BELVERA PARTNERS

The Belvera B2B travel sustainability report 2021

Sustainability reporting in B2B travel's top 350 companies globally

Contents

Introduction

**Letter from Roman Townsend,
Managing Director, Belvera Partners**

Welcome to the Belvera B2B travel sustainability report 2021. Just like many reports that have come before it, this one shows that yes our particular sector – the B2B travel sector – is performing woefully when it comes to embracing sustainability.

But whilst a few years ago this might not have been a surprise, given recently trends for the wider public to take this seriously it does seems both concerning and, frankly, embarrassing.

The moment when CEOs could confidently say 'that's just a B2C thing' has now long since passed.
As travel is a such an important force for change – inspiring people all around the world – we have an even bigger responsibility to do the right thing and embrace changes that will create a multiplier effect across all sectors and cultures.

Therefore we hope this report and its recommendations drives your B2B travel company to up its sustainability game, something our grandchildren will benefit from whether right now you are a leader or a laggard.

Over the coming years we hope to repeat this report to measure progress and shortly, as an interim step, we will publish some research on how many of the companies on the Belvera B2B travel map have either a female or visible ethnic minority CEO or Chairman.

Producing this research over the last few months has been an enormous effort and it could not have come to fruition without significant contributions from many people. In particular we would we like to extend our gratitude to:

// S. Amirtha Priya for conducting all of the painstaking research by looking at and evaluating all these websites
// Glight Marketing for the design layout and creative input
// Teresa Laso from Attitude//
// Clare Jenkinson from ABTA
// Laura Garrido from ético
// Víctor Monzón from Bioscore Sustainability
// The sustainability and communications team at Hotelbeds and Amadeus for their collaboration on the case studies

What is 'B2B travel'?

We define B2B travel as the ecosystem of companies that exist within travel who provide services to other businesses, and not the end traveller.

Businesses and services such as travel technology, wholesale accommodation distribution, GDSs, channel managers, TMCs and corporate travel, DMCs, aviation and airports services companies, and shoreside turnaround providers for cruise liners.

To find out more about how we define the sector, have a look at the Belvera B2B travel map that we launched earlier this year.

What do we mean by 'sustainability'?

Many of you will no doubt associate this topic with the environment, and that an important element for sure – in particular carbon impact.

But in recent years sustainability has come to encompass much more to include both social impact and corporate governance too. Something often referred to as 'ESG': environmental, social and governance.

For the purposes of this report that's how we define the term, but we recognize that there is a subjective element to this and that its meaning is ever evolving.

How this research was conducted

We used the Belvera B2B travel map as the defined universe to look at, considering in total around roughly 350 organisations. This is purely looked at from a communications perspective: to be clear there was no evaluation in terms of whether information we found was accurate and compliant with legislation (or even if it was honest).

As this is the first edition of the research and the anecdotal evidence pointed towards a generally low level of sustainability awareness in the B2B travel industry, we used a fairly light and broad criteria for gathering our data.

We assessed the website of every company on the Belvera B2B travel map for the following four criteria:

// Were there any kinds of mention of sustainability issues on their website in any kind of structured and meaningful way?

// Did they have a sustainability report (or any other term that could be considered comparable)? It didn't have to be an actual ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) report or one according to the GRI guidelines, just simply any kind of document that compiled together in one place an update of what they are doing.

// Had they published any sustainability policies? This didn't have to be something that looked very official or reviewed by lawyers, it simply

had to be a list that went beyond 'sustainability is important' and outlined in concrete terms what they believed in.

// Could we see any case studies or examples of sustainability actions underway? For example a blog about a beach clean-up or a section of the website detailing organisations they are collaborating with.

// How easy was it to find any of this information? For this we took a simple scoring approach of measuring how many clicks did you have to go from the home page.

    1 = tab at the top of the home page

    2 = link at bottom of home page

    3 = a link from a second page

    4 = randomly placed / only with a Google search you can find

When companies had no information available, we contacted them via their generic email / contact form and stated that we were from a research company looking at sustainability in the B2B travel space and offered them the chance to submit information by email.

Of the around 350 total organisations analysed, around 50% had less than 200 staff, but 15% had more than 1,000 staff and 7% had more than 10,000. When we refer to the number of employees a company has or where it is based, this information was taken from its main LinkedIn profile.

BELVERA PARTNERS

The Belvera B2B travel map

The Belvera B2B travel map

Legend:

- Accommodation Distribution
- Hospitality Schools
- Awards
- Cruise
- Aviation
- In-Destination
- Consortia
- Investors
- Power Figures
- Journalists & Pundits
- Travel Tech
- Car Rental
- Business Travel
- Trade Media
- Tradeshows & Events
- Lobby Groups

(Map content — station labels include, among others:)

Bokun, Adara, Derbysoft, Bicsoore, ITA Software, IATA RSP, Raizup, WNS, TravelrateX, Datalex, RateGain, TravelSky, Yanolja, Google Cloud, Accelya/FareLogix, RezPower, AWS, Novotar, TSD Rental, travelandmobility.tech, Marheim, SITA, Carnect, Hewlett Packard, Car Trawler, Kevin May, Klaus Hilcebrandt, Sean O'Neill, James Goodall, Jason Rabinowitz, Jon Ostrower, Max Kingsley-Jones, Signature Aviation, Mitra Sorrells

JAL Ventures (Japan Airlines), HR Ventures (Hahn Air), Airbus Ventures / Aviation X Lab, HorizonX Ventures (Boeing), RedBeat Ventures (Air Asia), JetBlue Technology Ventures, Mainport Innovation Fund (KLM), Plug and Play, Lufthansa Innovation Hub, Travel Start-Up Incubator, Hotel Investment Partners (HIP), MailDimont Ventures, HNA Airport Group, SATS, GateGourmet, Schiphol Group, Vinci Airports, Aviapartner Group, Capita Travel and Events, All Stars Travel Group (ATG), Clear Sky Associates, LSG Sky Chefs, Star Alliance, Vantage Airport Group, Fraport, BBA Aviation plc, Radius Travel, TravelPerk, TripActions, Air Lease Corporation, Swissport, Sophie Griffiths, Dennis Schaal, Clarity, Linda Fox, Martin Cowen, SAP Concur, Direct Travel, Lucy Huxley, FCM Travel Solutions, Ovation Travel Group

British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association, American Car Rental Association, The Associated Canadian Car Rental Operators, Automotive Finance Corporation, Wheels Car Rental System, Bluebird Auto Rental Systems, Alternative Claims Management | ACM, iiQ Rental Software, Dorien, Kiu

Launch, Summit and Battleground Awards, Cateys, Premio Preferente, TTG UK, Magellan and Reader's Choice Awards, Skift Idea Awards, Glen Fogel, Luis Maroto, Joan Vilà, RoiBack, Philipe Chereque, Rafat Ali, David Schelp, Richard Clarke, Amadeus, Hotelbeds, Bedsonline, Adrian Awards, FVW, World2Meet, Egencia, Deem Inc., Hospitality.net, Travelport, American Express Meetings & Events, Marketing Awards, Travvy Awards, Amex GBT, Turistampa, BCD, FareHarbor, Travel Daily, Pinnacle Awards, UNWTO Awards, Travel Weekly (UK), Travolution, Airline Week, Smart Travel News, Aviation Week Network, Rolls Royce, ICAO, ABTA, WTTC, GBTA, PATA, Duetto, Oracle Hospitality, HOSTELCO Awards, USTOA, Frosch, CLIA, Sirena Travel, GBTA Convention, European Travel Commission, HEDNA, EU Travel Tech, TTG Incontri Rimini, IMEX, Seatrade Cruise Global, Damen Cruise, OnboardD-Software, Fincantieri, Heinemann Americas, SMS Group, Starboard Cruise Services, Chantiers de L'Atlantique, GAC Group, Meyer Werft, Inchape Shipping Services, Scanship, Wärtsilä, Videlio-HMS, International Cruise & Excursions (ICE), The ICEway, DeCurtis Corporation

Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL), Swiss Hotel Management School, Oxford School of Hospitality Management, Hotel School, The Hague, University of Nevada, Les Roches, SHA (Cornell University), Amadeus Hospitality, HRS, Dida Travel, Welcomebeds.com, Cloudbeds, Hotelogix, HotelPlanner, Webrez Pro

CITM (China International Travel Market), ITB China, Tourism Expo Japan, Signature Travel Network Annual Conference, FITUR, Oasis Travel Network, Independent by Flight Centre, World Travel Holdings, Travel Network Group, Uniglobe Travel Center, WESTA, CT Partners, Kaooni Destination Management, Global DMC Partners, Jumbo Tours, George P. Johnson Worldwide, Martiz Global Events, Aksa Sun Group, Ovation Global DMC, ALTOUR Meetings & Incentives

Main findings

// Sustainability overall has had a poor take up in the B2B travel space:

- Only 43% of the organisations analysed even mention sustainability (or similar terms such as 'environment' or 'CSR') on their website in relation to their business in any meaningful way
- Just a very small 17% have a sustainability report (even using the broadest possible definition of a report, i.e. very far from a recognized ESG report)
- And only 24% have policies publicly available

// Simply by measuring how many make reference to sustainability topics, conferences is the worst area and aviation the best

// And by measuring how many have a sustainability report, consortia and car rental are the worst areas – with none on the map having a report – and aviation the best

// Travel technology ranked fourth of 13 sectors when measuring for mentions of sustainability on the sector's websites, but a joint fifth when it comes the amount of reports available

// Overall smaller companies performed much worse, understandably perhaps:

- No company with below 20 staff has a report
- Only 5% of companies with 100 staff has one either
- This rises to 12% in the 100 to 300 range

// Whilst the largest companies – those with 10,000 plus staff – performed best, still fully 20% of them didn't have a report

// The most common country for headquarters for organisations in the report was the US,

followed by the UK and Spain.

- Surprisingly however, despite the US often being considered a leader in sustainability reporting, of the three it had the lowest level of reports at only 13% (well below the global average of 17%) – but if shouldn't be overlooked that it does have a higher level of small companies (who are less likely to have embraced the change still)
- Whilst the UK and Spain had 23% and 19% respectively

// The quality of sustainability information available via these organisations is overall very poor:

- Only 3% of companies feature sustainability either as a tab or have a clearly labelled section at the top of their home page
- Any information that is available is hard to find (and often not all in one place)
- Once you can find the information, it is often very hard to make sense of it all
- There is little standardization in how data is measured, compiled, or presented
- In terms of real commitment and impact, it is fair to say the effort is very weak

// Of the roughly 100 companies that had no information at all, when we contacted them to request information via an email only seven – that's right, just seven out of 100 – replied (and with very limited information).

// Overall there was a much greater focus on the environmental aspect of sustainability than the social or governance part.

Complete data

	Mentions sustainabilty	Has a report	Publishes policies	Provides real examples	How easy to find?
Accommodation sales & distribution	11%	11%	20%	14%	2.375
Aviation	89%	42%	58%	58%	2.125
Business travel	60%	36%	25%	46%	2.647
Car rental	16%	0%	0%	0%	3.6
Conferences	4%	4%	25%	46%	2.57
Consortia	22%	0%	4%	4%	2.6
Cruise	64%	21%	25%	36%	2.11
Hotel schools	29%	29%	0%	0%	3.5
In destination	33%	15%	7%	19%	2.6
Investors	38%	15%	15%	46%	2.27
Lobby groups	83%	16%	58%	79%	2.26
Trade shows	31%	6%	17%	17%	2.461
Travel Tech	53%	16%	29%	26%	2.72
Weighted average	**43%**	**17%**	**24%**	**31%**	**2.60**

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(even using the broadest possible definition of a report, i.e. very far from a recognized ESG report)

And only
24%
have policies publicly available

Only
3%
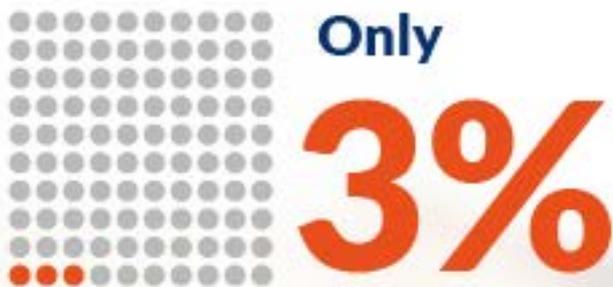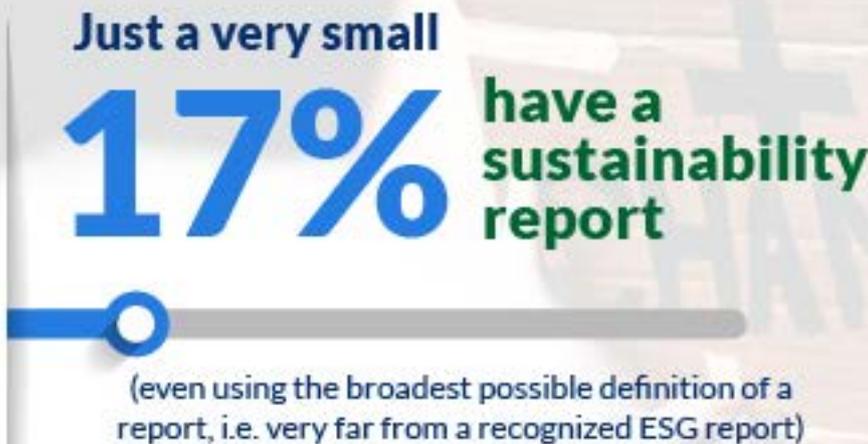
feature sustainability as a tab or have a clearly labelled section at the top of their home page

Consortias & car rental

are the worst performing areas and aviation the best (based on percentage with sustainability reports)

Why is sustainability important to B2B travel companies?

There is often a misconception – not just in travel, but in all sectors – that embracing sustainability is only of relevance to B2C companies.

Whilst it is true that B2C companies are leading the way, it is very much mistaken to feel that B2B companies cannot benefit directly, certainly in the medium to long term.

The risks

// Governments all around the world are taking actions that affect all businesses, including B2B ones. So even if you're not affected now, you will be soon and the reporting requirements, not to mention the sudden changes you might have to make to your business could be overwhelming.
  · More and more companies are being asked to take into account 'Scope 3' emissions, or emissions produced indirectly in the making a product (for example employee commutes or business travel).

// Access to financial markets could be restricted
  · Many investors are now bound by strict corporate governance and regulatory rules that forbid them from investing in companies that don't have a well-documented sustainability process.
  · And not only investors, but also lenders have similarly ever stricter procedures.
  · On the flip side, being able to convincingly demonstrate sustainability credentials attracts investors with such an appetite – for example, publicly traded companies that are included in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) see their share prices rise the day they join.

// Ever more B2B clients are demanding that their partners and suppliers are sustainability compliant:
  · In some cases this is because their financial backers are insisting on this
  · In other cases it is because their final consumer customers are expecting a supply chain that is sustainable
  · An example of this is how many wholesale accommodation distributors are now providing screening tools to highlight the green hotels in the portfolio. How long before the clients will ask that all hotels are like that?

The upsides

// Whilst in the B2C space touting your sustainability credentials is no longer a differentiating factor (and has in fact become a simple hygiene factor), in the B2B space due to the low levels of take-up there is the possibility to differentiate still

// Recruitment and retention: more and more staff are becoming concerned about sustainability issues.

  · A recent study by website Totaljobs of 2,000 employees in the UK showed that 28% would consider changing jobs for a more environmentally friendly company (increasing to 50% for 23- to 28-year-olds) – and 60% said they researched such factors when applying for jobs.

// Not only is this the right thing to do directly, indirectly travel can be an enormous force for good that has an almost infinite multiplier effect
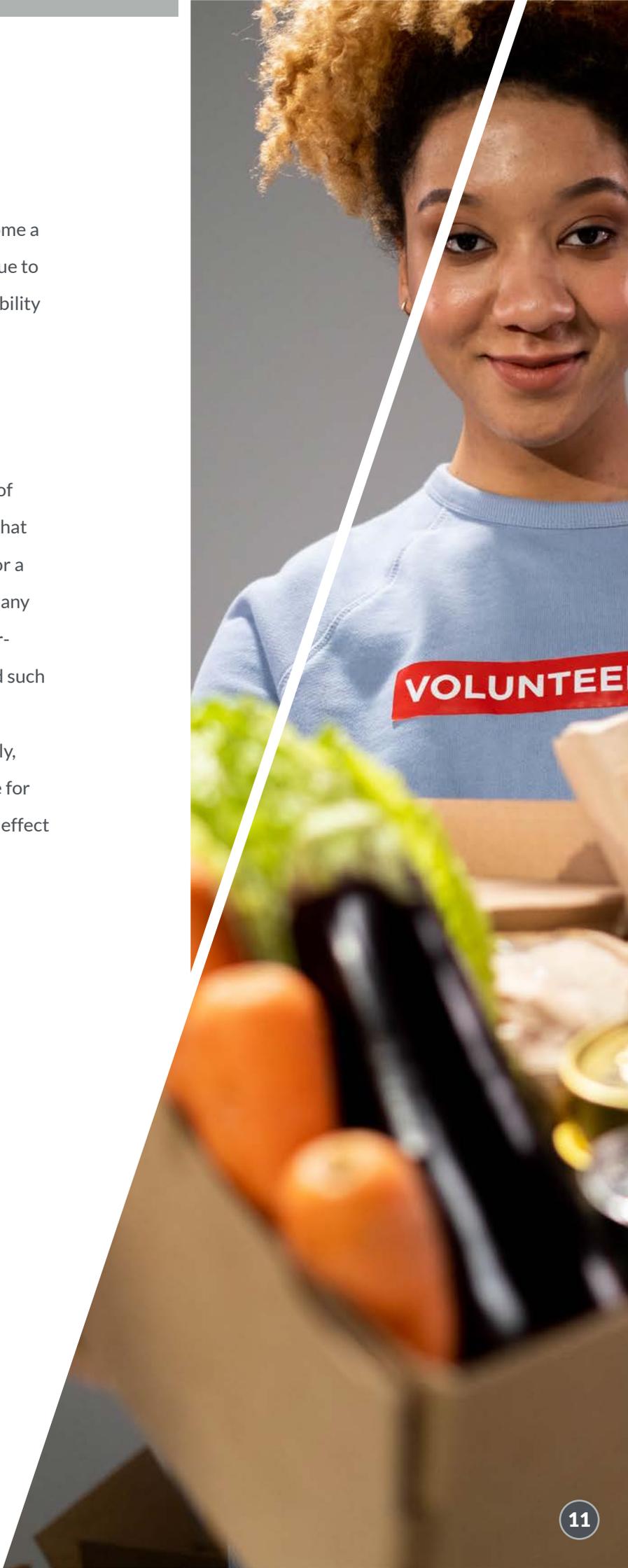
Expert interview

Laura Garrido, Founder of ético, a sustainability strategy consultancy focused on the tourism sector

Are these results a surprise?

I am not surprised as I think there is big room for improvement in the B2B travel space. So far in the B2B travel world it has not been a high priority, mainly due to the lack of awareness on how to respond. Sustainability has to be integrated into the DNA of an organization and continually be on the executive committee agenda: considering not just the environmental, but the social and economic elements too. Right now that is not happening nearly enough.

Would you accept the argument that B2B travel companies are not directly providing travel, so sustainability is not relevant?

No: I do not agree with this statement. Nor do I think they should only do it to increase sales. Companies have to take into account their relationship with the environment and society to guarantee their resilience. To carry out its activity over time, companies must take into consideration different aspects such as governance, people management, customer relationship, connection with the community and the environmental responsibility.

Does this have to involve an increase in costs or resources?

In the long-term certainly not, perhaps not even in the medium term. Sustainability not only benefits the brand, it also strengthens relationships with all stakeholders: a better work environment promotes the recruitment of the best talent and increases productivity, customers are more satisfied and loyal, and so on. But to achieve this yes there are short-term costs and we must think outside of the box to find solutions, quickly to make these possible.

Do you think that COVID has sped up or slowed this down?

I really believe that COVID has sped up the process. I think companies have been giving a breathing space to reflect on their strategy and additionally that they've come to the conclusion that perhaps the world is a little more fragile than any of us imagined: just look what a simple flu virus has done.

Are you being approached by many B2B travel companies?

More and more B2B companies are concerned by this topic and we've received many approaches recently. For example we are helping World2Meet (W2M) to implement a sustainability strategy that will impact its whole value chain and are also working with ROIBACK.

How do you go about advising such companies?

We believe that you cannot become sustainable until you define that that means and why it is important to you. At ético we think that the starting point is internal communication and have initiated a training plan where all company employees are able to find out first-hand about sustainability – as well as empowering them to make proposals themselves.

What's the single most important thing companies should do to become sustainable?

Without a doubt, for me the most important thing is the commitment and input from the top. Without this it is difficult for companies to value the incorporation of other KPIs outside of the economic benefit generated.

What other top three pieces of advice would you give?

As already said, training would be top of this list: without this the topic will be nothing but a temporary fashion. Next up would be to take the time to make the right analysis in order to initiate a strategy based on data and measurements you'd like to achieve. Finally, it must be understood that sustainability is not something you do once: it must be a continually evolving part of your wider business strategy.

Expert interview

Roman Townsend, Managing Director of Belvera Partners, a PR consultancy for travel companies whose audiences are not the end traveller

What was the sustainability tipping point for you from a business perspective?

In the last year or so the Financial Times has put one of its websites home page tabs as 'climate'. That's how important this is to the people who make decisions that impact businesses.

What will be the medium-term impact on B2B travel companies who don't take this seriously?

I genuinely feel that it won't be long before saying you don't do this will be like saying you bank in Iran or employ child labour: you´ll be cut off from capital and clients will slowly abandon you.

Can you share any anecdotes about how this is impacting investment in B2B travel?

Yes, only recent I´ve heard of at least one very large travel company missing out an investment in the hundreds of millions of euros because of the failure to pass a (admittedly high) sustainability bar.

At a communications level what mistakes are you seeing?

We saw one very prominent and large global company that had a great report – absolutely tip-top, must have taken a lot of money and resources – but hidden away and almost entirely impossible

to find on the website. And it was the only source of information about sustainability for that company: i.e. anyone visiting their website would incorrectly assume they do nothing, when actually they do quite a lot.

Are the results of this analysis really a surprise to you?

When you consider that we've set the bar pretty low here – you just need a basic CSR report, some half thought through policies and a picture of a beach clean-up, all easily available on your website, to get top marks – then yes it is a surprise that so many companies still can't do even that. More shocking is that we contacted a 100 or so companies who have literally zero information, offering them a chance to update us, and only 7 even responded.

Is there an opportunity here for B2B travel companies or is it just an obligation?

Given the low levels of engagement, then yes there's still some opportunity to differentiate your brand through genuine sustainability actions. Not only are so few others doing it well, of those are even fewer are communicating successfully about.

Expert interview

Teresa Laso, Director at Attitude//, a boutique sustainability consulting firm based in Mallorca, Spain — and previously Head of Sustainability at Hotelbeds

Tell us about the Spanish legal and regulatory environment in relation to sustainability reporting?

In recent years, we have seen that Spanish legislation has become increasingly stricter in terms of sustainability requirements for medium and large companies.

Particularly important is the 'Spanish Non-financial Information and diversity Law 18/2018', in effect since 2018, which is based on and amplifies EU Directive 2014/95/EU on disclosure of non-financial information.

What impact does that have for Spanish companies?

This law has significantly increased the number of companies required to file the non-financial information statement.

In fact from 2021 Spanish companies with an average number of workers greater than 250 (previously it was 500) are obliged to disclose information on the way they operate and manage social and environmental challenges, plus they must publish these reports on their websites.

What other changes are coming down the line in Spain?

In terms of environmental commitment, Spain has approved this year an important law that will help to tackle climate change and its effects, the 'Climate Change and Energy Transition Law 7/2021', which aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

This law underlines the need for Spanish companies to establish more ambitious goals to mitigate the effects and impact of climate change.

From 2022 companies will be required to calculate and verify their carbon footprint and develop Carbon Footprint Reduction plans to reduce their environmental impact.

How are the Balearic Islands responding to all these challenges?

The 'Climate Change and Energy Transition Law 7/2021' is already in place in the Balearic Islands via a regional ruling, placing the Balearic Islands at the forefront of the transition to clean energies.

Starting from 2020, companies operating in the Balearic Islands with more than 50 employees are obliged to calculate their carbon footprint including carbon footprint reduction plans, submit it to a public register and verify the calculation by an independent consultant.

And in the area of gender equality in Spain?

Last year two very important decrees were introduced that will help bring about greater equality of the sexes in regard to salaries.

Decree 901/2020 required companies with 100 or more employees to negotiate an equality plan by March 2021, and companies with 50 or more employees must negotiate it by March 2022.

Whilst Decree 902/2020 took effect in April this year and requires companies to keep a remuneration register covering all employees, including executives and senior managers.

A lot of reporting and compliance requirements for sure, but what's the real impact?

Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go for companies to move from pure compliance to deeply valuing the importance of integrating sustainability as a key part of their business strategy and culture. But reporting on sustainability is just the beginning, and smart companies will slowly include sustainability into their business agenda.

This is a key opportunity for differentiation in relationships with clients, employees, providers and investors – in the long term this will be like evolution: those that evolve will survive and those that don't will die off.
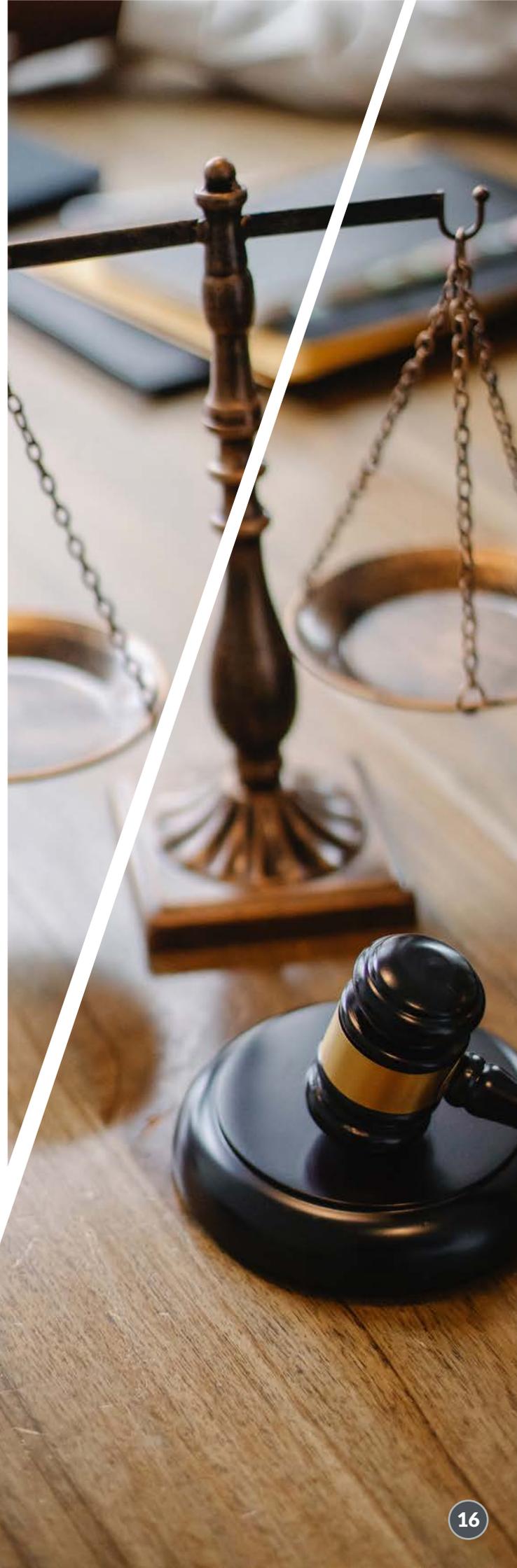
Expert interview

Víctor Monzón, CEO of Bioscore Sustainability, the first Spanish company to offer hotels a combined certification and IT platform focused around sustainability

How importance is the back-office IT infrastructure for a hotel when it comes to sustainability?

This is absolutely essential as it is not just about being sustainable, it is also about demonstrating that actually you are sustainable. To do that you need to input, measure and record a lot of data. The recent trend for digital transformation not just in terms of financial data, but all data related to sustainability, underscores that the more technologically advanced are gaining a big competitive advantage.

What is the approach now of corporate / TMC buyers and what kind of sustainability credentials are they demanding from suppliers?

The big corporate buyers and TMCs are ever more aware of the market trend for sustainable travel. They now demand suppliers to provide innovative technology solutions that meet these expectations – and they want assurances in the form of hard data.

Capturing the environmental data is relatively easy, but how do you capture and measure data for the areas of social and governance?

How businesses conduct themselves with all their stakeholders is very important: employees, providers, clients and more. That's why they need to adopt an intelligent sustainability strategy that captures all relevant data – for example salary pay based on gender or the existence of certain types of compliance based processes – in order to improve these KPIs continuously.
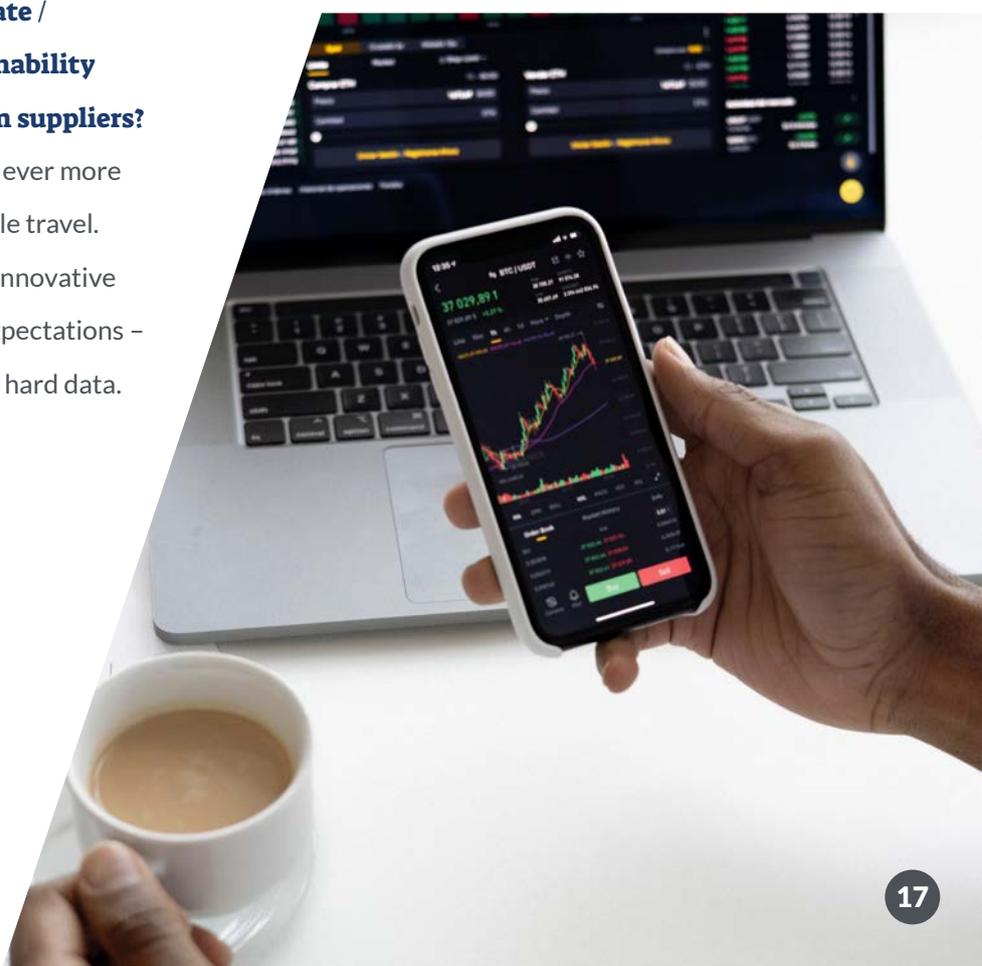
AMADEUS

Amadeus: a long-standing best practice example in the B2B travel space

Achievements

// Started monitoring the environmental impact of Amadeus operations in 2009 using its own Environmental Management System (EMS)

// Introduced a company-wide carbon-neutral growth policy in 2016 and Guarantees of Origin of renewable energy in 2019 at their main data center.

// Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) member for over nine years, plus since 2017 has been a member of FTSE4Good

// Current score in CDP (formerly Carbon Disclosure Project) is A-

// Redefined its long-term CSR strategy in 2020 to address the new social and economic challenges experienced by local communities and industry due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Examples of commitment

// Amongst many other actions, during COVID Amadeus worked with customers to waive hotel booking fees to support 1,036 medical professionals during the outbreak through its CSR program Powering Good with Partners. It also offered complimentary training opportunities for over 4,000 hospitality professionals in furlough or unemployed due to the pandemic as part of the Skills to Empower Good program.

// Amadeus uses its technology to achieve sustainable development objectives. For example during COVID it designed an online bot, Travel-19, to help over 77,000 travelers with COVID-related travel queries through the program Social Innovation Powers Good. More generally, the Altéa Departure Control-Flight Management software operated by the company helps airlines more accurately estimate the fuel needed for a specific flight (and as such reduce fuel consumption).

// Through the program Empowering Communities, Amadeus volunteers joined forces to make a positive impact on the industry and in the local communities. In alignment with the company's commitment toward helping build a responsible and sustainable industry, it also launched a global initiative, the Amadeus Social Impact Challenge, as part of the Amadeus Volunteer Day.

// Despite the challenges of the pandemic, during 2020 almost 35,000 hours were dedicated to CSR projects and almost 3,000 staff took part in CSR-related activities.

// Additionally, Amadeus is a committed and

heavily involved member of the United Nations World Travel Organisation (UNWTO) and also UNICEF, amongst a great many other organisations. In 2020, Amadeus supported 470 institutions with its CSR programs.

// Amadeus has also been an active member of the Global Travel and Tourism Partnership (GTTP) for over 20 years. GTTP introduces secondary school students to the travel and tourism industry and since 1996 has educated close to 3 million people.

// Amadeus is the leading investor in R&D in travel services (876€ million in 2020). This translates into products and services that improve operational efficiency of customers and reduce their environmental impact, helping to optimize for example fuel consumption from airlines and, consequently, reducing their CO2 emissions.

From a communications standpoint

// 'CSR' was already a chapter in its annual report following a stock market listing in 2010

// For many years now its annual report has had three relevant chapters updating stakeholders on sustainability commitments: social, environmental, and corporate governance.

// The company uses the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) method to report on its performance according to key metrics, which means that stakeholders can accurately compare how Amadeus is performing in relation to other similar size companies.

// Information about sustainability is easy to find on the main website, with all the necessary information in one space and in an easily digestible format. Look for yourself now: https://corporate.amadeus.com/en/sustainability

ABTA - The Travel Association: its role in moving UK travel businesses towards a more sustainable future for travel

The ABTA commitment

// ABTA is committed to building a more sustainable industry so travel and tourism is a benefit to everyone – and works not just with members, but their suppliers, destination authorities, travellers, the wider industry, and the UK government too

// It does this by supporting members to develop a sustainability approach that is right for their business across their operations, supply chains and with their customers

// This includes developing policies and targets, staff training, supplier codes of conduct and certification, measurement and reduction of carbon emissions, management of single use plastic and developing modern slavery approaches

// Additionally it is committed to collecting data to establish an understanding of and baseline for sustainability performance across its membership and to report on progress

The Tourism for Good report

// Towards the end of last year ABTA launched the report Tourism for Good, a roadmap for rebuilding travel and tourism, which sets out how we can embed sustainability into tourism's recovery

// It highlighted areas for action in:

· Environment, such as decarbonisation and management of waste, including single use plastics,

· Destination and community impact, ensure tourism continues to deliver benefits for local communities, and that we preserve the culture and nature that makes travel and tourism special

· Human rights, including labour rights, child safeguarding, anti-discrimination, and diversity & inclusion

· And animal welfare

// Not just B2C travel organisations, but also B2B

· ABTA tailors advice according to the needs of member segments, for instance it has specific guidance for Travel Management Companies that members of ABTA can find here: https://www.abta.com/sustainabletourism

· The international sustainability certification scheme Travelife Accommodation Sustainability – which is run by ABTA – is seeing increasing demand from organisations looking to manage sustainability in their supply chain

An interview with Clare Jenkinson, Head of Sustainability at ABTA

What is the big driver of shift towards sustainability from travel companies?

B2C companies are having to respond to increasing consumer demand for sustainability. ABTA's research shows half of people say that the green credentials of a travel company are important or essential when choosing a holiday, compared to only a fifth back in 2011

How does that affect B2B travel companies?

Indirectly this impacts B2B travel companies: not least in the form of legislation and expectations of investors and lenders – but increasingly from the B2B customers directly too

What form does that take?

Global travel companies are increasingly asking their suppliers for carbon emissions measurements, evidence of management of human rights, and sustainability certifications.

Collectively how should B2B travel companies meet this challenge?

Collaboration across the industry is essential, for example we are a member of sustainable aviation, working towards net zero aviation in the UK

And if we can pull this off, what can we achieve?

Ultimately, we believe that travel and tourism is a powerful force for good, not only supporting jobs and livelihoods at home and in destinations, but also often promoting the preservation of culture and nature around the world
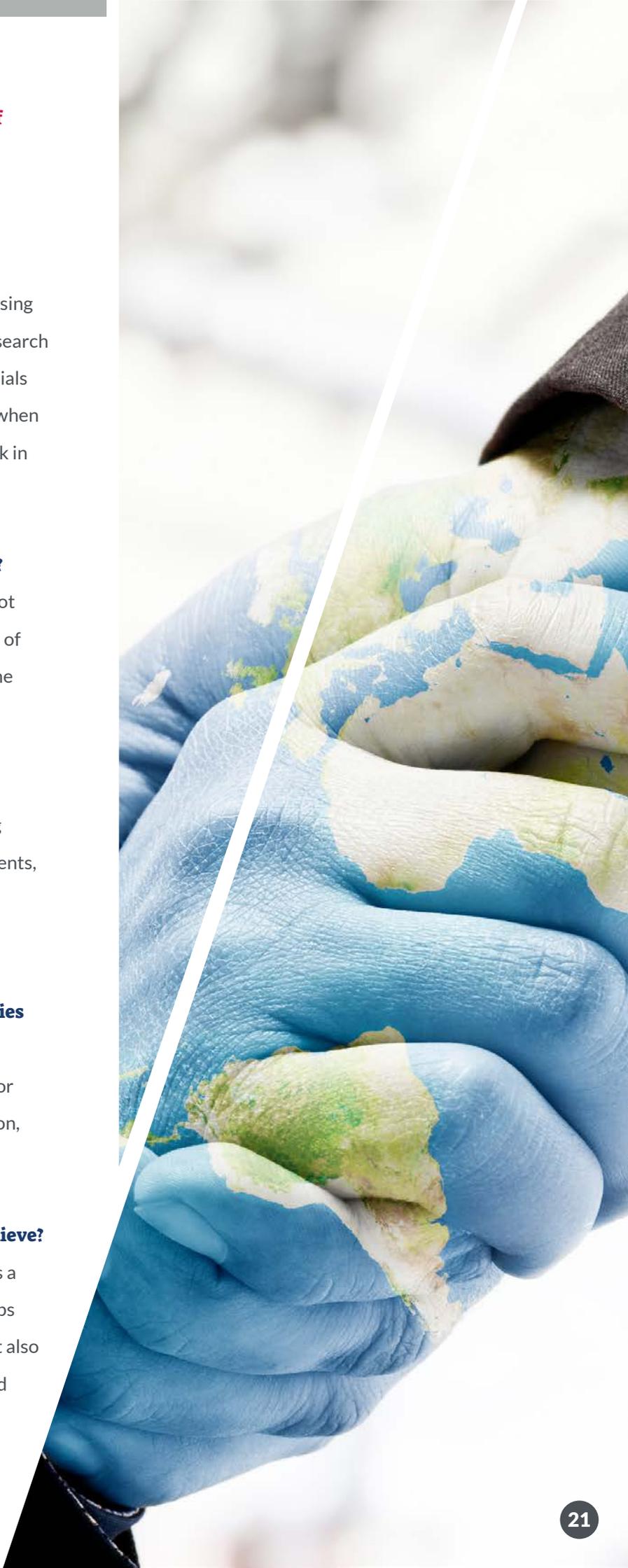
hotelbeds

Hotelbeds: a more recent sustainability convert that is catching-up fast

Achievements:

// Certified carbon neutral three years running

// Volunteering program launched in 2018 has seen 7,000 hours of time to support the causes most important to employees

// Rolled out a comprehensive range of policies, including a Code of Conduct and Supplier Code of Conduct; plus signing up to internationally recognized agreements such as the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement or Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism

// In February 2021 Hotelbeds became the first B2B travel company to sign the Climate Pledge Commitment, which urges industries to become net zero carbon by 2040, a decade ahead of the Paris Agreement.

Playing to its strengths:

// Taking advantage of its status as the world's largest bedbank, during COVID Hotelbeds was able to persuade hotel supplier partners to provide discounts for front-line COVID workers and offer these via travel agents under the banner 'Holidays for Heroes'.

// In a similar way the company launched a tool called Safe2Stay, that allowed intermediaries to find out information on COVID measures in place at a hotel property.

// Outside of COVID, Hotelbeds has led the way with its Green Hotels Programme, which allows intermediaries to search for sustainable friendly hotels. Already over 15,000 properties have been certified

Communications:

// 'Sustainability' is a tab right on the front page of the main website and all the information you need is easily available and clear – as well as to staff via its intranet

// As of 2019 the company has published a comprehensive Corporate Responsibility Report

// At an internal level Hotelbeds makes a great effort to engage employees and sign them up for volunteering via events and the company intranet

An interview with Gareth Matthews, Global Director for Marketing, Communications & CSR:

How important is sustainability to Hotelbeds?

"Hotelbeds has always had a very strong commitment to its corporate social responsibility – as a global company, we recognise the example we should set in terms of supporting and protecting the

From here how will you evolve your approach further?

"We have established a good track record already and pivoted quickly last year to adapt our initiatives in light of COVID and its restrictions. It's increasingly clear that the pandemic is likely to accelerate the positive drive towards a more sustainable industry with greater awareness of the impact we all have on destinations worldwide so we will continue to adapt and react accordingly, and I expect we will see much more related activity in the future."

Tell us about how you've adapted your approach in light of the pandemic?

"We recognized very early into the crisis that we needed to pivot quickly to respond and we did that in a number of ways, including the launch of our popular 'Green Hotels Programme', designed to highlight and promote properties in our portfolio that meet strict sustainability KPIs, and the development of the Safe2Stay tool that allowed intermediaries to find out information on COVID measures in place at a hotel property."

How has the pandemic changed the B2B distribution space in terms of sustainability issues?

"The pandemic has certainly changed the industry and the preferences of travellers, and as leaders in the B2B market, it's important that we make sure we respond responsibly, adapting our business offering to these emerging changes especially in relation to sustainability."

Recommendations

The following are ten simple steps to make your B2B travel company more sustainable

1. **Appoint someone internally to lead this:**
   - // Ideally the more senior the better, management needs to be behind this for it to work
   - // Due to the growing compliance element it is important that legal are directly involved too

2. **Conduct an audit:**
   - // Build your analysis mostly on hard data, don't allow personal opinions to enter in too much
   - // Compare how you are performing to similar sized organisations in your sector and others too
   - // Consider the wider space you operate in. Yes you're a B2B travel company and don't provide the final service to the consumer, but you're playing an integral role in the experience

3. **If you don't have policies, create some today:**
   - // Start with the ones that all companies need – like discrimination, child labour, carbon emissions, etc. – but don't forget to include ones directly relevant to your particular area of travel
   - // Remember they need to be easy to understand, realistic, measurable and, ultimately, enforceable

4. **Join a group or community that is supporting businesses like yours:**
   - // Ask your local chamber of commerce or business association what they can offer
   - // For example, at the European level there is the European Assocation of Sustainability Consultants: https://www.europeanasp.eu/
   - // Look at travel industry associations and lobby groups, for example ABTA, the WTTC, or UNWTO

5. **Bring in experts:**
   - // But make sure their experience is genuine and relevant to the travel sector by asking to see references and examples of work they've done for similar clients
   - // Also look for someone appropriate to the size of your organization – a one person outfit might not be able to support a 10,000 employee organization

6. **Train your staff on your policies:**
    - // Regular internal workshops and updates
    - // Include information in new joiners' introduction packs
    - // Make commitment to the policies part of your HR performance reviews and bonus targets

7. **Publish your targets and performance:**
    - // Have a report that includes your targets and how you´ll measure them
    - // Then publish how you perform regularly
    - // Make sure your performance is recorded in a consistent and reliable fashion

8. **Ask for feedback, continually, from all your stakeholders:**
    - // All views should be welcomed
    - // Remember that suppliers too are stakeholders

9. **Engage in local community actions:**
    - // But make sure they add real value by aligning them with the knowledge base of your organization
    - // For example, if you're a travel tech company with many IT experts, perhaps they can deliver greater value teaching IT skills to unemployed people than yet another beach clean-up

10. **Start today and don't think that because you are late it is now not worth it**
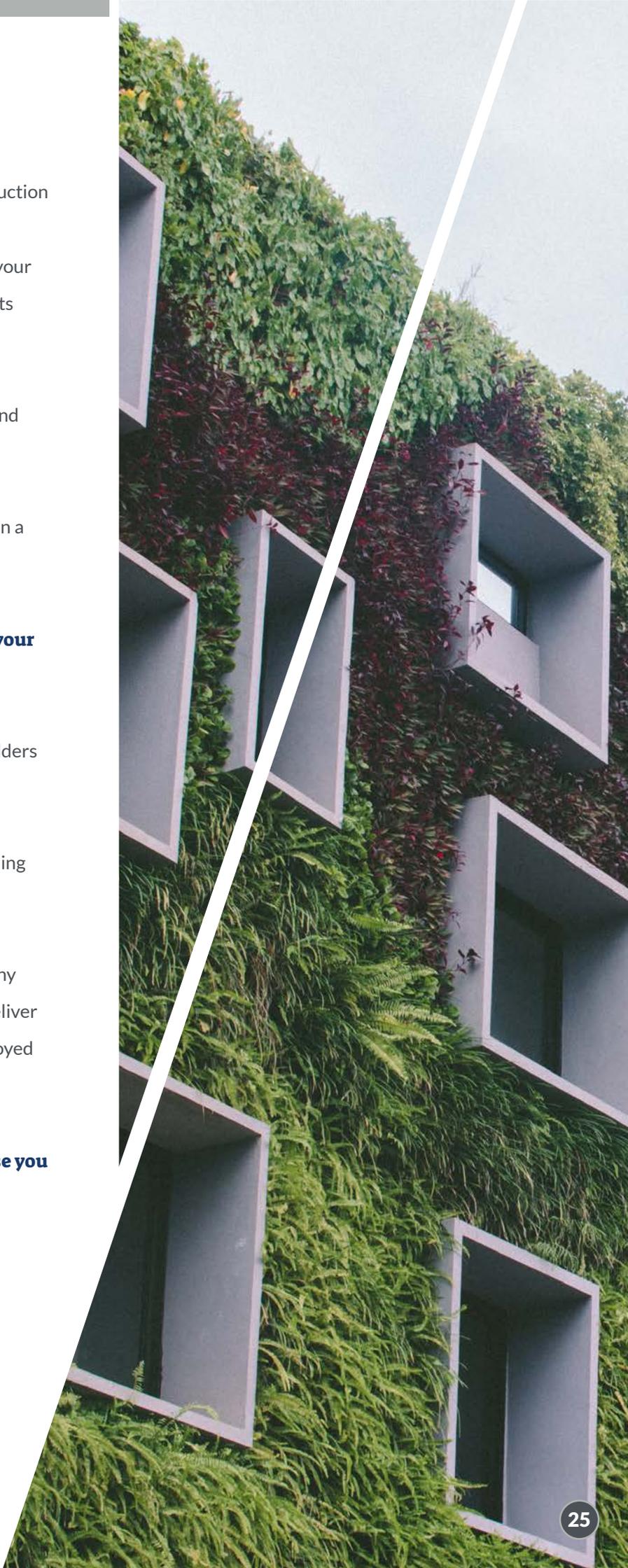
What role should communications play?

Communications can play a significant role in ensuring uptake and engagement from both your employees and stakeholders. Plus, if approached sensitively, your company can also gain significant reputational gains.

// It is essential that all information should be clearly available on your website:
- · There needs to be a prominent tab on your home page titled 'sustainability'
- · Within that area all information relating to sustainability should be easily available

// You must have clear policies for all the essential areas, written up in plain English and downloadable as PDFs:
- · Environmental impact
- · Employee welfare
- · Anti-discrimination
- · Bribery & corruption
- · Child & slave labour
- · Animal abuse (in particular if you sell / distribute activities that involve animals, such as zoos)
- · And so on…

// Every year you should produce a report, no matter how short, that updates on how you have performed. Label it clearly, place it on your website in the sustainability section. Start small and modest, being open about any limitations, but aim to expand the scope over time.

// Use your company's intranet to communicate clearly your policies and vision, set examples and drive uptake

// Ensure that information about your sustainability commitment is included in relevant marketing and sales materials, for examples newsletters, brochures, RFPs, etc.

// When you are involved in any acts that could be easily communicated – for example a beach clean-up or an internal session on awareness about a topic – then take a photo, write a blog and share it on social media.

But when should you reach out to media?

// This should only be done when what you are doing really is 'news' in the sense of being new, original, and of interest to other travel trade audiences

// For example, an average beach clean-up is unlikely to be of interest to anything more, at most, than your local newspaper – but launching an App that lets people volunteer for beach clean-ups might be

// Using a carbon off-setting tool for business travel isn't newsworthy, but perhaps an exclusive 'no business travel and work-from-home only' model could be

// Certainly, any kind of tool or technology you can introduce that directly impacts the end traveller in terms of sustainability would be considered potentially interesting to media

About Belvera Partners

Belvera Partners is a PR consultancy that works with travel organisations whose audiences are not the actual end traveller – audiences such as investors, tech partners, industry analysts, lobby groups, conference organisers and, of course, the travel trade media.

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