

# Sustainability and Marketing Teams

**Marketing teams are the closest people to your institution's stakeholders and have the best idea of what stories and communication methods matter to them. It's great for an institution to have ambitious sustainability goals, but without effective marketing through mainstream channels staff and students can be left unaware of your sustainability initiatives and progress. When behaviour change is an important aspect of your sustainability strategy, collaborating with your marketing or communications team will be vitally important.**

Marketing and communications help **embed sustainability into the values of your institution**

**Positive impacts from sustainability and wellbeing projects can improve student satisfaction surveys**

Marketing teams **identify and target multiple audiences** that are easily overlooked



Sustainable institutions have been shown to have **lower staff turnover**

Effective communication makes **staff and students aware** of sustainability projects and how they can get involved

Marketing team can help give sustainability a **visible identity** within the institution

## Collaborative Project Suggestions

### Communication

#### *With marketing teams*

*Offering training on sustainability issues and current institutional initiatives for your marketing team would ensure everyone is on the same page when talking about sustainability*

Differing conceptions of job roles may create a barrier to working together (for example the idea that "sustainability teams are expected to promote all their own material" vs "sustainability teams always just want to promote their own material and don't share it with the main communications team". Some communications jobs may fall to the sustainability team, however to promote initiatives more widely both internally and externally the marketing team will have more knowledge and channels. >> **Getting Started:** *Engaging more in the work place, through meetings, shadowing or office swapping, will give you a greater understanding of how the marketing team operate, what they can offer, and who you can approach for communications support.*

#### *With students & staff*

Marketing messages can show stakeholders the value of sustainable behaviours. Messages that tell stakeholders what they can personally gain from taking action are more likely to close the value-action gap. Also important is clearly expressing the actions stakeholders can take and how can they get involved through sharing their own stories and accessing more information or training resources. >> **Getting Started:** *Map out for each sustainability initiative the different ways people can engage and take action before talking to the marketing team.*

*A study of consumer behaviour found that while 61% of consumers are "very concerned" about the environment; there is clearly a value-action gap that marketing could help to address by making it easier and more appealing to take action*

Research into climate psychology has shown that focussing on negative messages can lead to people feeling overwhelmed and then not taking action. Try focusing on the positive (e.g. marketing the health benefits of a vegetarian diet, the social benefits of solar power), but make sure you are not focusing on the positive so much that you lead people to believe there's no need for action. Building on the experience of marketing within other focus areas may strengthen the impact of sustainability messages at your institution. >> **Getting Started:** *Your marketing team will be able to provide a steer on the balance of positive and negative messaging.*

## Health and Wellbeing



*A university study showed 52% of students would rank the university higher if they were to learn it was a “sustainable university”. Sustainability was not the most important factor for students choosing a university, however is likely to be a factor when choosing between otherwise comparable universities.*

- One of the main aims of sustainability is to increase people’s wellbeing, and many initiatives actively improve wellbeing (for example active travel, relaxation spaces in developed greenspaces, etc.) as well as providing opportunities for diverse groups to work together and fostering community cohesion.
- Marketing these sustainability initiatives shows that the institution values the wellbeing of its staff and students, and is a forward looking, innovative institution. With higher wellbeing, student satisfaction surveys will be higher, which can be marketed to increase student recruitment. Sustainable institutions have also been shown to have lower staff turnover. Effective marketing can therefore have a massive impact on not only staff and student wellbeing, but also on their numbers.

>> **Getting Started:** Work with your marketing team to promote the health and well-being aspects of sustainability projects to staff and students, and share details on how they can get involved.

## Branding and Mascots

- Creating a name, logo or brand guidelines for your institution’s sustainability work can create an identity which people are familiar with and recognise as the work that their institution is doing to support sustainability. Marketing teams will be able to help align this with institutional branding for continuity, which can then be used across sustainability social media and communications.
- Some of the most sustainable universities in the world have opted for kooky mascots to promote their sustainability efforts. For example WUR in the Netherlands uses “The Green Man” in marketing videos to promote sustainability initiatives – a person in a bright green body suit, cycling around campus and interrupting people’s daily routines. If nothing else, these tactics will certainly get a smile out of your students and staff!



>> **Getting Started:** Approach your marketing team with ideas of what branding you would like to create, with examples of projects and themes that occur through your institution’s sustainability work.

*Consider if a story is better promoted through your own channels, or might have a bigger impact through the mainstream channels. There are benefits to both, but if sustainability is rarely communicated as a mainstream story, it may never gain the reputation of a mainstream issue.*

## Sustainability Publications

- Sustainability publications created in collaboration with staff and students have proven to increase interaction with sustainability projects, provide an “open call” for sustainability stories, and inspire new projects and academic courses at institutions.
- This could be in the form of a monthly newsletter or annual magazine. For example The College of the Atlantic’s “Viewbook” is an alternative prospectus that is structured around the global issues the college is tackling rather than academic courses on offer (e.g. the “Hydropolitics” section outlines the college’s stance, presents a student project on the issue, and then introduces an optional academic course on hydropolitics).

>> **Getting Started:** Look at previous publications created by your marketing team and other departments (including your own!) to understand the pros and cons of different approaches.

## Sustainability Reporting

- Following the trend for financial reports to be more accessible, appealing, and outline an institution’s values, institutions’ sustainability teams are using their **reports** as a form of marketing. Reports can outline achievements and values as well as link to wider social initiatives that the institution are addressing, to send a message of both the institution’s international perspective and values around sustainability.

>> **Getting Started:** The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a starting point for considering global sustainability issues the institution may be working on. This framework can make the reporting more interactive and colourful while linking to wider society. Consider signing the [SDG Accord](#).



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