## Environmental Science

## Digital

## Asignment-3

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# Topics \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Sustaining human societies……………………………………………………

1. Economics
2. Environment
3. Policies
4. Education

2. Bibliography…………………………………………………………………….

**MEANING OF SUSTAINABILITY**

In [ecology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecology), **sustainability** is the property of [biological systems](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biological_system) to remain [diverse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biodiversity) and productive [indefinitely](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/indefinite#Adjective). Long-lived and healthy [wetlands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wetlands) and [forests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forests) are examples of sustainable biological systems. In more general terms, sustainability is the endurance of systems and processes. The [organizing principle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organizing_principle) for sustainability is [sustainable development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_development), which includes the four interconnected domains: ecology, economics, policies and education. [Sustainability science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability_science) is the study of sustainable development and environmental science.

### THREE PILLARS OF SUSTAINABILITY

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/1b/Nested_sustainability-v2.svg/250px-Nested_sustainability-v2.svg.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nested_sustainability-v2.svg) A [diagram](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euler_diagram) indicating the relationship between the "three pillars of sustainability", in which both [economy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_economy) and [society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society) are constrained by environmental limits. | Sustainable development.svg [Venn diagram](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venn_diagram) of sustainable development: at the confluence of three constituent parts |

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The [2005 World Summit on Social Development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005_World_Summit) identified sustainable development goals, such as economic development, social development and environmental protection. This view has been expressed as an illustration using three overlapping ellipses indicating that the three pillars of sustainability are not mutually exclusive and can be mutually reinforcing. In fact, the three pillars are interdependent, and in the long run none can exist without the others. The three pillars have served as a common ground for numerous [sustainability standards and certification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability_standards_and_certification) systems in recent years, in particular in the food industry. Standards which today explicitly refer to the triple bottom line include [Rainforest Alliance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainforest_Alliance), [Fair-trade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairtrade) and [UTZ Certified](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UTZ_Certified). Some sustainability experts and practitioners have illustrated four pillars of sustainability, or a quadruple bottom line. One such pillar is future generations, which emphasizes the long-term thinking associated with sustainability.

Sustainable development consists of balancing local and global efforts to meet basic human needs without destroying or degrading the natural environment. The question then becomes how to represent the relationship between those needs and the environment.

A study from 2005 pointed out that [environmental justice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_justice) is as important as is sustainable development. Ecological economist [Herman Daly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herman_Daly) asked, "what use is a saw mill without a forest?" From this perspective, the economy is a subsystem of human society, which is itself a subsystem of the biosphere and a gain in one sector is a loss from another. This perspective led to the nested circles figure of 'economics' inside 'society' inside the 'environment'.

The simple definition that sustainability is something that improves "the [quality of human life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quality_of_life) while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems",[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability" \l "cite_note-caring-30) though vague, conveys the idea of sustainability having quantifiable limits. But sustainability is also a call to action, a task in progress or “journey” and therefore a political process, so some definitions set out common goals and values.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability#cite_note-31) The [Earth Charter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Charter)[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability#cite_note-EarthCharter-32) speaks of “a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.” This suggested a more complex figure of sustainability, which included the importance of the domain of 'politics'.

More than that, sustainability implies responsible and proactive decision-making and innovation that minimizes negative impact and maintains balance between ecological resilience, economic prosperity, political justice and cultural vibrancy to ensure a desirable planet for all species now and in the future.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability#cite_note-33) Specific types of sustainability include, [sustainable agriculture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_agriculture), [sustainable architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_architecture) or [ecological economics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_economics).[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability#cite_note-34) Understanding sustainable development is important but without clear targets an unfocused term like "liberty" or "justice".[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability#cite_note-35) It has also been described as a "dialogue of values that challenge the sociology of development".[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability#cite_note-36)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Sustainable development** is a process for meeting [human development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_development_(humanity)) goals while [sustaining](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability) the ability of natural systems to continue to provide the [natural resources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_resources) and [ecosystem services](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecosystem_services) upon which the [economy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy) and [society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society) depends. While the modern concept of sustainable development is derived most strongly from the 1987 [Brundtland Report](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brundtland_Commission" \o "Brundtland Commission), it is rooted in earlier ideas about [sustainable forest management](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_forest_management) and twentieth century environmental concerns. As the concept developed, it has shifted to focus more on [economic development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_development), [social development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_change)and environmental protection for future generations.

Sustainable development is the [organizing principle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organizing_principle) for sustaining finite resources necessary to provide for the needs of future generations of life on the planet. It is a process that envisions a desirable future state for human societies in which living conditions and resource-use continue to meet human needs without undermining the "integrity, stability and beauty" of natural [biotic systems](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biotic_community). It was suggested that "the term 'sustainability' should be viewed as humanity's target goal of human-ecosystem equilibrium (homeostasis), while 'sustainable development' refers to the holistic approach and temporal processes that lead us to the end point of sustainability." (305)[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_development" \l "cite_note-1)

# Economic Sustainability Economic sustainability icon

# The general definition of economic [sustainability](http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/Sustainability.htm) is the ability of an economy to support a defined level of economic production indefinitely.

## The wrong definition of economic sustainability

The world's nations presently define their top economic goal in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is the total amount of production produced within a nation, usually within one year. In 2010 GDP varied from $16 trillion for the European Union, $15 trillion for the US, and $6 trillion for China to $16 billion for Afghanistan, $7 billion for Haiti, and $105 million for the Faukland Islands. [1](http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/EconomicSustainability.htm#F1)

The top economic goal of most nations is a constant, never ending rise in total GDP of several percent per year. It's their economic growth target. Nothing is more important except for war. If a country's GDP goes flat, that's stagnation. If it falls for more than two quarters is a row that's a recession. Both are to be avoided at all costs.

The official GDP growth targets for several countries are: (Data sources vary per nation)

| **GDP for Selected Countries** | |
| --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Total Annual Target** |
| [India](http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2562044.ece) | 9% |
| [China](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-03/05/c_13761830.htm) | 8% |
| [Vietnam](http://talkvietnam.com/2011/11/national-assembly-targets-7-pct-gdp-growth/) | 7% |
| [United States](http://www.pkarchive.org/new/howfast.html) (implied target) | 2% |
| [Japan](http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/dec2009/gb20091230_684517.htm) | 2% |
| [England](http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/jul/26/gdp-figures-economic-growth-targets) | 1.7% |

Sustainability is what people want to happen indefintely. No country has a GDP growth target less than about 2%, except when recovering from a recession. Thus the defacto defintion of ***economic sustainability*** is steady growth in total national GDP of a minimum of about 2% per year.

But this is the wrong defintion. Total national GDP doesn't tell you how much the average person's income is. Nor does it tell how many people are at the low end of the distribution of income and are thus starving. Nor is steady growth even possible forever. Steadily growing total GDP is thus a flawed goal that can lead a country, and the world, terriby astray.

## The right defintion of economic sustainability

Let's add a column to the table for average GDP per person. This takes us closer to what matters. ([Data source for last column](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_%28PPP%29_per_capita))

| **GDP for Selected Countries** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Total Annual Target** | **Average GDP per Person** |
| India | 9% | 3,500 |
| China | 8% | 7,600 |
| Vietnam | 7% | 3,100 |
| United States (implied target) | 2% | 47,200 |
| Japan | 2% | 34,000 |
| England | 1.7% | 34,800 |

This perspective shows a large gap between the developing and developed nations. The high growth rates are an effort to catch up in average GDP per person.

For a pillar of sustainability to be strong it must answer these questions with a yes:

http://www.thwink.org/sustain/resources/images/misc/CheckSmallGreen.png1. Can it be sustainable?

http://www.thwink.org/sustain/resources/images/misc/CheckSmallGreen.png2. Does it well support the goal of the system?

For the first question, can steady GDP growth be sustainable? No. But average GDP per person can, if it doesn't clash with the goals of the other pillars or the goal of the system.

Now for the second question. As Thwink.org sees it, the goal of Homo sapiens is (or should be) to optimize long term quality of life for those living and their descendents. That's the goal of the human system. Does average GDP per person support that goal? Not quite. There's nothing in average GDP per person that allows comparison to the goal of quality of life. To do that we need the so called poverty threshold.

The [***poverty threshold***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_threshold) or poverty line is defined as “the minimum level of income deemed necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living in a given country.” [2](http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/EconomicSustainability.htm#F2) In poor countries the threshold is defined quite low, as low as $1.25 per day. Below the threshold a person suffers malnutrition and frequently dies. Developed countres define the poverty threshold so much higher that it's no longer a "poverty threshold." It's the preferred minimum standard of living level. For example, in the US it's $30 a day. [3](http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/EconomicSustainability.htm#F3) This is widely called the “national poverty line,” a confusing term. The more accurate term is "preferred minimum standard of living level," which is the one we will use.

Does the preferred minimum standard of living level (in monetary units) well support the goal of the system? Yes. So at last we have the correct definition. ***Economic sustainability***occurs when a political unit, such as a nation, has the preferred percent of its population below its preferred minimum standard of living level. The percent needs to very low, somwhere around 5% or less, because everyone below the level is suffering, either physically due to poor health or psychologically.

## Solving the economic sustainability problem

How far the world is from economic sustainability is shown below. ([Data source for last column.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_percentage_of_population_living_in_poverty) The CIA Factbook column was used for the developed countries. The International Poverty Line of $2 per day was used for the three developing countries.)

| **GDP for Selected Countries** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Total Annual Target** | **Average GDP per Person** | **Percent Below Preferred Minimum Standard of Living Level** |
| India | 9% | 3,500 | 76% |
| China | 8% | 7,600 | 36% |
| Vietnam | 7% | 3,100 | 48% |
| United States (implied target) | 2% | 47,200 | 15% |
| Japan | 2% | 34,000 | 16% |
| England or UK | 1.7% | 34,800 | 14% |

The last column shows how impossibly far the world is from economic sustainability. It's impossible for India, China, and other undeveloped countries to catch up with developed countries in terms of average GDP per person and be sustainable with today's technology. Even with 50 years from now technology it looks impossible. Here's why:

The [Ecological Footprint](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_footprint) is the measure of consumption of the earth's carrying capacity. Total global capacity is estimated at 12 bilion hectacres. In 2007 18 billion hectacres were being consumed by the world's population, which is 50% overshoot.

Looking at the [latest Ecological Footprint statistics](http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/env_eco_foo-environment-ecological-footprint), we see an average of about 7 hectacres per person for European Union countries. They have an adequate standard of living and are the world's best at living sustainably, for developed nations. Suppose the entire world emulated the European Union countries. At a global population of 7 billion people (today's population) that would be a 49 billion hectacre footprint. Global carrying capacity is 12 billion hectacres, so at that point the planet would be in 49 / 12 = 400% capacity utilization. Above 100% is overshoot, so the overshoot would be 300%. That level of environmental impact would destoy the environment instantly.

There is little evidence that as the footprint grew that environment impact per person would fall correspondingly due to new technology and conservation practices. It has already proven impossible to get the world's top two greenhouse gas emitters, China and the United States, to even sign the Kyoto Protocol treaty. World greehouse gas emission grew 6% in 2010 over 2009. Climate change is only one of many environmental sustainability problems, like freshwater supply, pollution of many kinds, soil fertility lost, deforestation, and so on.

If you put all these trends and data together, economic sustainability looks impossible.

So what are we to do?

The analysis at Thwink.org has pondered this question deeply. It appears that the world's present solution strategies have not been successful because they do not resolve [root causes](http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/RootCause.htm). Instead, they attempt to resolve [intermediate causes](http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/IntermediateCause.htm). As a result they fail.

But if problem solvers took up the principle that the only way to solve a difficult problem is to resolve its root causes, everything could change. The economic sustainability pillar problem could become solvable.

# Environmental Sustainability

To define environmental sustainability we must first define sustainability. [***Sustainability***](http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/Sustainability.htm) is the ability to continue a defined behavior indefinitely. To define what environmental sustainability is we turn to the experts.

Herman Daly, one of the early pioneers of ecological sustainability, looked at the problem from a maintenance of natural capital viewpoint. In 1990 he proposed that: [1](http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/EnvironmentalSustainability.htm#F1)

**1. For renewable resources**, the rate of harvest should not exceed the rate of regeneration (sustainable yield);

**2. [For pollution]**The rates of waste generation from projects should not exceed the assimilative capacity of the environment (sustainable waste disposal); and

**3. For nonrenewable resources** the depletion of the nonrenewable resources should require comparable development of renewable substitutes for that resource.

This list has been widely accepted. It's an elegant [abstraction](http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/Abstraction.htm), one that made me pause and read it three times when I first encountered it.

The list can be shortened into a tight definition. ***Environmental sustainability*** is the rates of renewable resource harvest, pollution creation, and non-renewable resource depletion that can be continued indefinitely. If they cannot be continued indefinitely then they are not sustainable.

## Why this particular definition is important

This is discussed on the glossary page for [sustainability](http://www.thwink.org/sustain/glossary/Sustainability.htm).

Basically the world's standard definition of environmental sustainability is sustainable development, which means sustainable economic growth, which is an oxymoron. No form of economic growth can be continued indefinitely. Furthermore, all economic growth today is terribly environmentally degrading.

Thus it's impossible to be sustainable and achieve economic growth at the same time, now and for at least the next 50 years or so. That's why definitions like the one on this page must replace the world's standard definition of sustainability.

Education for Sustainability (EfS) is defined as a transformative learning process that equips students, teachers, and school systems with the new knowledge and ways of thinking we need to achieve economic prosperity and responsible citizenship while restoring the health of the living systems upon which our lives depend.

**Sustainability education** (**SE**), **Education for Sustainability** (**EfS**), and **Education for Sustainable Development** (**ESD**) are interchangeable terms describing the practice of teaching for [sustainability](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability). ESD is the term most used internationally and by the United Nations.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_for_sustainable_development#cite_note-1) [Agenda 21](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agenda_21) was the first international document that identified education as an essential tool for achieving sustainable development and highlighted areas of action for education.

Groundwork has been laid for sustainability education worldwide. Recent changes in [service learning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Service_learning), a focus on literacies and skills, standards that support interdisciplinary thinking, and the role of [systems thinking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Systems_thinking) have all increased the visibility of the movement.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_for_sustainable_development#cite_note-2) Various approaches to ESD encourage people to understand the complexities of, and synergies between, the issues threatening planetary sustainability and understand and assess their own values and those of the society in which they live in the context of sustainability. ESD seeks to engage people in negotiating a sustainable future, making decisions and acting on them. While it is generally agreed on that sustainability education must be customized for individual learners,[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_for_sustainable_development" \l "cite_note-3) according to Tilbury and Wortman, the following skills are essential to ESD:[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_for_sustainable_development#cite_note-4)

* Envisioning – being able to imagine a better future. The premise is that if we know where we want to go, we will be better able to work out how to get there.
* [Critical thinking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_thinking) and reflection – learning to question our current belief systems and to recognize the assumptions underlying our knowledge, perspective and opinions. Critical thinking skills help people learn to examine economic, environmental, social and cultural structures in the context of sustainable development.
* [Systemic thinking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Systems_thinking) – acknowledging complexities and looking for links and synergies when trying to find solutions to problems.
* Building partnerships – promoting dialogue and negotiation, learning to work together.
* Participation in decision-making – empowering people.

Sustainable policies

#### ****INTRODUCTION****

Sustainability is an important word in the public sector, with Government departments all having to meet various environmental targets. Accordingly, suppliers to the public sector are expected to follow suit, with a Sustainability Policy often stipulated if they wish to tender for contracts. Increasingly too, the private sector is expecting more environmental responsibility to be shown by their supply chains.

Related to an Environmental Policy, a Sustainability Policy should outline sustainability considerations within business decisions, with a plan of how to prevent issues arising. This might include encouraging staff to use public transport (where possible), to ensuring your business is doing its best to recycle. The idea is to show consideration to the environment and natural resources. Sustainable procurement would also have the objective of social progress that recognises the needs of all stakeholders, including the wider community.

You could consider using an environmental management system to help you manage, measure, monitor and report on your environmental performance. The internationally recognised [ISO 14001 standard](http://www.british-assessment.co.uk/services/iso-certification/iso-14001-certification/) allows organisations to demonstrate their environmental credentials and is highly regarded for public sector contracts.

#### ****BENEFITS OF A SUSTAINABILITY POLICY****

Implementing a Sustainability Policy may require some initial investment to change the way your business operates. However, this investment should be quickly recouped due to savings from new found efficiency, energy savings and work opportunities.

A well written Sustainability Policy helps your organisation to:

* Meet current environmentally related legislation
* Save money in terms of consumption, waste and recycling
* Increase efficiency throughout your supply chain
* Differentiate you from the competition
* Improve reputation with stakeholders

#### ****GETTING STARTED****

An in-house risk assessment should be the first step before starting your policy, as it will help you understand the impact your business has on the environment and society. To help you get started, [our eco friendly office guide](http://www.british-assessment.co.uk/guides/hints-and-tips-on-creating-a-green-office/) may give some ideas of how your business affects the environment on a continuous basis. You can also read guidance on environmental legislation on  the [Government’s Environmental Agency website](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/142627.aspx).

If your business is in the manufacturing sector, legislation is more of an issue, yet even office-based businesses have to consider direct use of resources such as energy consumption. Also consider the full life cycle of the products or services you deliver. Have you thought about the delivering of your supplies, or how your customers dispose of your products? What could you do to improve this?

When it comes to society, consider how your business impacts the local community. This could range from how you source your suppliers, to hiring local people.

When creating your Sustainability Policy, there is no agreed set layout. However, if your motivation behind creating the policy is because of a supply chain requirement, it is wise to obtain a copy of the client’s own so your policy can reflect their requirements. Otherwise, there are numerous templates available on the web.

It’s imperative to have a policy that is both easy to understand and that clearly states the organisation’s aims and objectives, similar to a Mission Statement. It doesn’t need to be longer than a single page.

There are four key areas to address in a Sustainability Policy:

* A commitment to prevent and reduce environmental impact
* A commitment to compliance with relevant legal requirements
* A dedication to continously improving on sustainability performance
* An assurance that the policy wil be well communicated and manaaged

To help you get started writing your own sustainability policy, you can see links a range of policies below.

* [Swansea University’s Policy](http://www.swansea.ac.uk/sustainability/policy/)
* [Cancer Research’s Policy](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/who-we-are/how-we-are-governed/SustainabilityPolicy/)
* [Virgin Atlantic’s Policy](http://www.virgin-atlantic.com/gb/en/footer/about-us/sustainability.html)
* [Sustainability Policy template from Meet Green](http://meetgreen.com/free-info/sustainability-policy-template/)

#### ****SUPPLY CHAIN AND MARKET PLACE****

Of course, it’s not practical to choose suppliers purely on sustainability criterion. It’s still important to consider quality, reliability and costs. However, by ensuring you use local, like-minded suppliers, you can often find money can be saved. In your policy, you can include:

* Your sourcing plans and targets
* That all suppliers are required to provide their Sustainability Policies which are evaluated and noted
* How you encourage and promote sustainability to your suppliers and stakeholders

#### ****COMMUNITY INVESTMENT AND SOCIAL IMPACT****

What community and charitable projects is your organisation involved in? How much have you spent on donations this year? Have you sponsored any of your employees for any charitable events? Do you allow local students to come in for work experience?

It’s worthwhile involving your employees in deciding what concerns you would like to support, as this will certainly aid buy-in.

#### ****EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES****

It’s important to encourage employees to help with your initiatives, as collectively they have the potential to contribute massively to reducing your organisation’s environmental impacts; research has proven that engaged employees work harder as a result.

You may start with more obvious things such as reviewing contracts to ensure minimum legal standards are exceeded and there are allowances for a flexible, diverse working environment.

More proactive employee intiatives range from the more common cycle to work schemes, to lunchtime yoga sessions, free annual health checks or even an annual “family day”. If you don’t do anything at the moment, what could you do? Ask your employees for their suggestions.

Once your Sustainability Policy has been finished and signed off by senior management, you should distribute it to all employees.

#### ****INFLUENCING OTHERS****

Once your policy is finished, don’t stop there! Your Sustainability Policy is a communication tool; it also needs to be shared with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders. Then, set a date in the diary for the policy to be reviewed to ensure it remains relevant; this should be at least a yearly activity.

You have an opportunuty to reduce environment impact even further by engaging with your suppliers. Whilst a typical office based business may not have a huge environment impact, together, your suppliers will. Accordingly, use your influence as a client to encourage suppliers and contractors to uphold similar environmental standards, you may even want to make it a requirement to do business with you.

Certainly post your Sustainability Policy onto your website. You could also integrate your green message into all of your marketing materials, hopefully encouraging customers to adopt a similar ethos. By communicating your aims and objectives, it may even bring your organisation more work or help you to retain existing clients.

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