

# Learning Inspirations

LEARNING LINK APR – JUN 2024

## 17 GOALS TO RULE THEM ALL: HOW THE SDGs CAN BENEFIT ORGANISATIONS



Committed to by world leaders at the UN Summit in New York, the 17 proposed goals and 169 targets aim to be a charter for people and the planet in the twenty-first century. Debated by civil society and UN member states for more than two years, the goals will stimulate action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance to building a more equitable and sustainable world for all.

The aim of the new SDGs is ambitious: End extreme poverty; fight inequality and injustice; fix climate change. In all countries, for all people. The goals come not a moment too soon: Climate change is rapidly becoming the greatest threat to poverty eradication and negatively affecting sustainable development efforts. If action is not taken to cut emissions and support communities to adapt to the changes, its impacts will only increase.

**Ultimately, the SDGs will affect organisations and institutions of all shapes and sizes.**

For the private sector, the SDGs can provide a more focused direction on how to boost the quality of sustainability goals, position them as commitments, and better communicate them in a credible and meaningful manner.

**No matter how large or small, and regardless of their industry, all companies can contribute to the SDGs. While the scale and scope of the global goals is unprecedented, the fundamental ways that business can contribute remain unchanged. The UN Global Compact asks companies to first do business responsibly and then pursue opportunities to solve societal challenges through business innovation and collaboration.**

**What are the benefits of the SDGs for companies?**

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The SDGs facilitate the alignment of corporate strategy with the needs of today's society. They highlight areas of innovation and can help to open up new markets. That is why the topic of opportunities is very relevant in the context of the 17 goals. For SMEs that address the SDGs, benefits can include the following:



**Recognising tomorrow's opportunities:** more and more innovations arise from changes in consumer behaviour (e.g. share economy), but also from increasing pressure from social enterprises that enter the market with innovative, sustainable solutions. This can lead to a further development of business processes or products in terms of sustainability, but also to the development of new types of solutions.

**Attractiveness as an employer:** Especially for young talents, it is of great interest whether and how a potential employer takes its social responsibility seriously. Companies that are strategically and credibly oriented towards sustainability goals have a better chance of convincing these talents to join them.



**New partnerships and synergies:** Working together with others on the success of the SDGs is a powerful, unifying element

**Positive reputation of the company:** Communicating the company's engagement with the SDGs internally and externally – this convinces employees and external stakeholders and turns them into multipliers or advocates.



Some great examples:

Ikea has sparked transformational change in the market for commodities, namely cotton, and a more efficient use of resources within its own supply chain. Partnering with the Better Cotton Initiative, Ikea not only improved the livelihoods of 43,000 farmers in South Asia, but also significantly reduced the amounts of costly artificial fertilisers it used. This is inspiring news for anyone operating in the textile industry where pesticides and chemicals can account for up to 60 percent of farming costs, and where forecasts see production costs increasing as conventional cotton farming becomes more water and chemical intensive.

The UK government has integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into the agenda of each department and outlines their commitments and actions for each goal on their website.

Lego is dedicated to SDG 4: Quality Education for All and aims to educate children about sustainability through events and a wind turbine model they launched with information about climate change and wind energy.

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## Are companies already contributing to SDGs?

Many entrepreneurs and companies, sometimes without even knowing it, already contribute to sustainable development. They do this, for example, by acting in the following ways:

- Looking after the well-being and health of their employees (Goal 3)
- Knowing the conditions under which their supply chains operate (Goals 8, 12)
- By being aware of measures that reduce their company's carbon footprint (Goal 13).
- Paying employees fairly and in a gender-neutral way (Goals 5, 8)
- Allowing employees time to engage in social activities (target depending on type of engagement)
- Actively supporting the common good in their community (goal depending on type of support)

So you are already firmly on the path, take a few steps more and get in the game completely. Carefully consider which SDGs align with the company's goals and purpose, and choose one or several that are relevant to your industry. Involve all employees in the decision-making process to increase engagement, evaluate the company's impact on the selected SDGs and set clear targets and KPIs for each one.

By acknowledging and reacting to the implications of the SDGs, organisations and institutions can ensure thriving environments in which to operate in. Ultimately, YOU can play a leading role in delivering a healthier, cleaner and an increasingly more prosperous future for all.

"The private sector is an indispensable partner for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Businesses can contribute as part of their core business. We therefore call on companies around the world to measure the impact of their actions, set ambitious targets and communicate their progress transparently."

– Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General of the United Nations

Adapted from:

<https://www.southpole.com/blog/17-goals-to-rule-them-all-how-the-sdgs-can-benefit-organizations>

<https://unqlobalcompact.org/sdgs/about>

<https://www.17goalsmagazin.de/en/the-relevance-of-the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-for-companies/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/drive-growth-make-positive-impact-17-sustainable-development-goals/>