

Empowering people, driving change:

→ *The Chief People Officer's role
in sustainability leadership*



World Business
Council
for Sustainable
Development

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About this report



01.

01. About this report

Momentum is building around the shift to a more sustainable world. Businesses are setting ambitious transition plans toward a net-zero, nature-positive, and more equitable future. While Chief Sustainability Officers continue to lead the charge, sustainability is becoming increasingly central to core business strategy, requiring a broader range of corporate functions to step up. In this context, few roles are as pivotal to achieving sustainability goals as that of the Chief People Officer (CPO).

As stewards of people and culture, CPOs hold a unique position to align workforce strategies with sustainability objectives, cultivate the critical skills needed for transformation, and embed sustainability into organizational values and practices. Yet, despite their crucial role, the contribution of CPOs to corporate sustainability is often overlooked.

This report aims to:

- Raise awareness of the critical role CPOs play in preparing companies for sustainability transformation;
- Identify essential levers CPOs can use to advance corporate sustainability agendas;
- Provide practical guidance to help CPOs take the first steps in this journey.

Insights shared in this report have emerged from perspectives and expertise shared by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)'s Chief People Officer Network — a global community of senior executives dedicated to exchanging ideas, sharing leading practices, and exploring the powerful tools that people and culture leaders have at their disposal to drive corporate sustainability forward.

The report also draws from a 2024 survey of close to 100 Chief People Officers worldwide conducted by WBCSD in collaboration with Spencer Stuart, exploring the challenges and opportunities facing human resource functions in the context of sustainability leadership.



The sustainability transformation: *A people agenda*



02.

02. The sustainability transformation: A people agenda

Today's business environment is changing rapidly

Climate change. Nature loss. Rising inequality. Three existential challenges that are fundamentally changing the world in which business operates. These challenges are depleting the natural resources and destabilizing the environmental conditions that business depends on. They are eroding people's trust in key institutions and systems, including business and markets, and fueling civil and political upheaval. They are shifting consumer sentiment and changing what workers expect from their employers. They are driving investors to take a closer look at companies' social and environmental impacts, dependencies, risks and opportunities. And they are leading policymakers to establish new regulations, requirements, and programs.

Climate, nature and equity challenges driving an increasingly complex business environment

A planetary emergency

- Science shows that 6 of 9 critical planetary boundaries have now been crossed¹
- 73% of all global wildlife has been depleted since the 1970s²
- Annual damage caused by climate change totals at least USD 200 billion per year³
- 19% of GDP is projected to be eroded by climate change by 2050⁴

Shifting consumer sentiment and employee expectations

- Worldwide, 64% of consumers report high levels of concern about sustainability, including 79% of consumers in fast-growing markets like China, India, and Indonesia⁵
- At least 69% of employees want their companies to invest in sustainability effort⁶
- Approximately 45% of Gen Z and Millennial workers have either left a job or plan to do so due to climate concerns⁷

Triggering policy and regulatory change

- From 2024 onwards the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive will affect thousands of businesses, requiring businesses to disclose their social and environmental impacts with heavy auditing to ensure credibility.

These changes in the operating environment are fueling an inexorable shift toward sustainability across the business community — a shift away from business models and practices that frequently extract value, externalize cost and risk, and exacerbate global challenges, toward those that support a more just and regenerative system where all people can live well and within the limits of what our planet can provide.

While we are still in the early stages of this shift, a sustainable business transformation is gathering steam. Many multinational companies recognize the increasing strategic importance of sustainability and are proactively assessing operational risks and seizing commercial opportunities accordingly. Long-term ambitions to reach net zero, become nature-positive, and improve social outcomes have been set out, and businesses across all sectors are innovating, developing, and scaling promising new technologies and practices that will enable them to capitalize on historic new markets.

The continued shift toward sustainability will transform our social and economic systems and have a profound impact on business, much in the same way that the digital transformation has over recent decades. Bolt-on sustainability strategies and programs will not see companies safely to the other side. Rather, companies will have to tackle existential issues head-on — transforming their business models, adapting their operations and adjusting portfolios. The sustainability transformation can bring historic commercial upside for companies that are prepared to take decisive and purposeful action, and serious disruption for those that are not. There are no guarantees for today's vested interests or yesterday's leaders. Across markets, competitive positioning will look very different 10 or even 5 years from now.



Successful transformation will depend on people

As the sustainability transformation unfolds, much of our focus tends to be on the emergence of the new regulations, systems, technologies and innovations that will unlock sustainability solutions and the commercial opportunities that accompany them. Yet, at its core, sustainability progress depends on people — it is people who generate ideas, advocate for them, invest in them, test them, refine them, and ultimately scale them.

Transforming business models and practices for sustainable growth will be complex and challenging. To succeed, companies must focus greater attention and energy on the people they depend on to grow successfully — empowering them as agents of change with the right knowledge, mindsets, skills, incentives and working conditions to drive this agenda forward. How seriously business leaders take this people-focused agenda now will determine which companies pull ahead and those that fall behind. It is also important to note that these efforts should not be confined to sustainability teams alone. Sustainability skills and fluency are increasingly necessary for jobs at every level throughout the business.⁸

At present many companies are finding that the people within their organizations are not currently equipped with the right combination of mindsets and skills needed to drive sustainability transformation forward at the speed and scale required. A recent ManpowerGroup survey of more than 40,000 organizations found that 94% of employers feel they lack the right mix of internal skills to achieve their sustainability goals⁹ — posing a significant barrier to long-term success. Similarly, a 2024 study by ERM and WBCSD revealed that more than 150 business leaders regard inadequate sustainability-related skills and awareness as one of the top three internal obstacles preventing their companies from capitalizing on sustainability opportunities.¹⁰

Research by LinkedIn shows demand for sustainability skills outpacing supply by a rate

of two to one in 2024.¹¹ For businesses to navigate the sustainability transformation effectively, leaders must take action to bridge this emerging gap — inspiring, incentivizing, and supporting their people to realize their full potential as changemakers.

Chief People Officers have a pivotal role to play in closing the sustainability skills gap. By embedding sustainability into workforce strategies — through hiring, upskilling, performance incentives, and culture-building — they can equip employees with the capabilities needed to drive lasting change. In the next chapter, we will explore concrete actions CPOs can take to lead this agenda, ensuring their companies not only keep pace but gain a competitive edge in the sustainability transformation.

Competition for sustainability talent is heating up

- **A recognized gap:** 94% of companies don't believe they currently have the right mix of skills to deliver on their ESG targets, and just one in eight employees globally believe they have one or more sustainability skill.¹²
- **Unprecedented demand:** 70% of employers are urgently recruiting or planning to recruit people with sustainability skills.¹³
- **At all levels of the organization:** 76% of CEOs agree that the sustainability transformation will require most workers to acquire sustainability skills — not just those working in traditional sustainability functions.
- **Demand outpacing supply:** While sustainability talent demand grew 11.6% from 2023–2024, supply only increased by 5.6%.¹⁴
- **An increasing skills gap:** If action is not taken on upskilling it is predicted that by 2030 one in five jobs will lack the sustainability talent to fill it. By 2050 this gap will increase to one in two jobs.¹⁵

The role of the *Chief People Officer*



03.

03. The role of the Chief People Officer

To navigate the sustainability transformation successfully, businesses will have to embed a strategic focus on people at the heart of their efforts. They will have to empower people, building the capabilities, mindsets and conditions people need to thrive in a changing world and deliver on the company's sustainability ambitions.

Who is better placed to mobilize and support people to deliver on organizational goals than the Chief People Officer and their team?

Over time, the role of human resources has gone from administrative and compliance-oriented to strategic and focused on gaining competitive advantage through people. Human resources teams are now called upon to manage an array of complex issues, from remote work to skills shortages, and to play significant roles in major business transformation strategies and initiatives. The growing importance of the human resources function can be seen in changing titles and rising compensation for the most senior HR leaders, which in many cases are now key members of the C-suite.¹⁶

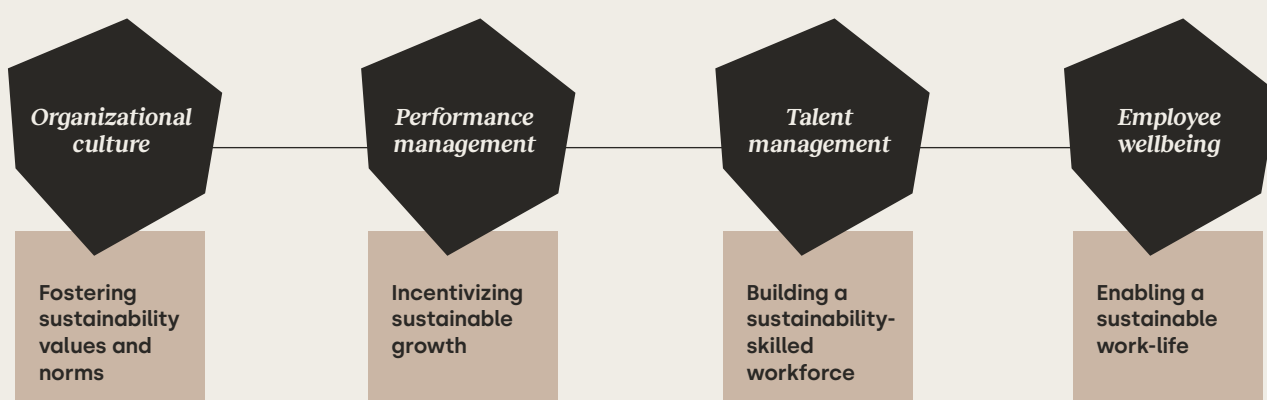
There are many reasons why CPOs are uniquely positioned to help drive the sustainability agenda forward. CPOs are the guardians of corporate culture. They are the conscience of their companies, ensuring that corporate purpose and values align with employees' lived experiences. They are also connectors and change agents, charged with understanding what employees need and what the business needs, and doing the work

required to align the two. It is the responsibility of the CPO to anticipate future workforce needs – if the CPO doesn't do it, no one else will. And CPOs have multiple levers of influence at their disposal, from company-wide communications to recruitment, hiring, and promotion, and from learning and development to compensation and benefits.

As such, CPOs have an essential role to play in delivering the people-focused agenda that is so central to their companies' ability to deliver sustainability goals. Yet their role in this context has often been underrecognized to date and, for many organizations, coordination between human resources and sustainability teams has been limited. In a recent Spencer Stuart survey of Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs), for example, human resources ranked the lowest of nine different parts of the business in terms of perceived importance to the sustainability agenda.¹⁷ Similarly, in an EY survey, CSOs reported lower levels of collaboration with their CPOs than with any other member of the C-suite.¹⁸ These trends stand at odds with what is required for companies to succeed in the context of the sustainability transformation.

Fundamentally, there are four essential levers of influence CPOs have at their disposal to help drive and support the sustainability transformation: organizational culture, performance management, talent management, and employee wellbeing. These levers are depicted in Figure 1 and described in more detail in the pages that follow.

Figure 1: Levers for CPO Sustainability Leadership



Organizational culture:

Fostering sustainability values and norms

Why does this matter?

Organizational culture is often defined as a set of shared values, assumptions, attitudes, and norms that shape what employees do and how they do it. As such, fostering a culture of sustainability is an important way of encouraging, guiding, and supporting employees to come up with the ideas, take the initiative, and implement the behaviors

and practices needed to achieve a company's sustainability goals. Culture can accelerate a company's progress by ensuring that sustainability is integrated into the many micro-decisions employees make every day¹⁹ — acting as a critical link between ambition and implementation.

Human Resource functions play a crucial role in shaping, nurturing, and sustaining corporate culture, and as such are pivotal in ensuring that a company values sustainability.

What does this look like in practice?

Key focus areas	Examples of impactful actions CPOs can take
Integrating sustainability into core corporate values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Consistently set out a clear mission and purpose when it comes to sustainability through internal communications, onboarding processes, recognition programs, and other company rituals. → Ensure that employees understand the "why" behind the company's sustainability goals, including both the costs and risks of inaction and the potential benefits of change. → Anchor sustainability communications in the unique, positive impact a company can have on people and the planet; while sustainability is in part about reducing harm, it should also be about pride and impact.²⁰
Ensuring that leadership sets a strong example on sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure that leaders embody and promote a culture of sustainability and that they demonstrate genuine commitment to sustainable practices. → Equip leaders with the right knowledge and mindsets when it comes to the importance of sustainability to the business, through experiences, work assignments, and training programs. → Leverage succession planning as a strategic tool for building a leadership team that embraces sustainability as a strategic opportunity.
Instilling a sense of ownership around sustainability throughout the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Emphasize that sustainability is a shared responsibility, and highlight how different functions and roles, beyond the sustainability team, contribute to the company's sustainability goals. → Use employee feedback mechanisms to regularly collect perspectives on sustainability-related matters, and use those perspectives to frame communications, address concerns, and develop new ideas. → Invest in employee-led sustainability initiatives in areas of strategic importance to the company, for example through internal competitions and communities.
Encouraging cross-cutting collaboration on sustainability goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Facilitate internal secondments that allow employees with different backgrounds and skills to work on sustainability-related projects for defined periods of time. → Facilitate the creation of interdisciplinary teams across functions that work together on sustainability projects, breaking down silos and leveraging diverse expertise.

Performance management:

Incentivizing sustainable growth

Why does this matter?

Perhaps the strongest indicator of what a company values is what it measures and rewards. Performance management strongly influences corporate culture and directly shapes employee

behavior. Performance management also surfaces areas for improvement, fueling learning and innovation. To re-engineer a company for sustainable growth, it must evaluate, and reward employees based on more than short-term financial performance. CPOs are ideally placed to ensure that incentive schemes integrate sustainability impactfully.

What does this look like in practice?

Key focus areas	Examples of impactful actions CPOs can take
Setting clear and measurable sustainability goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Work with sustainability teams to ensure that the company's sustainability goals are cascaded down into individual performance targets for employees to promote ownership and accountability at all levels of the organization. → Regularly review and adjust metrics and processes as needed based on feedback and changing organizational needs.
Monitoring sustainability performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Reinforce the importance of sustainability and keep it at the forefront of employees' minds by making sure that sustainability performance is established as a key component of regular evaluations. → Empower managers throughout the organization to provide feedback on sustainability-linked performance and recommend opportunities for continued development.
Recognizing and rewarding sustainability performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Implement reward systems that recognize employees and teams that excel in meeting sustainability goals; these could include bonuses, recognition by senior management, or career advancement opportunities. → Identify and celebrate "sustainability champions" within the organization who consistently demonstrate leadership in this area.
Ensuring company leadership is accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use executive compensation to create incentives and accountability for the delivery of mission-critical sustainability outcomes at the highest level.



Talent management:

Building a sustainability-skilled workforce

Why does this matter?

A key constraint for many companies seeking to navigate the sustainability transformation is a shortage of staff with the right skills and awareness at all levels, including C-suite and board members. Talent management is essential to building a workforce with the skillsets and

mindsets needed to support sustainable business practices, and to take advantage of potentially historic new markets. This includes both technical skills related to sustainability-focused operations (such as hydrogen engineering or battery material technician) and more adaptive (such as stakeholder engagement and systems thinking). It also involves the promotion of a continued learning (and unlearning) mindset throughout the organization.²¹

What does this look like in practice?

Key focus areas	Examples of impactful actions CPOs can take
Identifying the skills needed to deliver on sustainability transformation strategies and the gaps that need filling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Assess the current and future skills needs of the business when it comes to delivering on sustainability ambitions and commitments. → Identify gaps and risks in the existing workforce. → Develop and implement solutions to address skills gaps accordingly.
Integrating sustainability into recruitment and hiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Integrate sustainability explicitly into every job description. → Seek candidates with sustainability-oriented skills, experience, and perspectives. → Emphasize and model the importance of sustainability throughout the recruitment process, for example by minimizing air travel and designing the process with consideration for candidate's personal needs and commitments. → Leverage the onboarding process to communicate sustainability's importance to the company and to begin to cultivate the right mindsets.
Rolling out learning and development programs for existing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Invest in reskilling and upskilling for employees at all levels to achieve broad buy-in and enable the company to transform itself for sustainable growth. Diversify curricula to reflect differences in functional roles and sustainability readiness. → Keep the 70/20/10 model in mind and complement training with on-the-job experiences and opportunities to interact with colleagues working on sustainability-related initiatives. → Measure the effectiveness of upskilling efforts and continuously improve. → Work with trusted partners across the academic and NGO space to ensure that upskilling remains relevant and fit for purpose as the sustainability landscape continues to evolve.
Shaping the skills of the workforce of tomorrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Proactively transmit clear signals of demand for the sustainability skills the company needs now and expects to need in the future, both to young people directly and to a range of stakeholders across the education system. → Invest in initiatives that help to upskill young workers for sustainability, including through career connected learning experiences such as apprenticeships, and through multi-generational skills exchange programs.

What are “sustainability skills”?

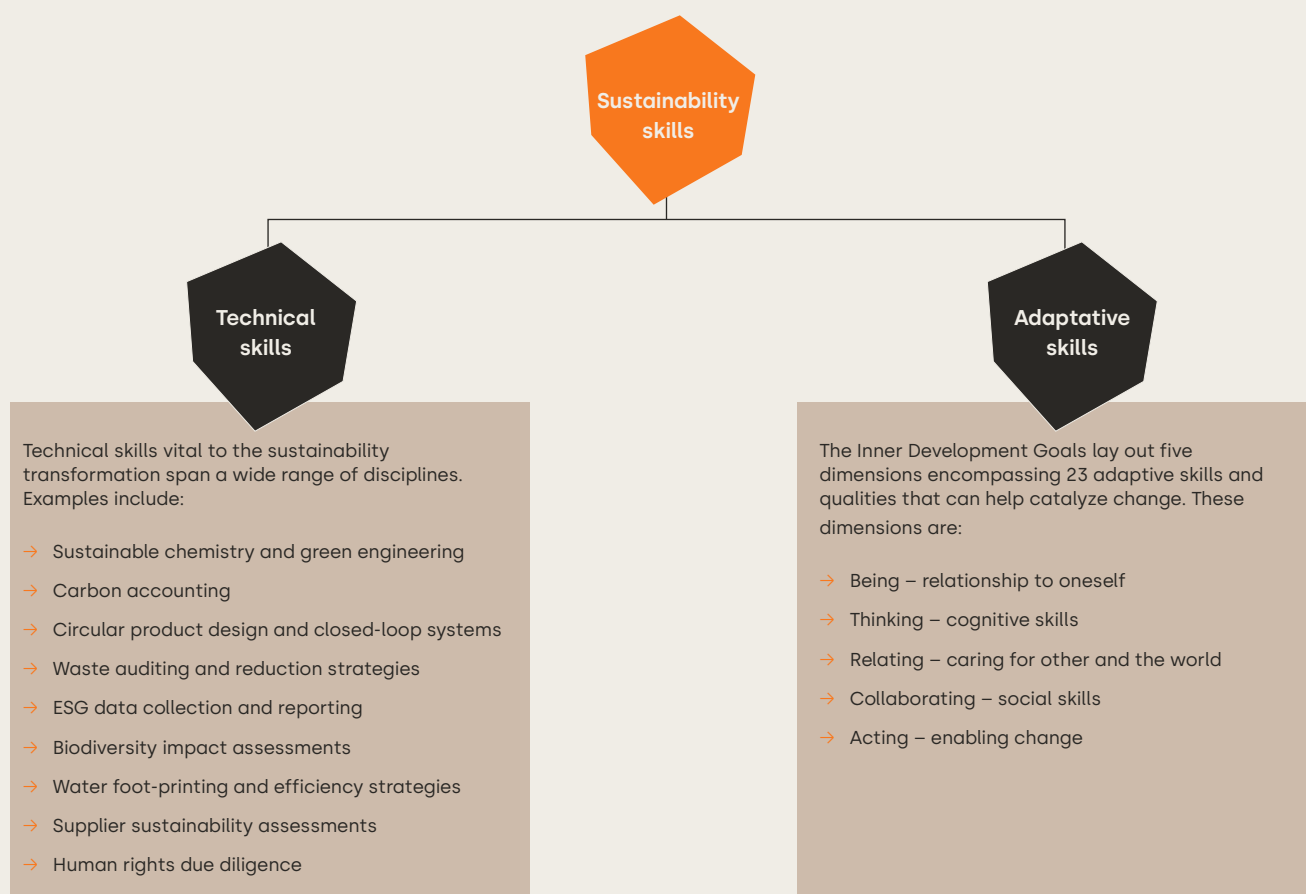
Sustainability skills – also often referred to as green skills – can best be described as the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to develop and support a society in which people can live well within planetary boundaries.

This definition includes both technical skills and adaptive skills. Technical skills include the specific knowledge and abilities required to effectively develop and use sustainable technologies and processes. Adaptive skills comprise the broader values and qualities that help individuals adjust to new challenges, communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and solve problems.

Emerging thought-leadership on the adaptive skillsets needed to support sustainable development has been powerfully captured by the [Inner Development Goals framework](#).

Sustainability skills include skills specific to sustainability-related functions as well as more universal skills that can be applied in service of sustainability goals.²² Some sustainability skills are relatively new and need to be developed; others already exist and simply need to be applied. Sustainability skills are needed across all sectors and are not limited to specialized sustainability roles – indeed they are becoming increasingly critical for an ever-expanding range of corporate functions.

Figure 2: Technical and adaptive sustainability skills



Employee wellbeing:

Enabling a sustainable work-life

Why does this matter?

Sustainability is about proactive, strategic stewardship of the resources a company depends on to succeed — and this includes human resources, as well as environmental ones. Just as companies are beginning to take a more sustainable and regenerative approach to nature, they must also take a regenerative and inclusive approach to people, through business policies

and practices that build security and expand opportunity for all. In particular, companies must take action to ensure that the costs and benefits of the sustainability transformation are distributed equitably — that the most vulnerable are supported, and no one is left behind.

Human resource teams and leaders have a critical role to play when it comes to driving strong social sustainability performance (the S in ESG) and ensuring that all employees are empowered to fulfill their potential as agents of change.

What does this look like in practice?

Key focus areas	Examples of impactful actions CPOs can take
Protecting and promoting physical and psychological health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provide a safe and healthy work environment, and build on traditional occupational health and safety efforts to account for risk factors such as long hours and work-related stress. → Provide on- and off-site medical services and health insurance programs, as well as programs that promote and support healthy employee lifestyles. → Shape an organizational culture in which business leaders seek to address psychosocial hazards, talk openly about mental health, and make relevant training, tools, and support mechanisms broadly available.
Supporting labor rights and financial security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensure that labor rights and standards are upheld globally, including freedom from coercion, discrimination and harassment and the ability to bargain collectively for terms and conditions of work that meet workers' needs. → Eradicate poverty wages and ensure that all workers in a company's operations earn enough to afford a decent standard of living. → Provide benefits that meet the needs of all workers in their local contexts. → Ensure that contract terms and work schedules offer the predictability and stability that workers need to take care of their families and plan their financial lives.
Providing equal opportunities for people of all backgrounds to join and succeed at the company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Remove barriers and biases in hiring, work assignment, performance assessment and promotion, providing members of historically marginalized groups with additional support as needed to level the playing field. → Provide equal pay and bonuses for equal work and benefits that meet the varying needs of diverse groups. → Foster an inclusive environment throughout the organization where people feel valued and able to contribute to their full potential.
Ensuring a just transition to more sustainable business models and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Identify employees whose livelihoods may be impacted by the sustainability transformation that is underway. → Retain, retrain, and redeploy existing employees to the extent possible, reskilling and upskilling people at all levels of the organization for high-demand job categories. → Compensate and support other employees to obtain new jobs, for example by building transferable skills that support long-term employability.

Taking *action*



04.

04. Taking action

Where are we now

In 2024, Spencer Stuart partnered with WBCSD to conduct a survey of close to 100 CPOs to better understand their interactions with their companies' sustainability efforts. Nearly two thirds of CPOs identified room for improvement when it comes to the way human resource functions support their organization's sustainability strategy at present (Figure 3).

Survey results also underlined how CPOs are at different stages of deploying the levers identified in this report. For instance, fewer than 50% of respondents had taken steps to align incentive schemes with sustainability targets or to roll out comprehensive sustainability recruitment strategies, while social sustainability efforts such as DEI and workplace safety were considerably more advanced (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Survey response – To what degree is your company's HR function fulfilling its potential to support your sustainability strategy?

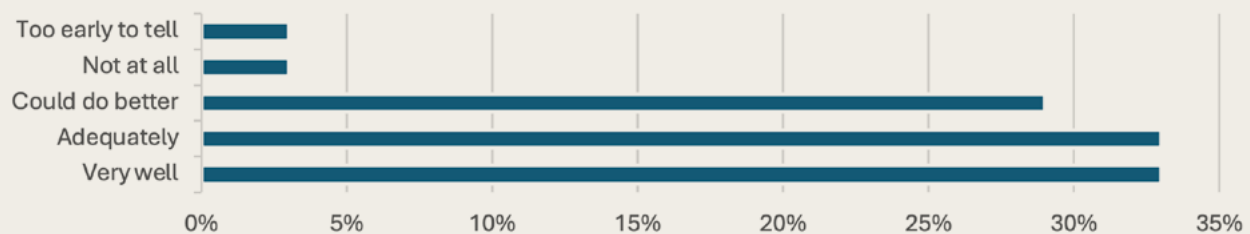


Figure 4: Survey response – In which activities is your HR function currently engaged to support your company's sustainability efforts?



Challenges

As CPOs and their teams step up to the task of driving sustainability forward in their organizations, they face a number of challenges. In some companies, the CPO's essential role in this regard remains under-recognized and under-resourced. Meanwhile, in many cases, collaborative operating relationships with sustainability teams have yet to be fully defined or implemented.

While a wide array of companies are increasingly making bold sustainability commitments, a substantial percentage of organizations have yet to fully take on board the need to question and transform their core business models and operating practices in order to meet those commitments — and to stay ahead of the wave of change that mounting crises such as climate change, nature loss, and inequality are triggering in the operating environment. In many cases

short-term mindsets, financial pressures, and misaligned incentives prevail.

When it comes to integrating sustainability more significantly into the HR function, these broad challenges are giving rise to a variety of barriers identified by the CPOs surveyed by WBCSD and Spencer Stuart, including limited budget, lack of knowledge and data, and limited interaction with sustainability teams (Figure 5 and Figure 6).

“A key challenge we face is convincing management that sustainability will not happen without HR support, and that HR should be given a clear seat at the table. This is about creating a movement by strengthening the linkages between the two topics and teams.”

Respondent, Spencer Stuart / WBCSD CPO survey

Figure 5: Survey response – What challenges do you face in integrating sustainability into HR practices?

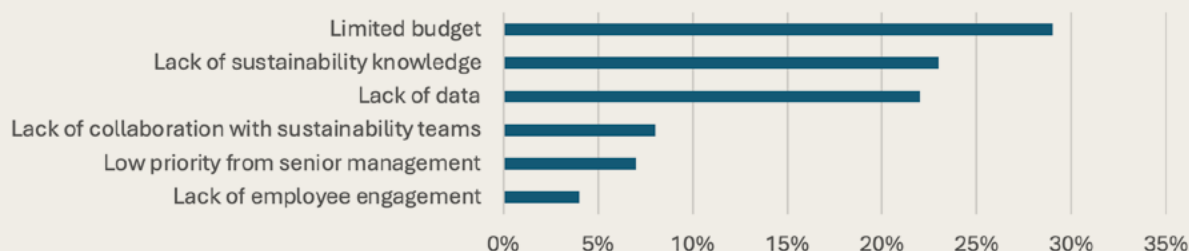
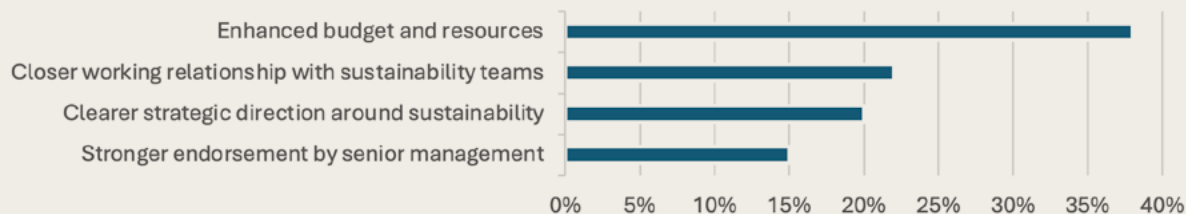


Figure 6: Survey response – What would help you better integrate sustainability into your HR role?



Getting started

The challenges CPOs face should not be taken as reasons for inaction. On the contrary, CPOs are uniquely positioned with the assets and capabilities needed to help address these challenges and catalyze change both within and beyond their own organizations. These include broad knowledge of the business, its strategic direction and needs; a deep understanding of people and what drives them, from front-line workers to C-suite colleagues and board members; and increasing influence and strategic decision-making power within their companies.

Equipped with these capabilities, there are several foundational steps CPOs can take now to prepare themselves and their firms for the sustainability transformation — and to take ownership of embedding a people-centric approach to sustainability into the fabric of their organizations:

- 1 Make sustainability your business.** Spend time familiarizing yourself with the broader sustainability transformation agenda and how it stands to impact your industry and organization in the next 3-5 years. Determine what short- to medium-term changes must happen, and more fundamentally, what existential questions your company will need to tackle — and what the implications will be for your company's people strategy.
- 2 Use your leadership position to advocate for sustainability transformation, with people at the heart.** Raise awareness of the environmental and societal trends affecting and disrupting your company and industry. Pose hard questions and facilitate tough, forward-looking conversations. Shine a light on the implications for people and the role people will need to play in transforming the business to succeed. Show how HR teams can help make it happen.
- 3 Cultivate a close alliance with the Chief Sustainability Officer and their team.** Understand the CSO's agenda, priorities, and stumbling blocks. Dig deeper into the people dimension, including the social side of environmental goals and strategies, and explore ways you and your team can help. Define responsibilities and work together to advocate for the internal investment that is needed.

Many of the levers identified in this report are tweaks to work CPOs are already doing, rather than entirely new actions that require additional resources. Moving forward it will be important for CPOs to interrogate where their company stands in relation to each of these levers, assess what is possible now given current resources, engage CSOs and other C-suite members to rank importance, and get started. Each step is an opportunity to learn and continuously improve.

How CSOs can support CPO colleagues in driving sustainability forward

Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs) can be critical allies to their CPO colleagues in driving the sustainability transformation — and vice versa. CPOs point to a number of ways that CSOs can engage and support them to fulfill their potential.

- **Providing a compelling sustainability narrative for HR communications,** helping to explain to colleagues across the business why the sustainability transformation matters and what roles individuals in different functions — far beyond the sustainability team — can play every day.
- **Setting up cross-functional HR/ sustainability teams** to share expertise and co-develop, implement, and assess new approaches to driving sustainability forward.
- **Send clear signals to HR teams on the skills that will be needed to meet sustainability goals,** including both technical and more adaptive or soft skills, as well as the values and attitudes required to apply existing skills in service of sustainability goals.
- **Collaborate to develop training for HR staff on sustainability** trends and issues to build awareness, change mindsets and behaviors, and trigger innovation within the human resource function.

Leveraging WBCSD Education

To support CPOs in their efforts to deliver sustainability upskilling at scale throughout their organizations, WBCSD is expanding a broad portfolio of learning resources designed to provide business leaders and practitioners with relevant, actionable and meaningful courses and materials to raise ambition, drive collaborative action and sharpen accountability around sustainability goals.

Drawing on over 20 years of experience in sustainability education and leveraging the insights of a broad network of world-leading subject matter experts and partnerships with some of the world's top ranking business schools and universities, WBCSD offers an ever-expanding selection of accessible and actionable learning resources, including the following:

Executive Education Programs

- **Young Professionals Program:** This virtual 6-week program supports executives in the early stages of their careers to develop the knowledge, skills and networks needed to become sustainability champions and future leaders.
- **Leadership Program:** Delivered in collaboration with IMD Business School, Yale and Sunway University, this 9-month program empowers participants across business functions to master new dimensions of leadership, enhance their understanding of sustainability and join a dynamic network of changemakers.
- **Leap Program:** WBCSD's Leap Program is a 12-month program that fosters inclusive growth and sustainable development. Delivered in collaboration with ESADE, Yale and the National University of Singapore, it is designed to empower women executives with the skills and insights necessary to lead sustainably.

- **Leading Resilient Enterprises in Our Changing World:** Delivered in collaboration with Stanford University, this immersive weeklong program in Palo Alto equips C-suite executives and senior leaders with the mindset and strategies to lead in a rapidly changing world. Attendees will strengthen adaptability, deepen self-awareness, and learn how to integrate sustainability into core business strategy. Through expert-led classroom discussions and real-world excursions, they will step into fragile ecosystems, engage with impacted communities, and witness sustainability challenges firsthand. By confronting these realities, attendees will gain fresh insights, develop the conviction to drive meaningful change, and position their organizations for long-term success in an uncertain future.

Self-paced online learning

The WBCSD Academy enables companies to roll out sustainability learning at scale across their entire global workforce. Through an innovative online learning platform, it provides access to a comprehensive and ever-expanding library of self-paced courses covering a wide variety of sustainability and leadership topics.

Bespoke education programs

At WBCSD we also understand that every organization's learning journey when it comes to the strategic integration of sustainability is unique. As a result, we offer bespoke learning programs to WBCSD members and prospects, tailored to individual needs and delivered by our network of experts to drive real impact.

For more information or to sign up to any of these programs and services please visit <https://www.wbcds.org/education/>.



Conclusion



05.

05. Conclusion

As the sustainability transformation accelerates, the role of Chief People Officers has never been more vital.

With their capacity to align workforce strategies with sustainability goals, to embed sustainability into organizational culture, and to foster the skills essential for a just transition to a more sustainable economy, CPOs are essential architects in the sustainability transformation.

Now is the time for CPOs to lead boldly, using the levers of influence at their disposal to deliver the people-focused agenda that is so central to their companies' ability to deliver on sustainability goals.

This leadership will require commitment, collaboration, and courage moving forward. For its part, WBCSD will continue to bring CPOs together as part of its Chief People Officer Network to explore emerging best practice and advance this agenda. We invite you to join us.



Endnotes

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Acknowledgements

Contributors

This report was developed collaboratively by member companies of WBCSD's Chief People Officer Network. We would like to extend our thanks to the following organizations for their guidance and support:

ABB
Anthesis
Arcadis
Ayala Corporation
Baker McKenzie
Bain & Company
Buhler
CMPC
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Inner Development Goals Foundation
Inter IKEA
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Key insights for this paper were gathered through an extensive survey of global CPOs conducted in collaboration with Spencer Stuart.

WBCSD would also like to extend its thanks to the team at SocialSide for its support in drafting this report.

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