

Three tips to avoid greenwashing

Do good to speak well

It can be tempting to use general language when sustainability plans are vague.

There is no excuse for this anymore.

There is a lot of shared knowledge and experience in the world today, and whilst there is no magic wand, there is definitely sufficient experience available to you to help identify your key issues and build a robust plan towards meaningful goals.

Be honest and authentic

Make sure you plan and deliver regular communication that represents the whole of your business.

It is unacceptable to do good in one part of the business to offset poor performance elsewhere.

Similarly, companies often find value in undertaking small, discrete pilots to learn what works best in their pursuit of sustainability - especially when this knowledge can be shared with others in their industry. But positioning is vital here; do not overstate the impact that a small or limited project can have.

Be precise and specific

The language of sustainability is necessarily based on science. But don't be scared by this.

The beauty of science-based language is that its precision is unambiguous. The more precise you are, the better you will be understood.

Using words like 'green, 'eco' or 'natural' without explaining what you mean by them, is unhelpful. Phrases like "better for the environment" invite the question "better than what?", so always qualify this too.

There is also a danger that people may think you are using non-specific language because you don't understand. And that's definitely not an impression that you want to convey.