

**BREAKOUT SESSION:**

**Power of influence: the new role of CSOs as sustainability goes mainstream**

**EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**ACTION: Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs) must master the power of influence as sustainability factors into mainstream business strategy.**

**SESSION OVERVIEW**

The role of the Chief Sustainability Officer is changing as sustainability factors into mainstream business strategy. The CSO is increasingly charged with “influencing, communicating and cutting through the organizational complexity to allow their firm to deliver on ESG commitments.”

Award-winning Yale professor Zoe Chance provided an ethical approach to influence and how to rediscover the superpower that can bring companies further along their sustainability journey. She also shared practical insights and tools to use the superpower of influence as a force for good.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Today, the CSO connects with all aspects of business within business strategies and operations. This puts increasing pressure for CSOs to master the power of influence.
- There are four “faces” of the CSO role:
  - Agitator (to challenge the status quo)
  - Facilitator (to mediate conflicting claims on scarce resources)
  - Executor (to lead change)
  - Steward (to manage internal controls)
- Influence doesn’t work the way we think because we don’t think the way we think. System 1 thinking - unconscious, fast, emotional and habitual. System 2 - conscious, slow, rational and effortful. To influence, it is important to appeal to System 1; information isn’t important until the person is interested.

- People take the path of least resistance. As influencers CSOs need to make the path towards sustainability easier. The core principal of influencing behavior is ease. There are compelling examples that illustrate this point – the difference between opt-in and opt-out policies; the importance of the “customer effort score” in marketing; etc.
- The most impactful tool for communication is framing, because words matter in evoking emotions and connections (e.g., “global warming” vs “climate change” vs “climate crisis”, “meatless” vs “plant-based”). The three most useful frames are
  - Monumental – important, huge
  - Manageable – bite-sized, easy
  - Mysterious – uncertain, curiosity-provoking, incomplete

**GET IN TOUCH**

To learn more about WBCSD’s Education program, please contact: [Rodney Irwin](#), Chief Operating Officer, WBCSD

***“Influencing is seeding ideas into other people’s minds, to use the knowledge of my constituencies to act.”***