

Here's a handy guide to help you plan your sustainability content marketing



Consumers, communities, and investors are redefining the way organisations view sustainability. Find out how businesses can scale sustainable growth through content marketing.

Not many businesses can say that their entire operations run on zero-waste principles. But the global social enterprise [TerraCycle](#) is one of a few exceptions. With a plethora of groundbreaking green initiatives dated as far back as 2001, this US-grown company is on its mission to bring the appeal of sustainability to the consumer goods industry.

As one of the fastest-growing recycling manufacturers globally, TerraCycle collects and processes non-recyclable waste materials into affordable, eco-friendly products. Uniquely, the company also partners with municipalities, brands, and retailers to create collection programmes where consumers can send their waste streams for recycling.

Running such a complex network of platforms is a huge undertaking. It requires effective communication strategies across marketing touchpoints so that the brand's sustainability message to consumers always remains consistent and clear.

That's just one of many examples of how effective content marketing plays a vital role in sustainability. Beyond meeting the target sales through advertorial campaigns, sustainability content marketing entails shaping a brand narrative that inspires grassroots movements to promote eco-friendly values.

The rise of corporate sustainability

A behavioural shift in consumers' purchases is one of the driving forces behind sustainability marketing's growing importance. Consumers aren't just placing their expectations on companies to show better social and environmental accountability. They also want to integrate sustainability into their daily lives. [A Nielsen's study](#) in 2018 had found that more than seven

out of ten consumers would change their consumption habits to lessen their impact on the environment. Additionally, their purchasing behaviours are also influenced by several health considerations.

49% of consumers, for example, were willing to pay premium prices for consumable goods with high quality and safety standards, which typically include organic, non-GMO, and antibiotic-free labels. Meanwhile, 38% prefer to purchase products made from environmentally friendly and sustainable packaging materials.

These unique preferences strongly translate into a lucrative market niche. [Research](#) conducted on consumer packaged goods (CPG) in the US found that half of the CPG growth from 2013 to 2018 came from sustainability-marketed goods, which demonstrably grew 5.6 times faster than their regular counterparts. Similarly, packaged goods with a sustainability product claim—accounting for 16.6% of the market in 2018—scored a profit of nearly \$114 billion, up 29% from 2013.

Such promising growth trajectories have not eluded the attention of investors. [The total sustainable assets globally](#) had more than doubled in seven years since 2012—reaching \$30.7 trillion by 2018. The changing investor demographics also contributes to the growing demand for sustainability investing. A study by [Mackenzie Investments](#) has discovered that 31% of millennial investors seek to diversify their portfolios with investments that meet the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards.

What are the benefits?

Practical sustainability marketing begets corporate transparency. It means that the more open your business becomes in communicating its conduct, the easier it is for you to nurture and maintain a strong brand reputation, stakeholder relations, and new growth opportunities.

As consumers and investors increasingly pressure companies to address economic, environmental, and societal concerns linked to their activities, the disclosure of non-financial information has become all the more critical to brand success. [Research](#) reveals that companies with high ratings for ESG factors experience a lower cost of debt and equity—with 89% of them outperforming the market in the medium and the long term.

Corporate reporting is perhaps the most notable channel with which businesses can convey their sustainability agendas. However, there are other ways companies can achieve this, including through thought leadership articles, editorial pieces, and digital creatives.

Thinking of scaling the breadth of your sustainability communication? Here are a few steps to guide you!

1. Highlight key sustainability areas in your business

The first step is to evaluate what sustainability entails to your management, industry, and consumers. Identify the hurdles that each of these facets encounters to establish clear sustainability objectives and how you can address them.

This process is highly crucial since it allows you to identify the audience demographics that would most likely peruse your content. It also helps you lay the groundwork for your future content structure, from the tone, writing style all the way to design.

Among key areas that pose the biggest hurdles to sustainability include waste generation, the presence of innovation culture, fair hiring practices, unique

sustainability offerings, and your company's impact on the local community. So consider answering these salient points before you proceed to the next step.

2. Build your sustainability brand kit

Now that you have a rough sketch of what types of content you are about to produce and the demographics you would likely engage with, it is time to fill in the details.

To build content that leaves a lasting impression on the audience, you first need to make sure that you have a brand kit in place. A brand kit is a handy guide to your brand's visual identity. The kit contains instructions on how you can create your logos, colour palette, fonts, and messaging, which reflect your brand's identity consistently across the board. Additionally, having such a kit at your disposal further allows you to ground your focus on sustainability areas with materiality to your company's performance.

3. Develop an effective communication strategy

The next step is to create a list of sustainability topics that are highly relevant to your industry. Find out how your company can leverage its strengths to address the problems discussed in these topics and use the outcomes of such endeavours as reference points for your content.

For example, suppose you are running a consumer goods company. In that case, you can help your consumers make more informed purchasing decisions by highlighting the eco-friendly novelties in your product development, such as fully recyclable packaging or all-organic ingredients, among others.

To develop a solid communication strategy, you must also determine which marketing channels best suited to your needs and how frequent you would use them to disseminate your content. Be it a blog post, infographic, or white paper—your content must reach the right audience at the right time.

Would you be using Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter to publish your content or all three in tandem? Do you have a content calendar to track your progress? What benchmarks would you use to measure your content success?

All these questions must be answered to help you scale your communication strategy and assert your brand authority.

4. Track your efforts with content monitoring and benchmarking

Content monitoring and benchmarking are vital for a successful communication strategy. There are several metrics you can use to benchmark your performance. Your website traffic, for example, helps measure your audience engagement. Isolate the dips and highs in the statistics and audit what types of keywords and posts you produced during those contrasting periods. That way, you'd know which content works and which one doesn't.

You can also gauge your performance by contrasting the ratio of returning visitors against the overall visitors on your site. Use Google Analytics to evaluate the percentage of new sessions.

Social media sharing is another popular and useful metric to analyse your content performance. Keep in mind that content that delivers great value receives a high number of social media shares.

So what does this tell us?

Numerous studies have illustrated a strong correlation between stellar business performance and sustainability practices. As sustainable development increasingly plays a vital role in corporate decision-making processes, you must also create an effective communication strategy to document and highlight your milestones. Thus, sustainability content marketing gives you the power to reshape your brand narrative, future-proof your business against unforeseen disruptions, and drive your innovation culture to new heights.

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