

# 08

## Digital Sustainability – taking action

- 8.1 Strategic scenarios for sustainability
- 8.2 Know your why in order to make it a reality
- 8.3 Matching sustainability goals and digital tools



## Exercise 8.1

# Strategic scenarios for sustainability

## Activity Type: Group

### DESCRIPTION

In this activity, participants deliberate possible future strategies in order to respond to possible challenges related to the company's sustainability goals.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this activity, learners will be able to:

- Understand the importance of incorporating sustainability into company strategies and the environmental responsibilities that businesses have in the context of hybrid working.
- Know about aligning sustainability goals with business objectives and ethical considerations related to environmental responsibilities.
- Comprehend the role of leadership in driving sustainability initiatives and promoting a culture of environmental responsibility.
- Be able to resiliently adapt the company's sustainability strategy to unforeseen challenges
- Be able to devise various strategies and scenarios in order to reach the set sustainability goals
- Expand their repertoire of strategic options.
- Increase their confidence in dealing with unpredictable developments

### MATERIALS NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- PROSPER online course
- paper
- pens
- post-its
- flipchart
- markers

### TIME REQUIRED

75 min.

# Strategic scenarios for sustainability

## Theoretical background

Strategies and plans for future action - they have been created under certain assumptions about the future. However, circumstances often change and new, unanticipated factors need to be taken into account. That is why managers need to be able to

test the viability of current strategies and adopt them rapidly in response to future challenges.

Examining different possible scenarios is not intended to produce a detailed plan for implementation, but rather to increase resilience: the ability to actively shape the system and be prepared to respond to surprises. This means being able to review the overall situation, identify the key factors influencing it, define possible outcomes, and act adaptively in response to changing circumstances. It keeps the overall focus on the goal while adapting the means accordingly.

The activity is based on the Liberating structure called Critical Uncertainties:

<https://liberatingstructures.de/critical-uncertainties/>

## Preparation

The activity presupposed the topic of sustainability is already familiar to the learners and its purpose doesn't need explaining. It also assumes the company has already defined sustainability goals.

The trainer should be familiar with the PROSPER online course, Module 4, Unit 1. Digital Sustainability in context of hybrid working

<https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-4-unit-1-digital-sustainability-in-context-of-hybrid-working/>

and Module 4, Unit 2. Digital Sustainability – taking action: <https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-4-unit-2-digital-sustainability-taking-action/>

Learners should also be familiar with Unit 2 - shared as a homework assignment prior to the delivery of the activity.

In addition, the following articles provide the context on why and how sustainability is related to the company strategy, if the trainer deems necessary to inform the learners further:

- Why sustainability isn't just for green companies

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/sustainability-green-companies-business-partnership/>

- Operations-driven sustainability:

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/operations/our-insights/operations-driven-sustainability>

## Introduction

The group starts by stating the main sustainability pillars of the company: what goals have been defined and what strategies have been set in place to achieve them. The main points are put on a flipchart and provide a wider content of the activity. 10 min.

## Activity description

Step 1. Divide the group into 4 small groups (depending on the number of participants, you might have to go with less, and prioritise certain scenarios). In small groups, participants try to answer the following question by writing on post-its:

What are the factors affecting the company's sustainability strategy that cannot be predicted or controlled? 5 min.

Step 2. Next, participants answer on post-its the question:

What factors threaten the company's ability to deliver on its sustainability strategy? **5 min.**

# Strategic scenarios for sustainability

Step 3. The groups then evaluate the factors they identified and select the one factor which brings the most uncertainty (question 1) and the one which carries the greatest risk (question 2).

On a flipchart, create a grid with two axes, both of which represent the presence/absence of a factor. The horizontal axis represents uncertainty (question 1): on the left side, the factor is present, and on the right side, the factor is largely absent. For example, if the uncertain factor is the active commitment by the team, on the left side, the commitment is low, while on the right side, the commitment is high.

The vertical axis represents risk. On the top side, the factor is absent, and on the bottom side, the factor is largely absent. For example, if the risk factor is a reliance on a public funding programme, in the top quadrant the funding is available without interruptions, while in the bottom one the funding programme is cancelled.

**There are four quadrants:**

high uncertainty, low risk    low uncertainty, low risk

high uncertainty, high risk    low uncertainty, high risk

**5 min.**

Step 4. Each group is assigned one quadrant and develops a suitable example scenario - what will happen to the company's sustainability strategy under the circumstances. If there are less than four groups present, scenarios with a single risk/uncertainty factor (low uncertainty, high risk or high uncertainty, low risk) are prioritised. **10 min.**

Step 5. After the scenario is developed, the groups develop three strategies that can help address the challenges identified. **10 min.**

Step 6. Groups share their scenarios and strategies in the bigger group. Together, they try to identify the strategies that can be effective for more than a single scenario. Some strategies can be suitable for a single scenario, but nevertheless play a vital role in preventing the breakdown of the company's sustainability policy.

**10 min.**

Step 7. Based on the strategies selected, the group can plan possible next steps and responsibilities. **10 min.**

## Debriefing

Participants share their answers to the following questions:

- Do you feel more empowered to deal with uncertain future scenarios now?
- Which of the strategies defined was most useful for you as a learning experience?
- If you had to define other uncertainty/risk factors, what would they be?

## Adaptation to online mode

The activity can be delivered in an online environment with minor modifications. Small groups must work in breakout rooms. The writing part in each step would be most effective if a Miroboard is set-up in advance, but in absence of preparation time, suggestions can be easily collected in Padlet.

## Exercise 8.2

# Know your why in order to make it a reality

## Activity Type: Group

### DESCRIPTION

In this activity, learners start from understanding the larger purpose of sustainability in the company's activities, elaborate their own purpose, and develop concrete steps in order to make that purpose a reality.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this activity, learners will be able to:

- Demonstrate ethical considerations in making sustainable decisions, considering the impact of business practices on the environment, and evaluating the ethical implications of sustainability initiatives.
- Understand how to engage employees in sustainability goals, promote a culture of environmental responsibility, and empower individuals to contribute to sustainable practices in the workplace.
- Develop skills in selecting appropriate communication channels, crafting engaging sustainability narratives, and conveying the importance of sustainability to various stakeholders.
- Visualise a common future for the team.
- Feel motivated and empowered, understanding the larger purpose of what they do.
- Take part in a participatory and decentralised process of implementation of a strategic vision.
- Develop all the elements required for a systematic implantation of a strategic goal.

### MATERIALS NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- PROSPER online course
- paper
- pens
- post-its
- flipchart
- markers

### TIME REQUIRED

145 min.

# Know your why in order to make it a reality

## Theoretical background

It is very important that sustainability is not seen as an initiative adopted from above, or as a response to political or administrative requirements - that it has a meaning for all employees involved.

Defining a common meaning is a key step towards any practical action plan, and the best way of communicating the importance of the topic. When learners take an active part in co-creating the different elements of the process, the connection between their action and the larger purpose is not lost on them, and they remain motivated to face different challenges.

The overall purpose of the activity is closely aligned with the philosophy described by Simon Sinek in *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*:

<https://simonsinek.com/books/start-with-why/>

The activity is based on the Liberating structure called Purpose-to-practice:

<https://liberatingstructures.de/purpose-to-practice-p2p/>

## Preparation

It is expected that the trainer is familiar with Module 4, Unit 2 of the PROSPER online course. Digital Sustainability – taking action: <https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-4-unit-2-digital-sustainability-taking-action/>

The following TED talk might be useful for introducing why starting with the purpose matters:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en)

Learners should also be familiar with Unit 2 - shared as a homework assignment prior to the delivery of the activity.

## Introduction

Introduce the idea behind the activity, and the five elements that will be reviewed:

- Purpose
- Principles
- Participants
- Structure
- Practices

The group starts by reviewing the main sustainability goals of the company: The main points are put on a flipchart and provide a wider content of the activity.

## Activity description

**Step 1.** Purpose. Participants are divided into small groups (3-5 participants). One of them is tasked with keeping notes from the group discussion on a flipchart. Participants deliberate individually on the questions and write down the key elements of their answer:

- Why is the company's business being sustainable important to you? Why does it matter for the larger community? **5 min.**

**Step 2.** Then, in the small group, all of them share their ideas and try to formulate a common understanding. They expand the idea they selected in more depth. **10 min.**

**Step 3.** All groups share their ideas and try to combine them into a common vision. It is important that the final statement is accepted by all participants. **10 min.**

**Step 4.** Principles. Using the same interaction model as before (5 min individual deliberation, 10 min. small group discussion, 10 min. large group discussion), participants attempt to answer the following question:

What rules must we follow in order to achieve our purpose? **25 min.**

# Know your why in order to make it a reality

This is the point where a short break is advisable. If the activity is carried out in two sessions, this is where the first one should end.

**Step 5.** Participants. Using the same interaction model as before, participants attempt to answer the following question:

Who must be involved in order for us to achieve our purpose? How will they be motivated? **25 min.**

**Step 6.** Structure. Using the same interaction model as before, participants attempt to answer the following question:

How do we need to organise our team and activities, and how would we distribute the responsibilities in order to achieve our purpose? **25 min.**

**Step 7.** Practices. Using the same interaction model as before, participants attempt to answer the following questions:

What will our next steps be? What activities will we carry out, what resources do we need for them, and how does the timeline look like? **25 min.**

## Debriefing

Participants share their answers to the following questions:

- Do you feel more connected to the company's sustainability strategy now? Why?
- Has any of the steps revealed new elements that did not occur to you before?
- Do you need anything else in order to carry out your role defined in the last step?

**10 min.**

## Adaptation to online mode

The activity can be carried out online without major adaptations, with participants working in breakout rooms. It is recommended that a Miroboard or Padlet is used for keeping notes. The final product of the

discussions may be further developed graphically in Canva and used as a communication material of the company's sustainability strategy.

## Exercise 8.3

# Matching sustainability goals and digital tools

**Activity Type:**  
**Group/Online**

### DESCRIPTION

In this activity, participants review digital tools for enabling Digital Sustainability in an SME and try to adapt them to fulfil the company's goals.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this activity, learners will be able to:

- Utilise digital sustainability tools for SMEs, understanding the functions and benefits of tools for recycling, ethical search practices, food waste prevention, paper waste reduction, ESG and carbon footprint management, environmental and building management systems, carbon footprint monitoring, and encouraging sustainable behaviours.
- Understand how to engage employees in sustainability goals, promote a culture of environmental responsibility, and empower individuals to contribute to sustainable practices in the workplace.
- Develop skills in selecting appropriate communication channels, crafting engaging sustainability narratives, and conveying the importance of sustainability to various stakeholders.
- Exchange tangible practical experience and get answers to pressing questions
- Align digital tools to strategic sustainability goals

### MATERIALS NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Computers/Laptops
- Projector
- White screen

### TIME REQUIRED

80 min.



# Matching sustainability goals and digital tools

## Theoretical background

This is a practical activity where tools are selected to fit particular goals. This is why it is important that the strategic aspects are explored first, and this activity is done as a follow-up. By no means should it be considered as a stand-alone - if participants merely review tools, the purpose of which is missing, they will not be able to draw significant benefits from the process.

## Preparation

The trainer should review the PROSPER online course, Module 4 / Unit 3 Digital Sustainability Tools for SMEs: <https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-4-unit-3-digital-sustainability-tools-for-smes/>

It is assumed that participants are already familiar with the company's sustainability strategy, goals, and their personal role in it. These themes are explored in the other activities of this learning topic.

## Introduction

The activity starts with participants discuss the following question:

- Does digitalisation benefit the overall sustainability strategy of the organisation?
- The group tries to agree on some common points of why digitalisation can be helpful. **5 min.**

## Activity description

**Step 1.** The group is divided into pairs. Each pair receives as a task to review some digital tools focused on one of the following aspects of sustainability:

- recycling,
- ethical search,
- food waste prevention,
- paper waste reduction,
- Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and carbon footprint management,
- Environmental and building management systems
- encouraging sustainable behaviours.

Participants can review tools included in the PROSPER online course. Module 4 / Unit 3 Digital Sustainability Tools for SMEs. <https://course.prosper-project.eu/module-4-unit-3-digital-sustainability-tools-for-smes/> Alternatively, they can also include other tools known to them or found online. **30 min.**

**Step 2.** After reviewing the available tools, the pair has to prepare a short presentation for the group, trying to 'sell' the merits of the tool, while also presenting its limitations. Pairs are allowed to make use of existing online reviews, videos, and any personal experience they have with the tools, but they need to deliver the presentation themselves.

- The presentations should follow the same structure:
- Brief presentation of the tool.
- Who are the target users
- Main functions
- Strengths
- Limitations
- Possible alternatives
- Why chose this tool over the alternatives?

The presentation can take any form the pair deems fitting, with PowerPoint being the default option. **20 min.**

**Step 3.** Each pair presents the selected tool using the projector and white screen. The big group discussed whether the tool is applicable to the overall company goals and strategy. **15 min.**

## Debriefing

Participants share their answers to the following questions:

- Has your opinion on how digitalisation benefits the overall sustainability strategy of the organisation changed?
- Which is the tool you found most useful?
- For which purpose do you feel that an additional search for tool might yield better results?

## Adaptation on online mode

If the training is delivered online, pairs need to work in breakout rooms. One of them has to share the screen on what they review. Presentations can be prepared in Canva or Powerpoint, but some additional time must be allocated to compensate for the difficulty of coordination.