

Next-Generation Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Jobs

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This is the source document for The Conference Board of Canada's paper on [Next Generation Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Jobs](#).

Issue: *After about five years implementing operational sustainability programs, many CSR and sustainability practitioners¹ realize they need to evolve their job descriptions, departments, and relations with internal and external stakeholders to achieve greater business and societal results.*

This short guide provides insights into how the jobs and roles of CSR and sustainability practitioners are adjusting to meet the new imperatives. The purpose is to enable interested practitioners to transition their roles for greater influence and success—for the benefit of their organization and society.

Highlights

The role of the sustainability practitioner is changing in important and fundamental ways:

- The CSR role shifts. It transitions from an operational to a strategic focus as the organization realizes it needs to become more transformational to foster prosperity for business and society.
- Job descriptions evolve. To secure the business and societal benefits, and future-proof the organization, the emerging role becomes more strategic, enterprise wide, and external.
- Skills change. To prepare for the new context, CSR and sustainability practitioners build capacity in systems thinking, social innovation, and external collaboration.

How Can I Use This Guide?

- Assess which of the “shifts” apply to you and your organization.
- Discuss them with your leader and team.
- Review your skill sets to determine if new skills and experiences are needed to enable your success.
- Review your job description with your direct report and HR to agree on any changes or updates to your job description and/or personal development plan, as appropriate.
- Hold a strategy session with your team, if you lead a department, to identify which of the department role shifts apply to your group; and agree on strategies to enable the transition. Use these findings to inform other job upgrades and training.
- Share the paper with your direct report and encourage a team discussion if you report to the head of a CSR department.

This briefing provides ideas, inspiration, and examples to help CSR and sustainability practitioners evolve their roles and influence in their organization. A shorter version of this paper was published by The Conference Board of Canada's Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Institute. ([Link](#))

¹ For the purposes of this briefing, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability are used interchangeably and refer generally to how an organization manages its environmental and social performance.

Introduction

The sustainability business case has been successfully demonstrated.² More and more organizations and industries are embracing sustainability as a means of protecting and creating shareholder value.

Organizations typically focus on “getting their operational house in order” for the first few years of their sustainability strategy, generating substantial operating savings. After achieving initial gains and establishing a foundation, they realize that in order to drive greater business and societal benefits, they need to embed sustainability deeper in the organizational culture, mobilize departmental leaders, incentivize sustainability innovation, and collaborate externally. They recognize that to generate sustainability results, internal functions and departments need to embed sustainability in their mandates. There needs to be increased enterprise-wide responsibility for sustainability. Typically, a range of key departments will have been engaged in the first phase of sustainability. The opportunity exists to scale and deepen key departmental relations in the second phase to foster embedment and realize greater results. Organizations that have matured their sustainability model come to appreciate that sustainability and CSR are not “nice to haves” but essential foundations for organizational excellence, competitiveness, and resilience.

These internal dynamics are reinforced by global developments such as the Paris Agreement on climate change and the adoption of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, which expect companies to take a stronger sustainability stance. To address this changing terrain, leading sustainability and CSR practitioners and managers are interested in new roles and job descriptions for themselves and their teams.

This insight briefing provides ideas and inspiration to inform job description updates and performance and professional development plans. The ideas draw upon the underlying principles of *The Transformational Company*, which seeks to improve upon its business model and operating context to safeguard both itself and society. This guidance document is informed by a range of case studies across business and higher education institutions that are transitioning their CSR departments and jobs. It was peer reviewed by six experienced sustainability practitioners for relevance, accuracy, and completeness. The guide includes examples of companies that have transitioned their CSR roles, along with research from a GreenBiz study that describes some of the shifts in sustainability mandates as reported by sustainability practitioners.

Strategic Sustainability

“Sustainability is core to our business strategy at TELUS. In 2013 our CEO created a chief sustainability officer position to drive greater sustainability progress at our company. Supported by a passionate and action-oriented sustainability team, this executive role provides leadership for embedding sustainability internally across the organization and collaborating externally with stakeholders to maximize contributions to business results as well as the customer and shareholder value proposition.”

—Andrea Goertz, Chief Communications and Sustainability Officer, TELUS

² See <http://projectroi.com/>.

Table 1

Summary Job Statement: The Old and the New

Original Job Statement (circa 2010)	New Job Statement (circa 2015)
Lead and manage projects that improve the company's positioning as a sustainable and environmentally responsible company.	Position the company as a sustainability leader, improve the company's sustainability impacts in its operations and value chain, advance sustainability innovation that generates financial benefits, embed sustainability in the corporate culture, and engage employees and external stakeholders to advance sustainability within the company, the industry and society.

Sustainability Practitioners Increasingly Focus on Customer Strategies

In their 2016 State of the Profession survey, GreenBiz and Weinreb Group asked sustainability practitioners to rank the drivers of their sustainability program and found that “more than twice as many panelists cited customer pressure as the single most important factor that would raise their sustainability program to the next level. Collating sustainability information requests from RFPs and collecting industry trends for consumer products can help your program bolster top-line revenue and contribute to bottom-line results. Be persistent in ferreting out these opportunities.”

—GreenBiz, *State of the Profession 2016, 1*

Evolution in Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Practices

To address the long-term sustainability mega-forces affecting their business, supply chains, and customers and scale and accelerate sustainability in their business and society, more and more companies are evolving their CSR programs. Global research into this new breed of company reveals that leaders are shifting their focus from “operational” strategies to “transformational” measures to foster business and societal success. These new strategies, described in this [Transformational Company how-to guide](#), are influencing the roles of CSR and sustainability practitioners as described in this report. Check out this how-to guide for the business case, case studies, and ideas on how to transition your organization.

Job Description Shifts

Jobs are dynamic and change over time to meet the priorities and requirements of the organization. Thus, job descriptions should be reviewed regularly—every five years at a minimum—to ensure that job duties are still applicable.

This is especially important for CSR jobs. As companies advance along the maturity continuum of sustainability and corporate responsibility, they evolve from a compliance and operational model to a senior-level, strategic, and external collaboration focus. This is a very common progression and necessary to achieve the business and societal benefits that await. These drivers propel sustainability practitioners to evolve their job descriptions, as summarized in Table 2, which describes some of the typical role shifts between old and new job descriptions of sustainability practitioners.

On a cautionary note, the steps outlined in Table 2 are illustrative and not definitive. In reality the shifts often have middle, transitional steps not included in the table. Further, as organizations evolve along the sustainability path, these roles often include “both-and” rather than discrete “either-or” mandates as suggested by the chart.

L’Oreal CEO Repositions Sustainability Role Due to Its Strategic Nature

“In 2015, I decided to have the Sustainable Development Department report directly to me, since our commitment is cross-functional and strategic for all L’Oréal functions, brands, divisions and countries.”

–[2015 Progress Report: Sharing Beauty With All.](#)

Table 2

Job Description Shifts for Next Generation CSR Roles

From	To
Project-based, annual and tactical initiatives	Development of a medium to long-term sustainability strategy, including goals and targets
Internal focus on improving the social and environmental impacts of the company’s operations, pursuing measures within the company’s direct control	Improving the company’s value chain and external operating environment through collaborations with suppliers, customers, competitors, governments, NGOs and others, tackling impacts which the company can influence
Community relations and public affairs	Stakeholder collaborations on shared value initiatives
Providing sustainability information to customers on request	Developing customer engagement tools and initiatives to improve customer sustainability performance and add value to business segments
Creating and maintaining a network of external stakeholders for dialogue purposes; coordinating sustainability partnerships	Proactive multi-stakeholder collaborations to advance shared sustainability goals and projects
No staff and budget	Managing a department and operating and capital budgets; developing a highly functioning team that can work independently

Internal innovation projects funded with internal resources	External innovations with competitors, research institutes, start-ups, suppliers, etc. leveraging external funds (e.g. government, customer, supplier funded, etc.)
Embedding sustainability in operations	Embedding sustainability at the enterprise level and into functional, business unit and departmental level strategies and mandates
Engaging operational employees	Engaging the board, executives and senior leaders
Doing the work	Supporting others to do the work
Implementing low hanging fruit	Advancing innovation to address sustainability barriers
Pursuing occasional pilot projects that advance sustainability innovation	Managing an intentional innovation portfolio
Designing first generation sustainability metrics	Developing science-based and context-based metrics and natural, social and human capital accounting systems
Monitoring governmental and regulatory developments and communications with government on a project-specific basis	Collaborating with government to advance the company's sustainability and financial performance in ways that benefit society
Predominantly internal role	Significant collaborating role with customers, suppliers, competitors and other stakeholders
Doing no harm	Doing good, generating a net positive effect

What's in a Title?

As CSR and sustainability practitioners transition to next-generation roles, reporting structures and relationships become increasingly important. While senior leader engagement and sustainability embedment can be accomplished at the director level through a high degree of influence and persistence with vice presidents, to fully accomplish these objectives, organizations that are pursuing strategic and transformational sustainability include the CSR voice/role on the executive committee (i.e., as a VP). Otherwise, the sustainability agenda is not discussed or shared at the highest levels of the organization on a regular basis—as are other functions and business initiatives. Typically, VPs do not engage in strategic discussions with directors from other functions, limiting the effectiveness of the sustainability director. While low-hanging fruit is easy to achieve at lower levels in an organization, in many corporate cultures, the VP title opens the door for collaboration both internally and externally. It also opens the door to board reporting and engagement. Another trend in organizations is to use the title “Chief Sustainability Officer” to signal intent and commitment and facilitate strategic conversations. (See “Shift from Sustainability Director to Sustainability VP” below for an example of this.)

Major Roles and Responsibilities for the Next-Generation CSR and Sustainability Practitioner

The following are some of the major roles and responsibilities that CSR and sustainability practitioners adopt in their job descriptions as they elevate their impacts within and outside their organizations to achieve business and societal results. Sustainability practitioners may wish to include some of the following in updated job descriptions.

- 1) **Strategy Development, Implementation, and Performance Monitoring.** Lead the development and coordinate the implementation of the company’s enterprise-wide sustainability strategy. Assess trends, risks, and opportunities and best practices; consult internal and external stakeholders; determine strategic direction; coordinate and implement a corporate-wide plan; and design programs and budgets to achieve sustainability goals. Contribute sustainability expertise and insights in leader strategy discussions and collaborate with corporate leaders for commitment, buy-in, and implementation of the sustainability strategy.
- 2) **Internal Integration and Capacity Development.** Act as senior champion for enterprise-wide sustainability. Provide strategic leadership and expert knowledge in embedding sustainability across the company. Design and implement an ongoing best practice employee engagement or empowerment program to embed sustainability in the culture, motivate employees, realize cost avoidance/savings, and advance the company’s social purpose. Lead and coordinate a multi-faceted education and training program that ensures all employees are knowledgeable about sustainability and how it applies to their department, function, and role. Support the integration of sustainability in the company’s leadership development programs for the next generation of leaders. Initiate and lead the company’s cross-functional committee/s to advance sustainability across the company and build internal sustainability ownership and capacity. Support leaders and all major functions and departments to integrate sustainability into their functions, business plans, operations, and internal/external communications. Provide expert sustainability advice to departments based on research and analysis of trends, risks, impacts, opportunities, and leading practices within and outside the industry in Canada and internationally. Support the leadership team in understanding and interpreting emerging trends and expectations, including “bringing the outside in” to the organization via stakeholder panels and expert insight.
- 3) **External Stakeholder Engagement.** Initiate, build, and coordinate strategic partnerships and collaborations with external stakeholders to advance the company’s sustainability vision and goals and a sustainable industry and society. Coordinate a cross-functional stakeholder engagement program to build strong and mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. Stakeholders include governments, customers, suppliers, investors/analysts, industry associations, competitors, academia, NGOs, media/social media, and others. Review and monitor stakeholder relations and

Shift From Sustainability Director to Sustainability VP Reflects Transition in Role

“In my first five years as a sustainability director, responsible for a small sustainability department, we focused on getting our house in order, including baselining and reducing our operational impacts, educating the workforce and fine-tuning our sustainability reporting. Over time, more senior leaders became engaged and by 2015 we began to formalize the embedment of sustainability throughout the organization. We also scaled up our collaboration with external partners, including suppliers, clients, industry peers, academics and governments to achieve our sustainability goals. Today, our department is led by a vice-president with a group of nine including all sustainability and citizenship staff from across the organization and its subsidiaries. Now my time is primarily spent engaging leaders and departments, supporting sustainability embedment, developing sustainability strategy as a component of our corporate strategy and collaborating externally. I believe this shift makes me more effective both internally and externally in helping us achieve our vision to be a catalyst for a sustainable society.”

–Barbara Turley-McIntyre, Vice President, Sustainability and Citizenship, The Co-operators

ensure leaders are aware of, and address, stakeholder issues, concerns, and perceptions as they relate to sustainability. Participate in national/international external boards/committees to advance sustainability within the company, industry, and society. Key stakeholder engagement roles include the following:

- **Customer engagement:** Collaborating with Sales and Marketing, develop customer engagement programs that attract and retain customers, increase sales, strengthen customer relationships, help customers become more sustainable and improve the sustainability impacts of the shared value chain. (See Quality #12, [Value Chain Influence](#), and Quality #14, [Customer Engagement](#).)
 - **Supplier engagement:** Collaborating with Procurement, develop and implement measures to improve the sustainability performance of the company's suppliers and their products and services and realize financial and sustainability benefits for the company. Identify and address sustainability risks and opportunities of the supply chain and suppliers. (See Quality #12, [Value Chain Influence](#).)
 - **Government collaboration:** Collaborating with Public and Government Affairs, join and initiate government (provincial, state, federal) or quasi-government (United Nations) partnerships and collaborations to advance the company's sustainability and financial performance. Monitor sustainability legislation and policy to identify impacts on the company. Leverage government subsidies and incentives. Recommend and pursue opportunities to contribute to public policy initiatives that advance sustainability for the company, industry, and society. (See Quality #19, [Public Policy Advocacy](#).)
 - **Investor engagement:** Collaborating with Investor Relations, proactively cultivate shareholder interest in and appreciation of the company's sustainability performance and attract investors seeking sustainability investments. (See Quality #17, [Finance Community Engagement](#).)
 - **Industry collaboration:** Collaborating with Public or Corporate Affairs, join and initiate industry collaborations to advance sustainability in the sector, catalyze sustainable innovations, and further the company's sustainability goals. Industry collaboration could include engagement with standards bodies setting industry standards, such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board. (See Quality #15, [Industry Standards](#).)
 - **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:** Collaborating with Public/Government Affairs and Community Investment, join and initiate multi-stakeholder collaborations to address and overcome systemic issues affecting the company's performance and society's well-being.
- 4) **External Reporting, Communications, and Transparency.** Manage publication of the company's sustainability disclosures and assurance aligned to global best practices. Ensure the company has robust information systems for tracking, performance management, and reporting against the

The ability to exercise internal leadership on a cross-functional and/or cross-business unit basis has long been the hallmark of a highly effective sustainability practitioner. Not surprisingly, practitioners with the strongest skills in this area also stand out in their ability to navigate the challenges of shared leadership within the context of collaborations with external stakeholders—where options can be more complex and views more diverse.

—Linda Coady, Chief Sustainability Officer, Enbridge

achievement of short- and long-term goals and targets—and performance over time. Develop metrics that enable the company to demonstrate best practice in performance monitoring, such as science-based and context-based metrics and natural, social, and human capital accounting systems. Understand and communicate the context for goal achievement or under-achievement to build trust with stakeholders. (See Quality #13, Stakeholder Accountability and Transparency.)

- 5) **Sustainability, Resilience, and Circular Innovation.** Develop innovative measures to foster sustainability improvements that create sustainability and business value. Conceive and implement sustainability tests, pilot projects, and prototypes for learning and scaling across the company and externally. Create financing mechanisms that attract internal and external venture capital investments. Partner and collaborate with key stakeholders such as suppliers, customers, peers, start-ups, and research institutes to co-invent, co-invest, and co-create solutions. Develop strategies that advance the company as a circular business. (See “Circular Business Innovation” for a description.) Develop resiliency strategies that help the organization (including its physical and social assets) anticipate, absorb, accommodate, or recover from and otherwise survive challenges and maintain its ability to respond to changing conditions. Keep abreast of, recommend, test, and scale emerging technologies and applications that will improve the company’s sustainability and business prospects. (See Quality #11, Resource Productivity, and Quality #10, Closed Loop.)

Sustainability Embedment

“We are also seeing more budget resources get embedded into functions ranging from supply chain to product innovation.”

—GreenBiz, *State of the Profession 2016, 2*.

Circular Business Innovation

Circular businesses are leaders in the circular economy. They keep their products and materials at their highest utility and value; prevent waste through new business models and improved design; lengthen the life of their products through re-use, repair, or remanufacturing; and improve the end-of-life processing and recovery of their products. They are powered by renewable energy and source non-toxic, renewable, and recycled content products from zero-waste suppliers.

CSR Role Shifts From Internal to External Focus

In sustainability research GreenBiz conducted with PG&E in 2015, “79 percent of organizations expect to collaborate in order to further their innovation capacity, up from 12 percent five years ago. As innovation cycles shorten and organizations are stretched thin, the biggest impacts may come from pre-competitive initiatives that reach back into the supply chain or create new opportunities in areas such as the circular economy”.

GreenBiz and PG&E conducted research in 2015 to discover how companies create value by collaborating with others in order to spur innovation.

—GreenBiz, *State of the Profession 2016, 2*

Next-Generation CSR and Sustainability Skills, Knowledge, Education, and Experience

As the CSR role transitions in the company from being the expert professional to becoming a strategic change leader, a new set of competencies is required to be successful. Table 3 shows some new competency areas for next-generation CSR or sustainability jobs. Sustainability practitioners may wish to retool their skill sets to prepare themselves for these new roles to help their organizations advance down the sustainability path.

Table 3

New Competency Areas for Next-Generation CSR or Sustainability Jobs

From	To
<i>Skills/Functional Knowledge</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic understanding of environment and corporate responsibility • Research, analysis, problem-solving, communications and project management • Internal focus on influencing and mobilizing employees • Verbal and written communication skills • Interpersonal and organizational skills • A solid knowledge of the company and the company's industry • Proficiency in Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, and Word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy development and enterprise-wide implementation skills • Ability to influence and mobilize departments, executives and senior leaders in addition to workforce; translation skills to enable integration of sustainability principles into all departments and functions • High degree of communications proficiency • Change management skills and a strong grasp of organizational culture change strategies; knowledge of how to affect large scale change in and external to an organization • Partnering and collaborating along with influencing and listening skills • Knowledge of the company's value chain and external stakeholders, ability to build strong mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships; political acumen • Knowledge of sustainability trends and best/next sustainability practices globally and the changing role of business in society • Understanding of how to catalyze sustainability innovation in an organization • Skills in risk management and resiliency planning, including risk identification, mapping and analysis; knowledge of strategies to address risks, including systemic risks; skills in resiliency planning and adaptation strategies • Skills in business planning, budget management, business casing, forecasting, trade-off analysis, financial accounting of sustainability investments and venture finance • Proficiency in sustainability information systems, virtual collaboration tools and social media

Education / Certification / Experience	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor or Masters degree (preferably including environment, communications and/or business/commerce) • Progressive project and team management • Experience in briefing and working with senior corporate leaders and management • Experience in managing external relationships • Proven self-starter with leadership qualities and capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masters degree in business, sustainability management or equivalent • At least 5 years experience in sustainability strategy development, implementation and performance reporting / disclosure • In-depth experience embedding sustainability in organizational culture and linking sustainability to financial performance • 5 years experience proposing, initiating and managing cross-functional internal and external partnerships and collaborations and building strong, mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships • Experience initiating and executing innovation processes, including business casing, venture financing, partnering, testing, prototyping and scaling • A strong understanding of the social and human elements of sustainability including but not limited to experience with or training in diversity and inclusion, equity, community development, health and human /natural environments, and systems thinking • A mix of government relations, marketing and sales, public affairs, communications, operations, facilities, community relations, human resources, procurement, risk management, finance, accounting and investor relations experience is desirable

For more detail on the new skill sets for the next-generation CSR practitioner, see Appendix A.

Next-Generation Sustainability Departments

Not only are CSR jobs undergoing renewal, whole departments are transitioning their mandates for greater effectiveness. As organizations advance along the sustainability path, and go beyond only managing operational impacts under their direct control, they come to the realization that the entire sustainability team needs to upgrade its mandate to generate greater success and impact. Leading organizations understand that if they are to become sustainable, their sustainability departments must focus their efforts on transformational, catalytic, capacity-building roles. These departments retool to become enablers more than doers, supporting others across the organization who are doing the work, typically in a cross-function or matrix fashion. They undergo mandate renewal to reposition the sustainability team as experts at understanding the sustainability barriers faced by internal departments and business units and external partners—and in the strategies to overcome them.

The director becomes responsible for stewarding the overall integration of sustainability across the organization and its relationships, supporting executives to integrate sustainability into their core functions and mandates.

Sample responsibilities include:

- guiding the overall sustainability visioning process and embedding sustainability into the company's governing processes and strategic and business plans;
- supporting human resources to integrate sustainability in the employee experience and life cycle, including sustainability competency development and training;
- helping build the company's sustainability intelligence, data analysis, big data, risk management, trend analysis, and sustainability forecasting and back-casting capacity;
- collaborating with other sustainability leaders in peer organizations to advance transformational sustainability leadership in the industry.

Team members in the department may have some of these roles:

- supporting departments to prioritize and then integrate sustainability into policies, procedures, systems, and operational decisions;
- supporting and resourcing cross-departmental partnerships for innovation and project management;
- encouraging, identifying, piloting, harnessing, and scaling emerging sustainability innovation;
- collaborating with institutions, organizations, industry, businesses, suppliers, and governments at the local, regional, provincial, national, and international level to advance sustainability solutions.

Resources

State of the Sustainability Profession

GreenBiz Group's fourth State of the Profession report, produced in partnership with Weinreb Group Sustainability Recruiting, looks at the evolution of the sustainability executive and its unique role in industry. The report explores:

- where sustainability lives within an organization;
- how its leaders got there, and what projects and strategies they expect to be undertaking in the near future;
- what it will take to increase corporate focus on sustainability efforts;
- what career opportunities are available for sustainability professionals.

www.greenbiz.com/report/state-profession-2016

Sustainability Competencies and Talent Management: The New Business Imperative

A global literature review of the five sustainability competencies that companies should add to their existing leadership competency models to position the firm for future success. Equally relevant for the sustainability practitioner.

<http://corostrandberg.com/publication/sustainability-competencies-and-talent-management/>

The Qualities of a Transformational Company

A new global standard for companies seeking to improve their social and environmental impact. The Transformational Company Qualities, published by Canadian Business for Social Responsibility, are the definitive go-to resource, benchmark, and checklist on the essential requirements of leadership in sustainability and corporate social responsibility. They represent “next generation” practices in CSR and sustainability. Many of the shifts sustainability practitioners will need to be successful are described in this guide.

<http://cbsr.ca/transformationalcompany/>

Integrating Sustainability in the Corporate Culture

Conference Board of Canada 2016 Webinar on strategies to embed sustainability in the corporate culture and engaging functional and business leaders on sustainability plans.

<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=8201>

Appendix A

Five Skills for the New CSR and Sustainability Practitioner

As CSR practitioners take on enterprise-wide and external collaboration roles and shift from being an expert professional to becoming a strategic change leader, they need a new set of competencies to enable their success. Here are five skills drawn from a [global scan](#) of the sustainability competencies business leaders will need to steward their firms and society to a thriving future, adapted to the CSR practitioner position.

- 1) **Sustainability Knowledge:** This role is expected to understand how environmental, economic, and social trends impact the organization and how the organization impacts sustainability. The position requires an awareness of how to improve the organization's sustainability performance and how the organization and business model can be adapted to generate positive business and societal benefits. Knowledge of how to design strategies for the organization to pursue social value creation through its core business, functions, and relationships is important. This role requires awareness of strategies and approaches to accelerate and scale social innovation in business and society and to develop social purpose and resilient, regenerative, restorative business models, processes, and products. Expertise in governance and reporting structures for oversight and accountability of sustainability commitments and strategies and knowledge of how to embed a sustainability culture in teams, departments, and organizations is important. An ability to conduct foresight analysis and advise senior leaders on sustainability trends, risks, and opportunities and scenario planning is essential.

Risk Management Is a Growing Skill Requirement for Sustainability Practitioners

CSR and sustainability professionals who can bring risk management knowledge and competencies to their role will add considerable value to their organization. Helping risk and finance colleagues to identify, anticipate, and develop strategies for sustainability risk management (including mitigating, optimizing, pivoting, leveraging, or influencing risks) will improve their ability to provide strategic advice to executives and boards. These foresight skills will help the organization build its resilience and influence the trajectory of sustainability trends and their impacts on society.

- 2) **External Stakeholder Collaboration:** The individual in this role is able to influence and lead change beyond business boundaries and across disciplines and fields in collaborations with business, governments, and civil society to jointly develop sustainability solutions. Knowledge of how to build multi-party, action-oriented, mutually beneficial collaborations with diverse sectors, industries, suppliers, customers, disciplines, functions, cultures, competitors, communities, and organizations is required. This role can harness personal and corporate networks to accomplish business, societal, and systems-change goals. Knowledge of how to foster trust, mutuality, and shared understanding to build a collective vision, generate a common purpose, and foster collective creativity with

external stakeholders to improve business and social outcomes is important. Knowledge of how to lead virtual, cross-organizational teams is critical.

- 3) **Systems Thinking:** This role is able to see and understand interconnections and interdependence between actors (stakeholders, relationships, programs, etc.) and domains (social, economic, environmental) across time (past, present to future) and scales (local to global) to reframe and address challenges and opportunities for business and societal progress. This role has knowledge of how to work internally and externally to analyze complex systems to understand direct and indirect impacts, trade-offs, cascading effects, inertia, feedback loops, time delays, and unintended consequences of individual, organizational, and collective actions to design sustainable products and resilient and adaptive organizations and systems. This role recognizes how changes to parts of the system affect the whole and uses an understanding of how elements of a system relate and processes within a whole interact to frame risks and opportunities, identify possible leverage points or actions and optimize them for a desired outcome, and create solutions.
- 4) **Social Innovation:** This position knows how to generate and enable business model-, organization- and system-level innovation to advance both business and social value. The position has knowledge of how to build and realize aspirational visions that foster long-term organizational and system change. The role is able to develop, and communicate, a compelling future that generates social and business value and lead organization-wide initiatives to envision and stimulate solutions to systemic issues and challenges. Knowledge of how to encourage experimentation and innovation throughout the organization is important. The role can create interdisciplinary teams and collaborative processes, develop transition strategies that identify undesirable states and dynamics, and envision desirable outcomes and harness tensions as a source of innovation and creativity.
- 5) **Change Management:** This function knows the processes, behaviours, and skills necessary to effectively identify, manage, initiate, and influence change and manage and support others through it. An ability to understand and apply the principles, types, and stages of change and develop approaches to suit the situation is important. The role uses active listening skills to identify the sources of resistance and anticipate concerns. The individual effectively communicates and manages the business case for change—the costs and the benefits; assesses employees' readiness for the change; and builds communication plans and messages accordingly. The role has an ability to identify the overt and covert culture of the organization and its influence on the change and designs approaches and plans with an awareness of prevailing cultures. The individual can challenge thinking and question assumptions in a constructive way. The position is able to recognize likely impacts on business strategies, plans, and processes and alert business owners and to continually identify a wide range of stakeholders affected by the change. The individual involves the right people at the right time by developing stakeholder engagement strategies and plans and knows how to gain commitment through consultation and consideration of stakeholder impacts.