



CORPORATE HOUSING
PROVIDERS ASSOCIATION



The Sustainability Series: How Your Company Can Start the Environmental Sustainability Journey

By CHPA

Sponsored by:



December 2022

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Sustainability is no longer just a trend to capitalize on – it's a permanent addition companies need to be making to their business plans. Many are cognizant of what they do in their personal lives to live an eco-friendly lifestyle - whether that be recycling at home, bringing a reusable straw to restaurants, or using less water for a shorter shower. Sustainability isn't something that can just stop as soon as we walk in the office doors – we now must consider what we can do at the office and in our businesses to lead a sustainable lifestyle and help others make eco-friendly decisions as well.

As sustainability initiatives become more prevalent, “greenwashing” is also emerging as a concern. According to Business News Daily, greenwashing is “when a company purports to be environmentally conscious for marketing purposes but isn't making any notable sustainability efforts. Companies can greenwash even when they have good intentions.” Making behavior changes and using those changes in marketing pieces helps promote sustainability's importance to your company, but it is important that the changes are more than surface-level. A proper sustainability strategy and team can help avoid falling into greenwashing.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT WITH SUSTAINABILITY

We asked two questions on sustainability progress in a recent survey to our members:

- Does your organization have an established a green team or something similar that focuses on sustainability practices, advocacy, and ongoing education?
- Does your company have a sustainability policy or program in place?

To the first question, 40% of respondents reported yes, while 25% said not yet, and another 35% said their company was making progress on a sustainability policy or program. Similarly, 30% said their company did have a written sustainability policy, while 45% said their company was in the process of writing one. Companies are recognizing the importance of sustainability for the future of their businesses.

Introducing a sustainability plan and policies helps create a better future for the earth, but some sustainability practices can also improve your company's bottom line. Clients and Relocation Management Companies (RMCs) are already requesting sustainability plans and implementations. Authentic change and real metrics are growing in importance to customers. Meeting these requirements is rapidly becoming a requirement for consideration as a supplier of services. Consider a commitment to sustainability (in incremental, manageable, measurable steps) as good for growing your business and simply the right thing to do. Read on to learn more about what sustainability looks like in the corporate housing industry.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CORPORATE HOUSING INDUSTRY?

In 1987, the United Nations defined sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Sustainability is a business' efforts to achieve long-term goals that are good for people, the environment and the business' commercial goals. Sustainability can take many different forms, especially in the world of corporate housing. Examples can include your business' food offerings, supply chain choices, cleaning products, lighting and water use, recycling, promoting sustainable transport and offering reusable water bottles with a clean refill station.

IS THERE A SUSTAINABILITY STANDARD?

Sustainability standards can differ based on where your company is located. A good resource to begin your company's journey is the United Nations Global Compact's 17 sustainability development goals (SDGs). These came from a 2015 agreement between 193 Member States that a plan to achieve a better future for all would be adopted and implemented, also known as Agenda 2030. For companies wanting to advance the SDG Agenda, it's recommended they incorporate the [Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact](#).

It is important to remember sustainability is a journey, not a set goal or metric to reach. Utilize your network and talk with your clients, RMCs, services providers, etc., to find what they are doing to become more sustainable and what they expect from you. Some clients may be willing to pay more for sustainable accommodations.

HOW DOES YOUR COMPANY START THE SUSTAINABILITY JOURNEY?

While there is no one right way to start the sustainability journey, it is recommended that companies focus on only one or two sustainable development goals of the seventeen listed by the United Nations. For example, SDG 13 specifically seeks to combat climate change and address its impacts. It is important to note that these sustainable development goals are something to continuously work toward – these are not something that can be crossed off a to-do list within a set timeframe.

There are three pillars of sustainability that the corporate housing industry can begin to implement.

Education, Awareness & Support

The sustainability journey must start with defined terms and resources. The recently formed Global Mobility Sustainability Coalition is made up of six professional associations involved in global mobility: the Canadian Employee Relocation Council (CERC), CHPA, EuRA Relocation,

FIDI Global Alliance, the International Association of Movers (IAM) and the Worldwide Employee Relocation Council (WERC). The coalition created a survey to gather information to inform and guide efforts on this first pillar. The sustainability journey starts with explaining what sustainability is, defining key terms to make sure our industry is working from the same foundation and standardized language. From there, this pillar represents working with mobility partners and gathering sustainability resources.

Sustainable Actions and Certification

This pillar focuses on planning and tracking data. It is vital that changes are measurable to ensure your company is on track with its goals. Once this is done, your company can begin implementing best practices and work with peers to define what those are for your business. The next step is earning certifications from credible hospitality organizations. Specific actions can include creating green buildings, making energy-efficient changes to utilities, investing in low-carbon vehicles and more.

Reporting and Compliance

The final pillar is reporting on your measurable outcomes and publicizing your actions. This can be done by offering “green” options to clients, who may be willing to pay more for them, and adding visuals to your property to highlight sustainable changes.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO SET OUR COMPANY UP FOR SUCCESS?

The first step is committing to the sustainability journey. Evaluate your current practices and determine a roadmap forward. Establish a policy and share it company-wide so employees at every level understand what you are doing and why.

Understanding what areas of sustainability your company impacts is key to creating a sustainability plan. If your company doesn't have a food service, you won't create a zero-food waste goal as part of the company's sustainability plan; however, using eco-friendly cleaning products in the living units and guest areas is something that could have a much bigger and meaningful impact.

It's important to have a team dedicated to creating those sustainability policies and introducing eco-friendly practices to the business. This team will be responsible for determining how the company should allocate capital, research, and time. Identifying a leader is a great first step to creating that team, but one employee can't handle every facet of sustainability alone: developing a team to be responsible for sustainability measures is essential. Assigning a goal or strategy to each person on the team can help break down what could be a large list into smaller, more manageable pieces.

Company leadership needs to be on target with all sustainability plans and policies, too. If the executive team is ready to introduce a sustainability plan or make changes to the company's approach to sustainability, they will need to lead by example so employees at all levels will follow their lead and make and begin making changes to their day-to-day office routines.

ARE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES SOMETHING CLIENTS OR PARTNERS LOOK FOR?

Yes! Clients value eco-friendly companies, and many prefer to do their business with companies that share the same sustainability values. When procurement leaders shared important deciding factors regarding supply chain, corporate sustainability was a top concern on their list. It starts with identifying and tracking goals, evolving into how you can differentiate and market your business. Sustainability success can strengthen customer affinity with your brand, show leadership in the industry and act as a gentle nudge to encourage other corporate housing companies to engage in sustainable practices.

To get started, note what your company is already doing. This could be utilizing reusable items such as bottles or tote bags, choosing to use more sustainable cleaning products for your units, friendly reminders for guests to turn lights off, etc. Incorporating your company's sustainability efforts into your brand and sustainable branded items is an easy way to show it is a priority. It's critically important that you track your plan and share with your clients and their agents so they have visibility to your commitment.

CONCLUSION

Sustainability is a journey, not just a list of tasks to hit milestones and eventually cross a finish line. The association is here to help. As an industry, we're all on various paths of the journey and working toward various initiatives under the sustainability umbrella. No matter your specific company sustainability goals, we should strive together to leave our world and the corporate housing industry better than we found it.

This white paper was formed from CHPA's Sustainability series sponsored by Dwellworks Living. Click the links below to access the webinar recordings:

- [Why is Sustainability So Important?](#)
- [Industry Importance and Impact](#)
- [Green is the New Gold... to Procurement!](#)

About CHPA

CHPA is the only trade association dedicated exclusively to the corporate housing industry. The association advances the highest standards in business and professionalism; provides valuable insight, knowledge and resources to the industry; and increases visibility among related industries. Along with networking, education, certification, and information sharing, CHPA members grow their business and expand their reach through an international network of partners. Find out more about corporate or furnished apartments at www.chpaonline.org.

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