice:** Based on their own experiences, group members can offer 1-2 pieces of advice for overcoming the challenge, including techniques, resources, tools and tips.

Afterward, groups share one key piece of advice with the room.



Report Out: Key Advice from Peers



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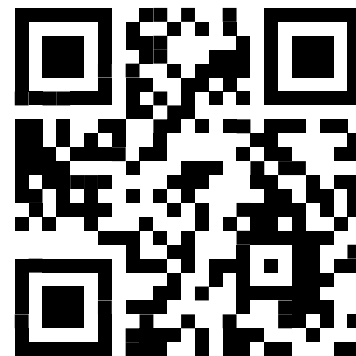
**Wrap-up!**

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# Key Learnings

1. Key competencies for sustainability professionals
  2. Building the sustainable business case
  3. Overcoming challenges with fellow sustainability peers
- Visit a special **microsite made for this workshop** that includes all workshop resources, plus additional career development tools and resources:

<https://gps.bard.edu/sb-workshop>



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## ⚡ Final Takeaway ⚡

1. Write down **one specific action** or next step you will take to accelerate your sustainability career.
2. **Schedule** (and invite an accountability partner to) **a future meeting** in your work calendars as a reminder!

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**Thank You.**

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