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Maximizing your positive impact while minimizing or eliminating your negative impact.
Over the past 10+ years of studying the evolution of corporate sustainability we've looked at how companies:

- Structure and budget for sustainability
- Staff the function
- Integrate it into management decision-making

From this analysis, we've distilled down several key things for firms looking to start or improve the success of their own programs:

- While some firms can take a "Big Bang" approach, most will have better success if they deliberately integrate sustainability into their existing culture and processes
- Doing so requires keen insight into the maturity and readiness of different processes and parts of the business and careful prioritization to ensure maximum ROI
- Co-creating programs with the active participation of internal and select external stakeholders dramatically increases the likelihood of success and ROI

To help firms take advantage of these insights, we created:

- The CollaborateUp Sustainability Maturity Model for assessing and improving the business opportunity and potential ROI of integrating of sustainability into the business
- The CollaborateUp Formula for co-creating with internal and external stakeholders
Why is it so hard to integrate sustainability?

Integrating sustainability is about driving change but sustainability leaders can't access the traditional tools of change management:

- No "burning platform". For firms – especially large, successful ones located in western societies – things aren't that bad.
- No "land of milk-and-honey". At best, we can promise things won't be as bad as they could be. Little to no proof things will be that much better than doing nothing.
- Multi-factorial. Sustainability problems have multiple causes and lack consensus about those causes – making it hard to pick tactics.
- Right vs. right. Tackling these challenges involves right vs. right (not right vs. wrong) choices: profits today vs. negative social or environmental impacts in the distant future.
Organizations, departments, and functions have varying needs and opportunities to use sustainability, based on the perceived impact they have on society and the environment (aka materiality):

- **Informed choice.** How much people that work at, invest in, or live next to the organization think the organization can directly or indirectly impact their lives and the choices they need to make. Example: consumers want to know how and where their clothes are made so they can make informed choices about clothing themselves.

- **Doing less bad.** Reducing or eliminating the negative consequences of the organization producing its intended value. Example: communities want utilities and energy companies to reduce or eliminate the pollution they produce.

- **Doing more good.** Maximizing the value an organization produces. Example: consumers want food companies to make more abundant, cheaper, and more nutritious food.
Depending on the level of society's expectations, organizations have several levels at which they can integrate sustainability.

- How companies measure their material impact can help determine the extent to which they want/need to integrate sustainability.

- The greater the level of integration, the greater the level of leadership and collaboration across units.

- In driving more thorough integration, firms move from "quality control" intervention to "quality design" that builds sustainability in from the beginning.

Note: This is only the top layer of the model. Additional layers with greater specificity are available upon request.
Limited leadership, collaboration, and integration across departments and organizations on sustainability-related strategy and operations.

CollaborateUp Sustainability Maturity Model

**Society’s Expectations**

- **Transparency**
  "Tell us what you do so we make informed choices"

- **Risk**
  "Do less bad"

- **Value**
  "Do more good"

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**Strategy**

- How does the organization use sustainability in its deliberate planning to achieve its objectives and create value?

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**Culture & Values**

- To what extent do the beliefs, behaviors, and mindsets of people acting on behalf of the organization reflect its stated value creating sustainability-related objectives?

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**Governance**

- How has the organization formalized the way sustainability-related decisions get made?

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**Process & Procedure**

- In what way has the organization built sustainability into its methods and practices?

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**Training**

- How had the organization incorporated sustainability into the way it develops talent?

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**Design & Usage**

- To what degree do people throughout the organization take sustainability into account in how they devise and perform their work on a regular basis?

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Limited leadership, collaboration, and integration across departments and organizations on sustainability-related strategy and operations.

CollaborateUp Sustainability Maturity Model

**Strategy**
- Published plan
- Materiality assessment
- Goals designed with external stakeholder engagement
- Community-wide integrated planning

**Culture & Values**
- Shared language
- Shared frameworks
- Cascading plans
- Shared expectations of leaders
- Integrated performance management
- Storytelling
- Celebration, recognition, pride
- Brand integration & employment value proposition

**Governance**
- Published plan & report
- Internal oversight bodies
- Informal coordination across departments
- External stakeholders involved in planning/oversight
- Integrated reporting
- Multi-disciplinary teams working within shared framework

**Process & Procedure**
- Documented standard operating procedures
- Public incident reporting
- Published risk mitigation procedures
- Integrated into management decision-making control points
- Integrated into research, development, & design

**Training**
- General familiarity at the executive level
- Multi-departmental training with active coordination
- Integrated into ongoing Leadership development
- Incorporated into employee orientation & ongoing training at all levels

**Design & Usage**
- A factor in initial planning
- Department/unit level risk management & mitigation as part of ongoing operations
- Daily use in research, development, & operations at the staff level

**Society’s Expectations**
- Transparency
  - "Tell us what you do so we make informed choices"
- Risk
  - "Do less bad"
- Value
  - "Do more good"

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Why and how to use the Maturity Model

Step 1. Determine society's expectations of your organization. This sets the overall target position on the horizontal axis of the model.

Step 2. Determine society's expectations of your different units and functions. This sets the overall target position on the vertical axis of the model.

Step 3. Assess your current level of maturity both as an organization and as individual units/functions.

Step 4. Set an appropriate maturation strategy.
Sources & Methods

CollaborateUp developed its Maturity Model based on the following research:

- CROA/NYSE Corporate Responsibility Best Practices Study (2011-2012)
- CollaborateUp/Monsanto benchmark of how leading firms integrate sustainability into management decision-making (2013-2014)
- Michael Porter’s work on creating Shared Value
- BCG/MIT Study on Sustainability Practices
Taking sustainability mainstream

Next Steps
Recommendations

- For the majority of firms who can't rely on a Big Bang, heroic approach to sustainability, a more slow-but-steady approach makes more sense.

- The Maturity Model can be a useful tool in integrating sustainability into corporate culture at various levels of the organization

- Key take-away of the model: not every process, business unit, or function requires the same level of sustainability maturity

- Effective change initiatives take a blend of top-down and bottoms-up intervention:
  - Top-down declarations and guidance
  - Bottoms-up integration and experimentation

- Use the model to prioritize where, when, and how to integrate sustainability and to deliberately intervene to change corporate culture
CollaborateUp

Accelerated Problem-Solving in the Commons Tools

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