



NET ZERO - EFFECTING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE FROM THE TOP



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To achieve Net Zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the culture, structure and processes within an organisation must change. This means changing the way people behave to embed sustained best practice from within. Ultimately it means Net-Zero-proofing your organisation's mission statement and business strategy. Culture is not what you say but what you do.

Changing organisational behaviour cannot happen without the full support, engagement and commitment from key influencers and decision-makers within the organisation, but how do you secure this commitment if it's currently lacking? We know that this is particularly relevant for managers tasked with environmental or wider sustainability goals that haven't been fully embraced across the organisation. For example, where there is no formal

sustainability strategy, Environmental Management System (EMS) or Energy Management System (EnMS) in place.

Surprisingly, we also find that even where formal ISO 50001 and even ISO 14001 objectives have been signed off by the board, it is still not always regarded as being the responsibility of the senior team to ensure that the objectives are strategic, that they reflect GHG reduction targets and that the organisation's need to be climate resilient is considered. If this situation is all too familiar, then read on.

WHO ARE THE 'INFLUENCERS'?

Nothing can be achieved without the commitment from the people at the very top who make the decisions. There are, however, influencers at all levels within an organisation; people who are listened to, believed and who inspire 'disciples'. Whilst the Managing Director or Chief Executive

may be the ultimate authority, he or she may not have the qualities required and it may be considered that someone else on the board or management team would be a better figure head for the Net Zero behaviour change movement. Obviously, you'll need to identify these people; they should not only have the authority to sanction any Net Zero initiatives, but also have the personal commitment and leadership qualities that inspire others to want to follow their lead.

There are others within the organisational structure who may have the authority and responsibility for doing what is required to change the culture, structure and processes to embed Net Zero behaviour, but they may not be inclined to do so unless they receive clear direction from the very top.

Having identified the top-level influencers, it is worth identifying other influencers in the organisation, at all levels, who share your ambitions and who would be prepared to support you in engaging the top-level influencer in your cause. The support of these influencers will also be critical in delivering any Net Zero behaviour change programmes.

They will be able to contribute by informing the strategy from their own and their peer colleagues' perspectives.

HOW DO YOU ACCESS THE TOP-LEVEL INFLUENCERS?

This can be challenging, but if you have no regular contact with the person/people, you could simply ask to see them for 15 minutes to explain the initiative and seek their support. Some people do not get in front of top management because they don't ask to see them!

In your approach it is worth stating how much time you will need – keep it short for an initial discussion – what you want to discuss in broad terms, what benefit it could potentially have for the organisation (including indirect co-benefits), and why you are approaching them.

If this doesn't work, can you identify an influencer who, whilst not at the very top of the organisation, may have access to the top and who could make the approach on your behalf?

Don't be discouraged. There could be many reasons, unrelated to you or your initiative, why your approach has been declined.

It's worth remembering that there can be considerable benefit from employing a specialist consultant in this engagement operation. They can take approaches and risks that internal staff cannot. As an outsider and specialist, their views are likely to be taken more

seriously than those of an insider, even though the insider might be making exactly the same points.

WHAT ARE THEIR GOALS AND PRIORITIES?

If you can understand the priorities and interests of the person/people you want to engage with, you can make your approach on terms that are relevant to them. If, for example, you know that your CEO is all about the bottom line, you can approach them on the basis of the competitive advantage and financial benefits that Net Zero offers. If you know the person's priority is customer service and reputation then use this as a way to get their attention.

They should also be made aware that regulations will be introduced that will require reporting about adaptation and mitigation measures. In addition, stringent requirements around commercial procurement, already introduced in the public sector, are likely to be introduced in the private sector.

These will require an organisation to have a clear Net Zero statement and strategy.

Other priorities may be compliance, health and safety, zero emissions strategy and possibly sustainability more generally. So, any Net Zero behaviour initiative should be framed within their priorities so that it then becomes their priority.

The purpose of this is to put a Net Zero behaviour initiative in the context of the entire organisation. In other words, it should be integrated into the culture, systems and structure of the organisation rather than be a stand-alone, isolated function, solely the responsibility of the initiative driver. Ultimately it is about Net-Zero-proofing business's day-to-day operations and how it plans for the future.

YOUR TIME TO SHINE.

Once you have gained your time with the leader(s) be prepared! Make sure that you set out your case clearly, succinctly with facts, figures and clear examples to support your case in terms that are relevant to their priorities.

It is important to define what top level commitment means and specifically what you want people to do. Because senior management are busy people, your requests of them should be framed by:

1. Actions with a high visibility and impact
2. Actions that take little time or start with cost-neutral measures
3. Actions that directly align with current business goals/priorities



It is also important to set a framework right upfront (although this may subsequently change) for how results will be measured, by whom and how progress will be reported so that your top-level ambassadors feel comfortable that they will quickly understand the impact of your initiative. Any successes should obviously be communicated but equally failures should be acknowledged, with plans to learn from the failures. It's all about cost-effective continuous performance improvement.

And finally, don't leave the meeting without agreeing a clear path to progress your initiative.

As specialist consultants, we are helping organisations to engage top level influencers with limited understanding of Net Zero and GHG accounting protocols by holding 1-2 hour 'capacity building' workshops. To date topics have included:

- Defining Net Zero, issues and opportunities for your business/organisation
- Greenhouse gas accounting, science-based targets and trajectories
- The energy hierarchy and good practice carbon offsetting
- Scopes 1-3 – understanding the implications
- Establishing priorities for action

This approach may be one that you wish to consider as it is successfully engaging senior decision-makers in getting to grips with Net Zero. It has given them an understanding of the basic principles, the issues, the governance requirements and the implications – the risks and opportunities – for their organisation. The outcomes are agreed responsibilities and priorities for action.

If you are interested in holding a workshop for your organisation or would like to discuss any other aspect of a Behaviour Change Programme, please call 0800 612 567 or email george.richards@jrpsolutions.com.