



Think ahead.

Taking the lead on sustainable hygiene choices



55%
higher employee morale,
in companies with
strong sustainability
programs¹



Source: 1 Harvard Business Review, A Comprehensive Business Case for Sustainability, 2016.



Introduction

The purpose of this white paper is to look at the **benefits, impact** and **approach** to introducing sustainable hygiene solutions into a workplace from both a commercial and individual viewpoint.

Across the globe, we are experiencing the monumental impact of a health crisis and climate change. These seismic events have brought the health of our people and the health of our planet into the spotlight. It has inspired people to ask themselves important questions about their hygiene behaviour and sustainability values.

Understanding individual behaviours and values is key for organisations that are looking to unlock ways to engage with employees through aligning personal and organisational behaviour with their values.

Sustainability is not just good for the planet, but also good for business.

Sustainable Hygiene – the critical, delicate balance

At a time when people were pledging to abandon single-use plastic, the use of disposable hygiene products, such as sanitising wipes, gloves, masks and plastic PPE, dramatically increased with the onset of the pandemic. It posed an interesting question. Was it possible to strike a balance between staying safe with optimal hygiene during a health crisis while continuing in our global effort to reduce environmental impact?

While companies scrambled to adopt more visible hygiene practices in their quest to protect their staff and consumers, it cast a spotlight on whether hygiene and sustainability were mutually exclusive. Could a balance be found between social and environmental responsibilities and achieve favourable economic outcomes?

Prioritising hygiene and sustainability in equal measure is possible if the right choices are made and if the outcome is reframed to creating sustainable economic value.



Power of the people



By 2025, Millennials will make up 75% of the workforce and are looking for socially responsible employers and prioritising purpose over salary.²

Sustainable businesses are redefining the workplace by designing models that create value for all stakeholders, from employees, shareholders and supply chains to society and the planet.

This idea of creating shared value is where a business can **generate economic value** by identifying and addressing problems that intersect with their business.

According to Harvard Business Review's, *The Comprehensive Business Case for Sustainability*, 21st century employees are focusing more on mission, purpose and work-life balance. Companies who are committed to sustainability initiatives create a sought-after culture and greater levels of engagement with 55% higher morale than companies who don't have a strong sustainability program.¹

A business is only truly sustainable when it harmonizes its environmental values with the environmental values of employees and customers.

Individuals and businesses have become more discerning of expected hygiene and safety standards and their associated environmental impact. Companies offering socially sustainable solutions to address global warming impact, ethical sourcing and responsible waste management are attracting talent and customers who live by the same values.

The Cone Communications Millennial Employee Study found that 64% of Millennials won't take a job if their employer doesn't have a strong Corporate Social Responsibility policy,² and 83% would be more loyal to a company that helps them contribute to social and environmental issues (vs. 70% U.S. average).² The study also highlighted 51% won't work for a company that doesn't have a solid social and environmental commitment.²

When it comes to Gen-Z, the data is even more compelling. As the newest incomer into the workforce, 94% of Gen-Z's believe companies should address urgent social and environmental issues and will strongly consider a company's social purpose when deciding where to work.²

Future-proofing your talent pool across these two generations can be summed up by the value you place on how Millennials and Gen-Z see the world around them and what they hold dear. How you embed sustainability as a measure of profitability will be their yardstick. How you value their health and well-being will measure your investment in them.

Sustainability – the agent for change

We only need to look within our own backyard to see a shift in consumer ambition to think and act more sustainably to protect our **health and wellbeing**.

Across our communities, businesses and healthcare systems, the focus on health has forever changed the landscape of our daily lives. In Essity's 2021 Green Response Report, 68% of respondents said personal hygiene became more important to them since the pandemic's start.³

Health and hygiene products also top the charts for consumers' willingness to spend more on environmentally friendly options with all age groups buying more environmentally friendly products because of the pandemic. (Refer to Figure 2)

Prioritising actions such as recycling, reducing waste and choosing to engage with local businesses who embody a shared environmentally friendly ethos show consumers have adopted new habits that are here to stay.

What this demonstrates to organisations is the need for innovative hygiene solutions with a sustainability-centric purpose.

People that have bought more environmentally friendly products since the start of the pandemic.³



Figure 1

Consumers are putting their money where their mouth is, showing willingness **to pay extra for a more sustainable option in every category.**³



Hygiene and health

+12%



Groceries, food and drink

+12%



Travel and transportation

+11%



Beauty and personal care

+10%



Fashion, clothing and accessories

+10%



Leisure, fitness and eating out

+10%



Consumer electronics

+10%

Figure 2 - % of people willing to pay more for sustainable options



Steps to sourcing sustainable hygiene products

A key agenda item for facility and operational managers in a return to office or hybrid working model is to provide a **safe workplace** that aligns with the organisation's **sustainability goals**.

With 43% of consumers more aware of the negative impact some products and services have on the environment,³ applying the same lens to hygiene products offered across your organisations highlights your commitment to minimizing your carbon footprint while increasing a positive-impact dialogue.



When it comes to comparing and selecting sustainable hygiene solutions for your facility, the Ipsos Essity Tork Sustainability Report found five success criteria:⁴

Relevance



Eco-friendly products – the material of the product, packaging and certification are important.



Reasonable pricing – When the ecological benefit is apparent, there is a willingness to accept reasonable, higher pricing.

Credibility



Holistic approach – For many it is not sufficient to buy a product made of more sustainable material. They seek sustainability along the entire production and supply chain from sourcing, production processes and transportation.

Differentiation



Consultancy and Training – Offering additional support and education to staff and customers will go a long way to increase commitment, participation, and support of sustainability goals.

Awareness



Communication – Make sustainable changes and talk about it. Building awareness of your sustainable products and being transparent about your efforts builds credibility of your brand's value.

The front foot on sustainability reporting

With the eyes of the world now focused on significant climate action and the global effort towards achieving a net-zero economy, **transparency** has become a **critical** component in how organisations report on their hygiene sustainability proposition.

ASX-listed companies are now legally accountable for fulfilling non-financial sustainability compliance obligations across complex environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting frameworks.

With a growing demand for sustainability reporting, developing a solid ESG framework and partnering with hygiene suppliers who themselves are driving sustainability change will benefit your organisation across these key areas:

1. Investor Appeal

It comes as little surprise that with a pandemic and a climate crisis as an economic backdrop, investors are holding companies to account on ESG reporting and find themselves driving socially responsible investing (SRI). SRI now represents more than 36% of global assets under management.⁵

Boston Consulting Group study, Moving Beyond Corporate Social Responsibility, 2018 also found companies with top performing ESG topics are being valued at up to 19% higher.⁵

Sustainability isn't a race, nor is it a short-term fix. Investors care more about the long term and seek out businesses that share a view of the future, with 65% of investors stating their motive for considering ESG issues was to help manage investment risk.⁶

Including ESG in your annual reports demonstrates how your organisation is working to reduce risk and reassures both existing and future investors that you are part of the rising landscape in ethical investing.

2. Brand Perception and Competitive Advantage

Stakeholders, from employees to consumers and at a local community level, take a favourable opinion of brands who commit to sustainability. Organisations working towards improved labour conditions, reducing their carbon footprint or driving down waste and water usage, not only champion their commitment but are rewarded with increased loyalty and higher brand salience.

3. Attracting and Retaining Key Talent

According to OnePolls survey, Eco-Unfriendly Europe, 80% think their employer could be doing more to turn the office into an eco-friendly place, with 47% thinking implementation of eco-friendly practices is usually an afterthought.⁷

Over two-thirds (68%) agree it is primarily employees leading the charge to make sustainable changes at their workplace, with over half (51%) having tried to implement eco-friendly practices themselves.⁷

To offer employees enticing compensation for their work is no longer enough. For 24%, selecting a company/organisation based on their sustainability reputation and actions is a top priority when looking for a new job, with a further 42% also taking it into account.⁷

4. An Ally in Activism

The age-old saying, 'To Avoid Criticism, Say Nothing, Do Nothing, Be Nothing' seems a far riskier approach in today's climate when it comes to not taking sustainable action.

With the activist eye cued for under-performing sustainability, there is an opportunity for public criticism. Investing in credible and achievable ESG reporting will be your best defence against activists' actions.

5. Being Part of the Solution

As the global agenda on sustainability deepens, government and regulatory bodies are uniting to protect our planet with a clear message. There is a growing urgency to implement corporate sustainability policy and reporting.

To convert sustainability intention into action requires an organisation to be courageous, committed and confident to lead with bold vision.

High visibility equals high reputational impact

From aged care to shopping centres, schools, offices, airports and entertainment venues, hygiene and cleaning standards, processes, and products have become the **highest priority and noticeably more visible**. The digital revolution, combined with the pandemic, has placed hygiene products in the top 5 of most consumed products.

Together with the significant shift towards addressing social and environmental issues in the workplace, we are seeing an increase in 'green' roles.

According to the European Commission (EU), all jobs will eventually become greener because the products and services generated are adapting to meet the EU environmental standards.

Worldwide, green jobs are making their presence known. Sustainability officers, designers, advisors and impact managers are just a few new roles in companies worldwide. A greener economy predicts 24 million new jobs globally by 2030.⁸

Unily's Future of the Sustainable Workplace cites 68% of 25 - 44-year-olds are more likely to work for a company with strong environmental policies.⁸ Companies paying attention have made substantial headway in implementing sustainability policies, such as the zero-waste initiative.

What can you do right now to make the right hygiene choices and take policy action for your workplace?



Use the Sustainability Hygiene Tips Checklist

Download 



Hygiene products and the environment

There is a role you can play in setting goals on climate change, ethical sourcing and waste management to ensure your products are responsible and sustainable in terms of sourcing, production and throughout the full product lifecycle. The due diligence you take will result in the **significant and empowering impact** those choices have and, ultimately, the company's overarching vision.

75% of companies globally engage with suppliers to assess environment performance.⁹

Here we overview areas of best practice to consider when selecting your hygiene products.

Climate Impact

A significant contribution to climate change is product consumption and a company's operations, where the majority of emissions come from.

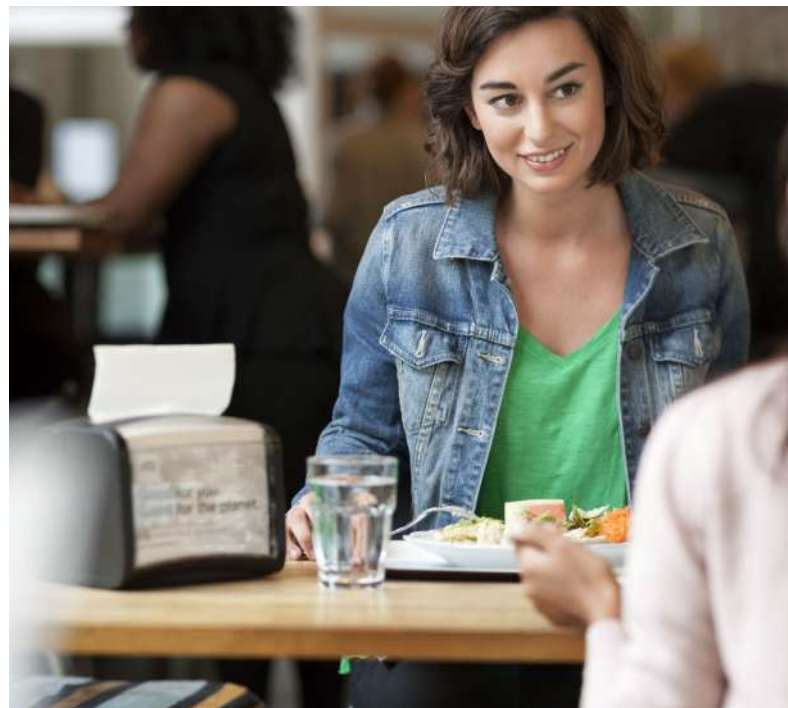
The impact of climate change should be considered when selecting hygiene products for your organisation in these ways:

1. Fibre sourcing and climate impact from deforestation and responsible forest management
2. Tissue manufacturing is highly energy intensive
3. Climate impact of distribution/transportation of cleaning products
4. End of life carbon emissions – Tork Environmental Product Declarations (EDPs) show that the highest carbon emissions throughout the product life cycle of tissue products come at end of life when products are disposed to landfill

Selecting hygiene products that use renewable energy throughout the entire lifecycle reduces the use and depletion of natural resources. In tissue production, making steam is the most energy intensive element. Utilising geothermal steam instead of gas-fired boiler steam can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Tropical Peatland Free

Tropical peatlands are one of the most carbon intensive land masses on the planet. Draining and establishing pulpwood plantations on tropical peatlands has an extreme impact on our climate. Seeking products with a Peatland Free No Deforestation No Peat No Exploitation (NDPE) commitment is taking a stand on deforestation, peat and exploitation.



Responsible Forestry

Forests play a critical role in regulating climate, absorbing CO₂ from the atmosphere, releasing oxygen and storing carbon in trees and soil.

New research from the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) and Globe scan reveals concerns about sustainability issues are strongly associated with forests. The primary concern within this is the deforestation of climate and biodiversity. The survey found that 86% of consumers try to avoid products that damage biodiversity and 8 in 10 global consumers expect companies to ensure that their wooden or paper products do not contribute to deforestation or damage wildlife habitats.¹⁰

Products carrying the FSC certification aid in mitigating climate change by promoting sustainable forest management and protecting the function of the forest.

Ethical Sourcing

Ensuring materials are sourced responsibly and human rights are respected is the first step to ending poverty. Suppliers who have implemented a responsible sourcing program to manage non-compliance across the globe is vital for eliminating modern slavery practices, including risks of forced labour, trafficking and exploitative conditions.

Waste Management

Work practices adopting the mindset of reduce, reuse, and recycle is one of the most impactful ways towards a sustainably led workplace. There is not an infinite number of raw materials, nor the space to dispose them.

Look for:

- Hygiene systems designed to use less and reduce waste
- Compressed products using less packaging or those that can be recycled
- Organic waste products such as hand towels, napkins that are certified compostable
- Biodegradable products that won't pollute water supply
- Hygiene products made from renewable materials

Third Party Certifications

Seeking products with third party certifications ensure the products live up to claims and provide reassurance.



Creating and embedding sustainable value as part of your core business strategy will ultimately shift all stakeholders from thinking about sustainability as an obligation to it being the organisation's competitive advantage.

Professional hygiene with a sustainable lens is a necessity to maintain not only the health of our planet, but your business and the valuable people within it.



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