Get Serious About Sustainability and CSR
Ever wondered what we mean when we talk about sustainability and CSR? Not sure why you should get serious about it? Then read on!

This short introductory guide explains what sustainability and CSR are all about and how your business can benefit by embracing them. If you want to find out more, there’s a wealth of additional information on our website at www.remsol.co.uk
Just what *is* sustainability?

The concepts of sustainability, being sustainable and sustainable development can be traced back to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, which was in part a response to the 1987 Bruntland Commission Report that gave us the often quoted definition of sustainable development that you may be familiar with:

"Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

In simple terms, it’s all about adopting behaviours that sustain our ability to continue doing what we do.
We live on a single planet, and we only live once. We have to make the most of it whilst living within our means.

Since at least the start of the Industrial Revolution, the global economy has functioned on a mostly linear basis: take, make, use, discard.

But there’s a limit to how much ‘stuff’ we can mine and chop down before it runs out.

At the same time, there’s a limit to the rate at which we can release pollutants and waste into eco-systems and expect them to be assimilated.

People everywhere deserve to feel safe, to be warm, to be fed and have access to clean drinking water, to not be exploited, to be educated and to enjoy the same life chances.

All that means having a strong world economy, but one that recognises and respects planetary boundaries and peoples rights to enjoy life.

Sustainability is about all of that and more.
The nexus at which social, environmental and economic needs overlap is what we call sustainability or sustainable development. Achieving that is all about striking the right balance between the different considerations.
Sustainability isn’t about absolutes

You can’t exactly *be* sustainable. It isn’t an end-state that you can achieve, you can only ever be *more sustainable* than you were before and strive to keep on improving.

Likewise, sustainability isn’t about achieving a complete lack of negative environmental and social impacts—that would be called Utopia. Instead, it’s about striking the right balance.

That means attempting to curb demand for finite natural resources by simply using less and recycling more, and doing what we can to avoid the creation of non-recoverable waste and limit emissions of pollutants to air, water and land, but doing so while contributing positively to society.
And CSR, what’s that?

CSR, or Corporate Social Responsibility, means different things to different people and organisations.

In essence, it’s about the way a business is governed and how it conducts itself—it’s about the standards by which it holds itself to account and about behaving in a socially, environmentally and ethically-responsible manner that takes into account the needs of all its stakeholders, not just shareholders and investors, to deliver sustainability.

CSR is often confused and conflated with corporate giving and big, extravagant gestures, but it’s often the little things that make the biggest difference. Like charity, good CSR begins at home, so to speak.
CSR is about making a meaningful difference

To maximise the benefits of CSR and to create a meaningful difference, it means starting with the things you control, then the things you can influence and, lastly, the things you can support but that are typically hard to influence and over which you can exercise no meaningful control.

It’s a principal we call **CSR: Inside Out**.

On the next page, we set out some examples of what we mean and show how it makes a meaningful social, environmental and economic difference.
Your CSR impact is greatest when you focus on the things you control from **inside** your business. As you move beyond that to the things **outside** your organisation, that you can only influence or support, your impact starts to wane. That’s not to say it isn’t worthwhile, just that you’re better of putting your resources where you can make the biggest difference.

**You control** how much you pay your staff—paying a decent wage could have a real and meaningful impact on their wellbeing by enabling them to do more fun things with family, take a holiday, pay for new school shoes or keep the heating on for longer in winter. This also has a number of societal benefits.

You don’t control your supply chain, but you can **influence** it by contracting on terms that demand minimum environmental performance standards, for example—helping to cascade good environmental practice.

You can’t control or influence charities, but you can still **support** them in their endeavours.
So, what’s in it for me?

Well, done right, sustainability and CSR deliver a range of societal and environmental benefits, but there are now countless studies that show how embracing them can also benefit the bottom line too, in a variety of ways.
A small sample of the extensive benefits...

**Project ROI**

This far-reaching study summarized over 300 leading research studies and concluded that well-run corporate sustainability programs consistently bring multiple types of benefits, including increased sales, growing market value, higher employee productivity, and reduced risk exposure, among others.

**Harvard Business School: Sustainability and Organisational Performance**

This Harvard Business School paper investigates the effect of corporate sustainability on organizational processes and performance. It shows evidence that what it defines as 'High Sustainability' companies significantly outperformed their counterparts over the long-term, both in terms of stock market as well as accounting performance.

**Imperative: The Workforce Purpose Index**

This study found that 28% of the 150 million-member US workforce defines the role of work in their lives primarily as a source of personal fulfilment and a way to help others. These Purpose-Oriented Workers not only seek out purpose in their work, they create it, and as a result, outperform the rest of the workforce.
...that are inter-dependent

If you’re using fewer raw materials and wasting less, you’re having an obvious and positive environmental impact—but you’re also cutting costs and boosting profits that can later be reinvested in your growth.

Likewise, a more engaged workforce that feels valued will likely be more motivated—that means greater productivity and, importantly, lower staff turnover which helps to reduce the total cost of employment.

And, if you’re upholding high governance standards, it means you’re much less likely to cut corners and break rules—avoiding reputational risks, the potential for prosecution, and costs.
Measuring, improving and reporting performance

If you want to improve your performance, first you need to know where you’re starting from. Then you need a structure or route-map that you can use to move from A to B, and in order to extract the reputational benefits of doing so, you need to report it widely and transparently. We have just the right toolkit for doing all of that and more.
Measure it. Sustainability and CSR Performance Review

We’ve developed a unique maturity model which we use to measure existing sustainability and CSR performance across up to 30 separate indicators, codifying that performance as either **Beginning, Improving, Succeeding** or **Leading** in each one.

It involves an online questionnaire, one or more telephone interviews and one or more site visits, and results in a report packed with insights and actionable insights. The report also contains recommendations for making improvements that will help move you from where you start out to where you could eventually get to—remembering that it’s iterative and that you can’t expect (and shouldn’t try) to go from, say, Beginning to Leading in one leap and across all 30 indicators.

You can then get on with making changes yourself, or you can employ us to help—which can include publicising your achievements.
Designed to benchmark you against recognised standards

Our Sustainability and CSR Performance Review considers a spectrum of indicators that are aligned with existing performance standards, such as relevant elements of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) G4 Standards.

More recently, we’ve amended it to better reflect the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

And it is structured in sections under three broad headings: environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance making it easy to spot where improvements are needed or would be beneficial.
Get Serious About Sustainability and CSR

START HERE

Book your Sustainability and CSR Performance Review quickly and securely on our website and start your journey to more sales, high profits, greater growth, a more engaged and productive workforce, enhanced reputation and less risk.