COLLABORATION IN PRACTICE

Marketing and Sustainability

Supported by CLYDE&CO

Global Compact Network UK

Sustainability Essentials for Core Functions

WHY THIS LANDS ON YOUR DESK

As the marketing function, you're measured on growth, brand value, customer trust, and campaign effectiveness. Sustainability factors into all of these areas: 85% of people want to live more sustainably but only 29% feel able to; over half of people believe companies mislead them about their sustainability efforts; and regulators can now fine companies directly for misleading green claims. Because you decide what the brand promises and how products are sold, these pressures reach marketing first.

The good news: you don't need to become a sustainability expert. Your sustainability team can supply the evidence behind a claim, flag what regulators will challenge, and help you find the product stories that are genuinely true – you keep the creative and commercial decisions. However, it benefits both marketing and sustainability to collaborate.

85%
want to live more sustainably, but only 29% feel able to (Kantar)

52%
believe companies give misleading sustainability information (Kantar)

up to 10%
of top-100 brand value from sustainability perceptions (Kantar)

6%
of ads show sustainable behaviours, leaving room to stand out (Kantar)

THE BENEFITS TO YOU

Brand value
Kantar estimates that sustainability perceptions contribute as much as 10% of the value of the world's top 100 brands.

Customer trust
Sustainability claims that are accurate and evidenced build trust; consumers sense over-promising and reject brands they think have misled them.

Sales from better products
Sustainability often translates into other attributes that resonate with customers: longevity, efficacy, quality. It's about how you tell the story.

Fewer rewrites, lower risk
Getting sustainability input early avoids costly last-minute changes and claims that can't be substantiated.

An honest narrative
Progress claims, framed as year-on-year improvement rather than a promise for 2050, give you a credible story that keeps customers engaged.

Commitments you can still defend
Testing public commitments on sustainability early means they hold up in the long term, and reduces the risk of saying something you'll regret later.

Growth beyond compliance
Sustainability opens new propositions and markets, and marketing is best placed to turn it into an inspiring growth story.

WHERE SUSTAINABILITY SHOWS UP IN YOUR WORK

Sustainability isn’t a separate campaign. It sits inside work you already do.

Your area of work	Why it matters to you	What it looks like in practice
Growth and proposition strategy	Sustainability is increasingly a source of growth, and the gap between what customers want and what they feel able to do is a market opportunity.	Translate sustainability strategy into products, markets, and customer propositions, using the UN Global Compact’s CMO Blueprint for Sustainable Growth as a framework.
Brand strategy	52% of people believe companies give misleading sustainability information (Kantar Sustainability Sector Index), and trust lost on sustainability is hard to win back.	Back every brand promise with real action and independent certification, such as Fairtrade or validated science-based net zero targets.
Product and range	A genuinely better product sells itself, on price, durability, or style, as well as sustainability.	Get sustainability input on which products to develop, stock, or promote, and understand impact from cradle to grave.
Claims and copy	An unsubstantiated claim is now a direct financial risk: the CMA can fine up to 10% of global turnover (Green Claims Code), alongside the ASA’s environmental claims rules. The EU bans generic claims such as “eco-friendly” from 27 September 2026.	Substantiate every claim before approval, and ask how it would hold up to a journalist’s question five years from now.
Agency briefs and production	Agencies deliver what the brief asks for, yet organisations rarely attach social and environmental KPIs to it.	Add impact KPIs to briefs and agency selection criteria, and use Ad Net Zero’s action plan to cut the footprint of production and media.
Creative and portrayal	Only 6% of ads show sustainable behaviours, which leaves room to stand out, and recognition now judges sustainability results too.	Explore where the brand could portray sustainable lifestyles and behaviours in support of the company’s goals. The Campaign Ad Net Zero Awards require evidence of sustainability, as well as commercial success.
Insight and measurement	Marketers rate themselves at just 42% on understanding the motivators and barriers behind the intention-action gap of sustainability – presenting opportunity for better insight.	Engage with customers to find the barriers to action, and build impact into ROI measurement.
Partnerships	Charities, NGOs, and certification bodies lend credibility and reach that paid media can’t buy.	Work with the public sector and industry initiatives to support company goals and extend reach.

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR SUSTAINABILITY TEAM

Collaboration works best before there’s a deadline. The value comes from getting sustainability input while campaign decisions are still open, rather than at final sign-off.

1. **Get input at the brief**
   Ask sustainability to review creative briefs, range decisions, and public commitments early, so you avoid late rewrites.
2. **Get a pre-approved claims bank**
   Agree on a shared set of substantiated messages, and consider tools that validate claims across the business.
3. **Ask for impact KPIs you can brief**
   Get sustainability measures you can put into agency briefs, procurement criteria, and how you judge creative work.
4. **Ask for the stories**
   Ask sustainability for evidence of genuine progress and better products, so you have something honest and compelling to say.
5. **Ask for it in your language**
   Expect sustainability to think creatively about what will land with customers, not just whether it’s factual. The CMO Blueprint gives both teams a shared framework, and the UN Global Compact Academy offers free training on sustainability concepts.