

■ THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

# A WHY, WHEN AND HOW GUIDE FOR BUSINESS



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



# BUSINESS AND THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

■ The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth a bold agenda to tackle critical issues that will affect the world over the next several years. These goals act as a call-to-action for both the public and private sectors to help address crucial challenges such as ending poverty, ensuring access to high-quality education and protecting natural resources.

Addressing the SDGs is new territory for most businesses. Because the agenda is recent, companies' practices and impacts have not been the subject of long-term study. Thus, this guide from SVCF is intended to get business people thinking about the SDGs, asking questions of themselves and putting plans in place. In it you'll find many pertinent examples of how your fellow corporate citizens are approaching the SDGs.

In our 10-year history, SVCF has helped more than 100 companies leverage philanthropy to address local and global challenges. In July 2017, we co-hosted an introductory discussion on the SDGs, where we learned that many business leaders are still familiarizing themselves with the goals and what they mean for their companies.

That experience solidified our commitment to create this practical guide. In it, we give business leaders the tools they need to understand why the SDGs are relevant to their enterprises, as well as suggestions on how best to approach these goals. We've also included perspectives from numerous corporate responsibility practitioners, and we hope their stories will inspire action. Together, we can change the world by 2030.



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**EMMETT D. CARSON**

Ph.D., CEO and President  
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# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## STEP 1

### DEFINE YOUR PRIORITIES

- What are the SDGs, and why do they matter to business?
- Map your value chain to tailor your SDG approach

## STEP 2

### GET FEEDBACK

- Connect with your stakeholders
- Use a materiality assessment to determine which SDGs matter most to you

## STEP 3

### TURN PRIORITIES INTO GOALS

- Set time-bound goals that reflect your priorities
- Define your level of ambition

## STEP 4

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- Incorporate the SDGs into your non-financial reporting using a new analysis from the U.N. Global Compact and the Global Reporting Initiative
- Tips for first-time reporters

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- Build on partnerships, unify sectors and engage employees to further your SDG goals
- Craft meaningful CSR programs to take you further

CONCLUSION  
RESOURCES  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS





# STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR PRIORITIES

## WHAT ARE THE SDGs?

### Have you read the goals and targets?

Before you get started on your SDG journey, [read the goals and targets](#)<sup>1</sup> and ask how they apply to your business.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals containing 169 targets to address the world's most pressing social, environmental and economic challenges by 2030. Unlike their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals, the SDGs explicitly call on business to help advance sustainable development around the world. With the SDGs as a guide, businesses can direct their capacity for innovation, strategic partnerships and finance toward an actionable roadmap for sustainable growth.

### WHY DO THE SDGS MATTER TO MY BUSINESS?

The private sector already spends billions of dollars to boost operational efficiency and craft corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs that improve people's lives and protect the planet, but most companies secretly wonder how much impact they really have. Think of the SDGs as the missing piece: They lay out a to-do list for businesses to follow, and a common language with which to measure and communicate these efforts to a company's stakeholders, including customers and investors.

"Opening trillions of dollars in new market value by 2030 means moving away from CSR and short-termism to a total transformation of current business models. Companies that pursue this pathway create firm footholds in new markets, benefit from significant cost savings, and attract and retain top talent,"

Achieving the SDGs will create at least

**\$12 trillion**

in new market opportunities by 2030<sup>2</sup>.

says Gail Klintworth, business transformation director of the Business and Sustainable Development Commission. "First movers who are already aligning their strategies with the global goals have a five- to 15-year advantage over their competitors." In short: Pioneering companies will gain a competitive boost while fortifying society and the planet for an uncertain future — and it's not too late to be an early adopter!

# THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACHIEVING THE SDGs

## CREATE VALUE

**Make a connection:** Empowering people and protecting the environment helps business build trust, improve reputation and connect with new stakeholders.

**Unlock new markets:** Achieving the SDGs will bring more people into the global economy and lift up new markets.

**Align with company and customer values:** Aligning the SDGs with your core company values sends a positive signal to an evolving consumer base that continues to gravitate toward sustainable companies.

**Demonstrate commitment to a stronger world:** A commitment to the SDGs tells customers, investors, communities and other stakeholders that you care about being a good corporate citizen.

## REDUCE RISK

**Preserve natural resources:** Achieving the SDGs can help to ensure bountiful resources for future generations while fortifying your value chain against price volatility and supply shortages.

**Retain top talent:** More than half<sup>3</sup> of recent college graduates are seeking a company with values that match their own.

**Stabilize society:** As the SDG Compass<sup>4</sup> points out, “Business cannot succeed in societies that fail.”

**Prepare for policy changes:** Aligning now can prepare your business for future policy changes as governments adopt legislation in accordance with the agenda.

## Engaging the C-suite

Within a year of the release of the SDGs in 2015, 49 percent of CEOs<sup>5</sup> surveyed by the U.N. Global Compact considered business to be the single most important actor in realizing the goals. “The fact that this is an agenda that’s resonating with CEOs points to how important it is,” says James Gomme, director of sustainable development goals with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), which put out a guide to help CEOs understand the SDGs<sup>6</sup>.



# DEFINE YOUR PRIORITIES

Your company may have a significant positive or negative impact on some of the goals and virtually no impact on others. “There is no company that is working on all 17 SDGs, and that’s not what they’re meant for,” says Sarah Bostwick, a former manager of reporting for the U.N. Global Compact who now leads the CEO leadership team at CECP - The CEO Force for Good. “The agenda needs to be customized based on the context and the needs around you.”

## YOU’RE ALREADY MORE ALIGNED THAN YOU THINK

The good news: If your company is doing anything related to environmental sustainability or CSR, you’re likely already more aligned with the SDGs than you may think. “The SDGs are a new narrative around sustainability globally, so it’s increasingly important to explain what you’re doing in the context of the SDGs. But this is not an agenda that’s supposed to replace the great work that companies are doing,” says



## For Startups

For startups looking toward that next round of funding, being a first mover on the SDGs could offer a leg up and appeal to a variety of stakeholders. “Both institutional and commercial investors are now starting to use the SDGs as a lens to assess the potential risks of investing in companies,” says Teresa Fogelberg, deputy chief executive of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).

James Gomme, director of sustainable development goals with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD).

Rather than establish an entirely new model, the SDGs simply recontextualize the efforts of companies like yours and put them into a common language. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel: Analyzing how your company interacts with the SDGs will foster meaningful engagement and avoid wasted work.





## MAPPING YOUR VALUE CHAIN

Thanks to the prevalence of non-financial reporting, most large companies are already familiar with how their operations and CSR programming affect people and the planet. Many are less sure about how their efforts stack up to those of their peers or how they measurably address global challenges at scale. Taking the time to map current operations and CSR programming against the shared SDG roadmap can illuminate these gray areas and make it easier for businesses to visualize their efforts as part of a global push for a brighter future.

**81 percent of  
S&P 500  
companies<sup>7</sup>**

published sustainability  
reports in 2015

## Quick Tips

When analyzing your value chain, consider any negative impacts that result from your company's operational footprint - waste products, for example - as well as positive impacts such as CSR programming and the potential your products or services have to improve lives or protect the planet.

Also factor in geography and context: Are you operating in areas with limited labor protections or environmental standards? Are you using resources in water-stressed, high-poverty or low-energy-access areas? These are likely negative impact areas for your business. Can your products or services make people's lives better in the communities where you operate, such as by improving water sanitation or access to food or energy? These are likely positive impact areas. Note where you are already making progress, while identifying key areas where you can improve.



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#### CASE STUDY

### Answering society's challenges

While scores of young adults struggle to find work, an estimated 500,000 to 1 million cybersecurity jobs<sup>8</sup> remain unfilled in the U.S. alone — leaving companies increasingly vulnerable to data breaches. Launched in 2014, the Symantec Cyber Career Connection (Symantec C3) seeks to fill this gap by preparing underrepresented young adults and veterans for careers in this crucial field.

In partnership with the nonprofit organizations Year Up, NPower, Per Scholas and Stride Center, Symantec C3 has reached 300 under- resourced and underrepresented students over the past three years. Nearly 75 percent of them are now employed in cybersecurity and information technology jobs or pursuing additional degrees — furthering the company's ultimate goal to educate 1 million people in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) through nonprofit partnerships by 2020.

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#### CASE STUDY

### Putting purpose on paper

Founded in 2010, Uncommon Cacao connects small farmers in Belize and Guatemala with premium chocolate companies looking for sustainable and traceable ingredients. By focusing on transparency and rigorous training in quality, the startup is able to offer farmers a better price while establishing strong relationships with farming communities.

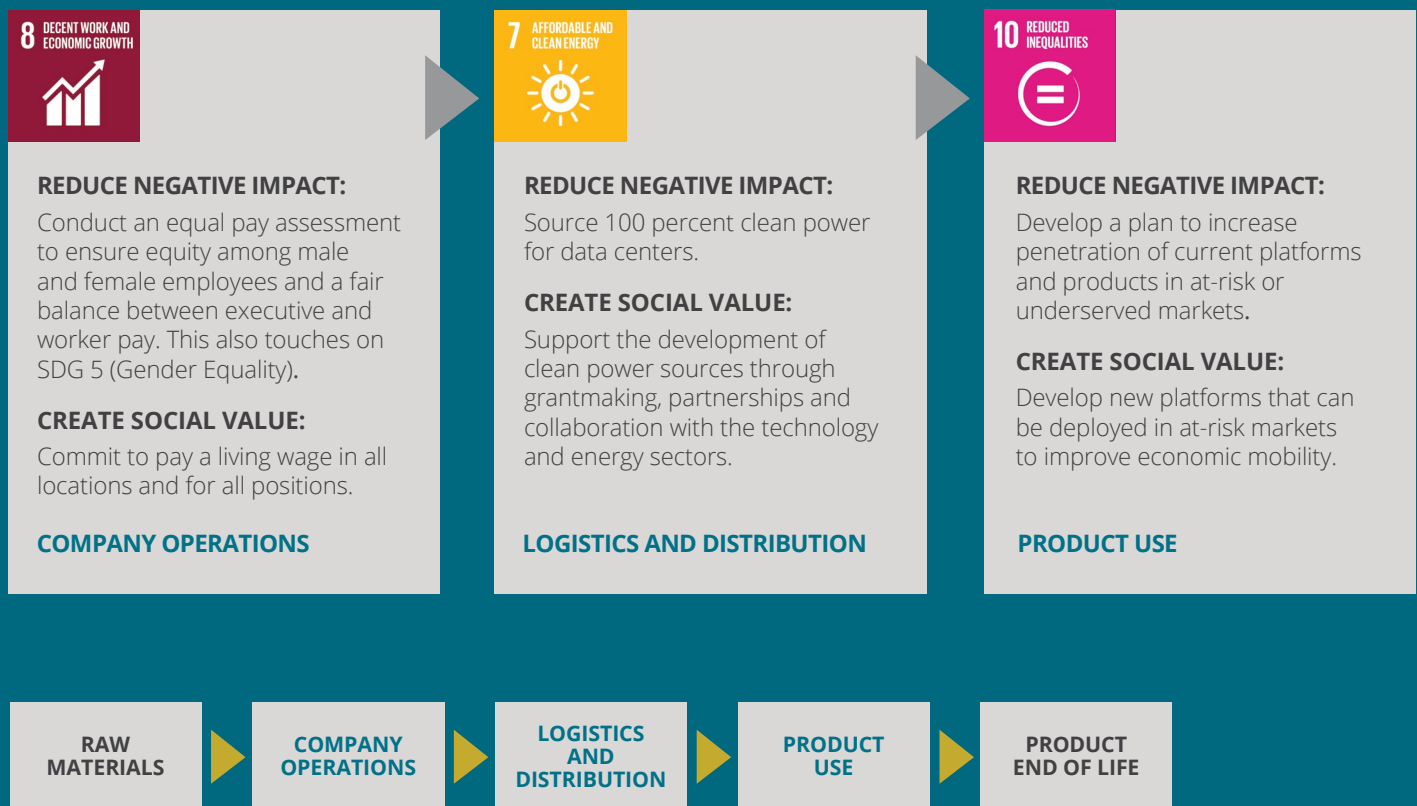
"SDG alignment was a natural decision for us since we are a registered public benefit corporation and have a clear mission-driven focus to our business," says Emily Stone, co-founder and CEO of Uncommon Cacao. The company prioritized two SDGs — eliminating poverty and reducing inequalities — and began publishing all pricing across its supply chain to further these goals and increase transparency. "This clearly aligns with both of the SDGs we are focused on, because through this radical price transparency we hold ourselves publicly accountable for paying farmers fairly, and can clearly see the progress we are making or challenges we are having in improving farmer income year over year," Stone explains.

# MAPPING YOUR VALUE CHAIN

To help you imagine how mapping your value chain might look for your company, consider the following scenario and how this fictional, financial technology company may map its current value chain and ambitions against the agenda.

## FINTECH COMPANY

Founded two years ago, a financial technology startup made a quick splash with an app that helps users save spare change for retirement.





## STEP 2:

# GET FEEDBACK

Your company will need buy-in from your stakeholders to develop an SDG roadmap that has legs. And a materiality assessment allows companies to determine which topics matter most to relevant stakeholders, both internally and externally, such as employees, investors or the communities where you operate. A materiality assessment helps a company to define and determine the business, social and environmental topics that matter most to its organization and relevant stakeholders.

"It's not about supporting as many goals as possible. It will be different for each company," says Kathy Mulvany, who leads Cisco's CSR operations and sustainability work as vice president of corporate affairs. Meaningful interaction with a few of the goals will have more impact than an attempt at shallow engagement with all 17, and this stakeholder engagement tactic known as a materiality assessment<sup>2</sup> can help you prioritize.

### Quick Tips

The stakeholders who will be the most involved with an SDG journey will vary by company, so it's important to be thoughtful about who is most apt to weigh in. Overall, companies should ask themselves, "Who is the best sounding board for our ideas, who will engage with our SDG roadmap most often, and what is the best way to start a conversation with those groups?" Explore all of your options — from board meetings and PowerPoint presentations, to surveys and informal discussions — to tailor a communications strategy that's right for your business.

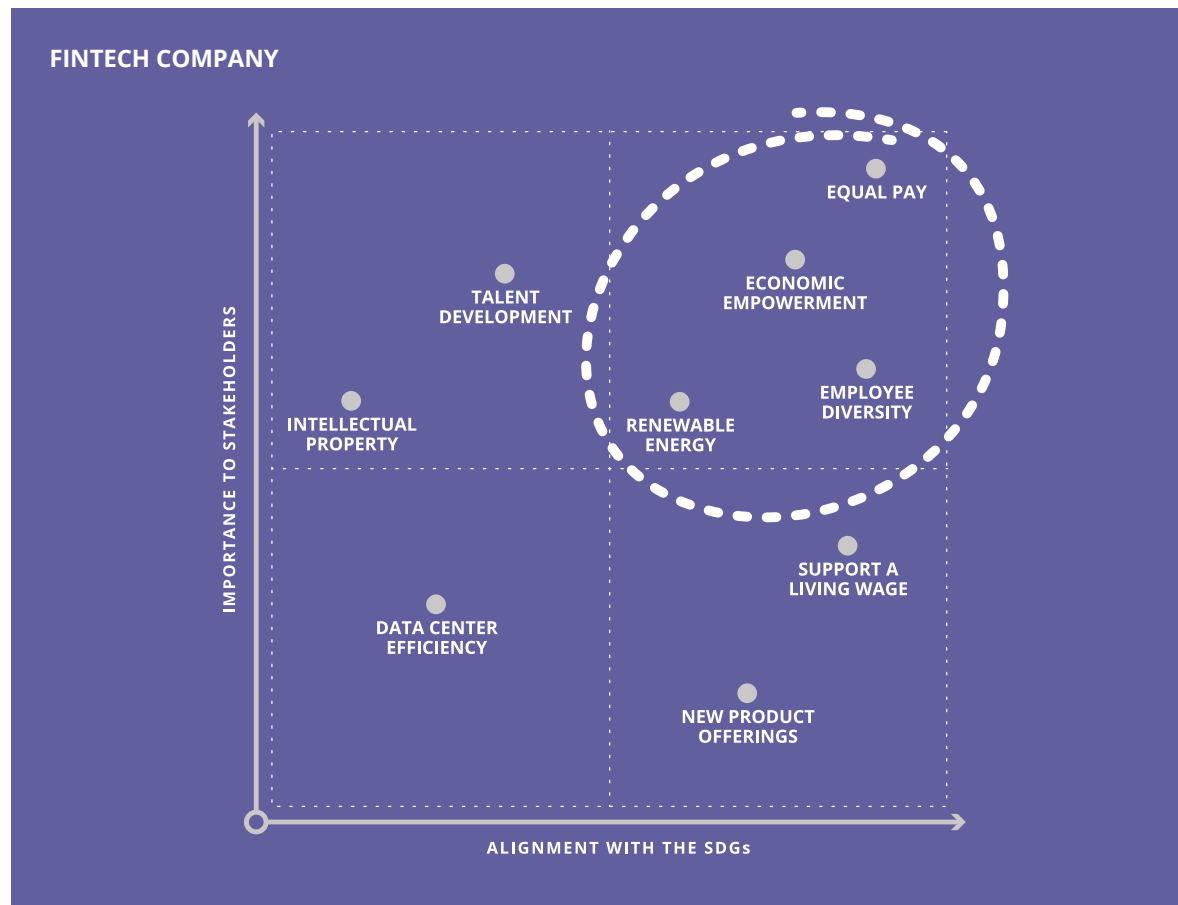
### For Startups

"We're not going to solve the SDGs unless we're able to unlock the power of entrepreneurs," says Ben Powell, founder and CEO of Agora Partnerships, the nonprofit behind the lauded Agora Accelerator for impact entrepreneurs. But the process of analyzing which SDGs are material, setting goals, and taking action may be significantly different for entrepreneurs and startups.

For some small, impact-driven enterprises, a materiality assessment may be as simple as sitting down with your team, talking about the company's core values and thinking about how they relate to the SDGs. "You could probably figure out how to do it over a beer," Powell says. "As a social entrepreneur, just ask yourself: 'What is my purpose?' You knew what your purpose as a company was before the agenda, and your purpose is probably expressed in one of the SDGs."

Your value chain map and materiality assessment demonstrate the areas upon which your business can approach the SDGs most effectively, as well as which of these areas

matter most to your stakeholders. This allows you to choose from the most important issues. Let's revisit our fictional financial technology startup to see how this might look:



## CASE STUDY

### Keep an ear to the ground

When your stakeholders talk, listen. They could be mulling your next great idea. That's what happened to home-sharing company Airbnb. When Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012, hosts wanted to share their spaces with displaced neighbors for free. "Inspired by their generosity, we created the Disaster Response initiative to make it easier for community members all over the world to provide emergency accommodations in times of crisis," says Kim Rubey, head of social impact and philanthropy at Airbnb.

Hosts have since offered free housing during over 90 disasters around the world. Earlier this year, the company took its efforts a step further by committing to provide short-term housing for 100,000 people in need over the next five years. The Open Homes platform — which connects Airbnb hosts who have previously donated their space with nonprofits serving refugees, evacuees and other people in need — builds upon existing relationships with stakeholders in pursuit of the company's ultimate goal.

## STEP 3:

# TURN PRIORITIES INTO GOALS

Your value chain map and stakeholder outreach will highlight the areas in which your operations and CSR programming already align with the SDGs, as well as where you can improve. The next step is defining specific goals to guide your progress.

This is a process that often builds on itself. Take Autodesk's story as an example. The software multinational's mission and vision aligned closely with SDG 7, modern energy, and in 2015 it pledged to operate entirely on clean power. After reaching that target in a mere two years, Autodesk and the Autodesk Foundation moved to "start making investments to build renewable energy capacity in the future," says Joe Speicher, executive director of the foundation. Building on its prior commitment

### Get SMART

The well-established SMART goal-setting method brings structure and transparency to your goals. Just follow the acronym: Your goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, results-focused and time-bound.

to 100 percent renewable energy, Autodesk now works with the PRIME Coalition to fund and advise early-stage renewable energy companies and is a key investor in the Acumen Fund's new Pioneer Energy Investment Initiative (PEII).

Likewise, your team will be faced with choices that force you to balance your reach and abilities with the bold action required by the SDGs. Ending hunger or making energy available to everyone are goals that no one company can accomplish alone. Moving the needle requires thoughtful analysis of what your company can do to further these ambitions — from operational changes to CSR — and how it can work with partners on broader initiatives that make a difference at scale.

### Quick Tips

#### START WHERE YOU ARE

Depending on your priorities and your company's overall experience with social and environmental sustainability, you might not feel ready to set long-term goals right away. The most important thing is to get started. That may mean setting short-term goals and building from there.



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## CASE STUDY

### From ambition to action

Reaching the estimated 2.4 billion people<sup>10</sup> who lack access to improved sanitation facilities is a formidable challenge. To translate ambition into measurable results, Kimberly-Clark Corp. synchronized its efforts with peers in pursuit of the common goal. In 2014, the company joined other sector-leading businesses as a founding member of the Toilet Board Coalition, a public-private partnership to achieve universal access to sanitation before 2030. “SDG 6 is so big and monstrous that no one company can make a difference,” says Jenny Lewis, vice president of the Kimberly-Clark Foundation. “The theory behind the Toilet Board Coalition is to band people together and use each other’s strengths in order to really impact that goal.”

“After we got our feet wet, we decided we had to do something as a brand to help further those efforts,” Lewis recalls. Toilets Change Lives, a consumer engagement initiative, utilizes product packaging and advertising to spread the word about KCC’s nonprofit partners and let customers know their purchases make a difference in their communities. The company now supports four nonprofit partners in the sanitation space and reached 255,000 people by 2016. It ultimately hopes to improve the well-being of 25 million people by 2022 through investments that increase access to sanitation, help children thrive and empower women and girls.

## For Startups

Goals set a framework against which companies can measure future progress, but startups and small businesses should be wary of trying to do too much. “I wouldn’t focus on more than two or three metrics,” Powell of Agora Partnerships advises. “If you don’t have the execution ability to collect the data, be careful of setting up something that will require additional resources to care for, feed and manage when you as an entrepreneur have so many other challenges.”



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## STEP 4:

# REPORTING

"It's all fine to say that we're taking the big picture of sustainable development into consideration, but if you cannot measure what difference you've truly made, it's all for naught," says Alexandra van der Ploeg, who heads up SAP Corporate Social Responsibility's global education and social entrepreneurship work. "Figuring out how to do that will have to be a multi-stakeholder partnership."



"Reporting is a way to communicate progress, not to communicate perfection," says Sarah Bostwick of CECP, who also holds a seat on the International Integrated Reporting Council's Framework Panel. "If you're waiting to be perfect before you can communicate or report, you're going to be waiting forever. The best day to start reporting is today, and the best point from which to start moving forward is the point where you are right now."

The reporting landscape around the SDGs is still evolving. Goal-setting and measurement systems are well established for environmental and economic targets, but less so when it comes to social programs. This leaves businesses largely in the dark when it comes to effectively measuring social impact at scale. Even if your company doesn't have all the answers yet, experts say that's no reason to hold off on incorporating the SDGs into your non-financial reporting.

### A WAY FORWARD FOR REPORTING

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the U.N. Global Compact came together to accelerate corporate reporting on the SDGs. At the U.N. Global Compact Leaders Summit in September 2017, they released a [detailed analysis](#)<sup>11</sup> representing a first step toward a unified mechanism to help businesses report on the 17 SDG goals and 169 targets in a comparable and effective way.

Teresa Fogelberg, deputy chief executive of GRI, calls it "the bible of business reporting on the SDGs." It's designed to be a reference point: Companies can search for their prioritized ambitions, select relevant SDG targets and choose from reporting indicators to help them measure progress.



### **SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE**

"We very much recommend a slow, steady approach," says Fogelberg, who also heads up GRI's policy work. "Stay close to what you're already doing. Map it with the SDGs. And then you can gradually expand to things you didn't report on in the past."

Symantec, for example, began by noting where an existing operational goal or program interacted with the SDGs in its 2016 CSR report. Only in its 2017 report did the company begin measuring progress against the more specific targets and business indicators related to the agenda, says Debra McLaughlin, senior manager of corporate responsibility.

"The SDGs should not be considered something companies have to do on top of what they're already doing," Fogelberg says. "The idea is to create a single, global, harmonized system for business to figure out to what extent certain goals or targets fit with their strategic purpose and where they can nudge them forward." Such a harmonized system

is still coming to fruition. GRI and the UNGC will release a follow-up resource to help companies further refine their reporting strategy.

## **For Startups**

"Reporting is important. It offers transparency to the stakeholders who are participating in our business," says Ian Rosenberger, founder and CEO of Thread International, a social enterprise based in Pittsburgh. "But it's more important that we actually make an impact than it is that we talk about it." Startups and social enterprises have scant resources, and if it's between scaling your impact and creating a robust report, the decision is clear. Do what you can to communicate, but not at the expense of your greater goals.



## Quick Tips

### WHEN 1+1=3

The SDGs are an interconnected agenda. As such, your company may notice that your efforts touch on multiple SDG goals or targets. How should you report this? Is it okay to double-count? “The underpinning principles of the SDGs are about universality, so if you can explain in your report that a program hits several goals, that’s a very positive thing,” says Teresa Fogelberg, deputy chief executive of GRI.

Stick to this simple rule: It’s fine to measure a program’s impact on multiple SDGs, but don’t double-count financials or the people you impact. The fact that a single program furthers multiple goals doesn’t mean you can count the participants more than once. The same goes for financial costs and returns.

## For Startups

Even if you’re not familiar with formal non-financial reporting, you can still communicate progress. “The SDGs are a great opportunity to open up a conversation with your stakeholders about the purpose of your company,” says Powell of Agora Partnerships. “If you have a social media presence, you can certainly blog about it or use the hashtag #SDGs to make yourself known a little bit. You could include the SDGs in an annual impact report that you send to your stakeholders. Or you could gather your employees together and have a talk. It’s all about communicating in the way that makes most sense for you and your business for where it is at its growth stage.”





## Setting the Standard

Reporting is an important tool with which to communicate your SDG journey, but it's far from the only option. "Reporting alone is not enough. You have to look at other ways of measuring sustainable performance, and the use of credible standards systems offers itself as quite a useful indicator," says David D'Hollander, policy and outreach coordinator for ISEAL Alliance, a global association for sustainability standards that includes the Rainforest Alliance and Fairtrade certification programs. [The SDGs Mean Business<sup>12</sup>](#), a report produced by ISEAL and the World Wildlife Fund, further explains how sustainability standards can demonstrate commitment to the SDGs.



## STEP 5: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

"Ultimately, if we all continue working the way we currently are, we're not going to achieve the SDGs," says Alexandra van der Ploeg, who heads up SAP Corporate Social Responsibility's global education and social entrepreneurship work. "The next step is figuring out where we can allow the agenda to influence how we do business and where we can partner up with others. It's about asking, especially in the CSR space, where do we come out of our splendid isolation and begin pursuing multi-stakeholder partnerships to make a difference? Those are things that are still in development."

### BUILD ON PARTNERSHIPS

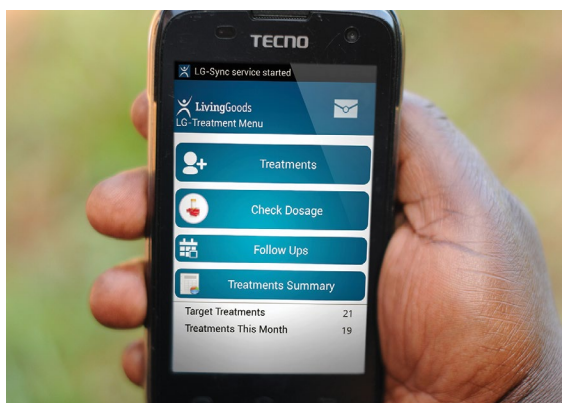
Identifying nonprofit partners who share your ambitions is often the easy part. What comes next can be trickier. "Moving from talking



toward actually collaborating is very difficult," says van der Ploeg. "We've achieved it in some small areas. You can often start with a smaller collaboration and begin building confidence and trust."

Last year, the German multinational software firm linked up with pharmaceutical giant GSK to bring skilled pro bono volunteers to healthcare nonprofit Partners in Health's Rwanda program. Merging their competencies in healthcare and tech, the two firms delivered a new pilot research database to help the nonprofit and its Rwinkwavu hospital reach even more people in one of the country's poorest districts.

"We not only brought a five-person team of SAP and GSK volunteers together to work jointly on a project, but we actually complemented each other's programs," van der Ploeg explains. "Together we were able to create project results for the organization that were significantly higher than if we had individually worked with them."







## BRING SECTORS TOGETHER

"Within an industry, we need the market-leading businesses to come together and define what SDG progress will look like for that whole sector," says David D'Hollander, policy and outreach coordinator for ISEAL Alliance.

This is already beginning to happen. In the travel and hospitality industry, for example, the International Tourism Partnership (ITP) is rallying over 25,000 of the world's leading international hotel companies around the SDGs. In September 2017, ITP and its members committed to collectively reduce impact on water use and carbon emissions, while fighting against human trafficking and improving youth employment opportunities.

"ITP members compete every day for customers and for consumers, but we think this work is far more important than individual financial metrics," says Ray Bennett, chief global officer for global operations at Marriott International, an ITP member company. The partnership's goals represent a broader push to use the SDGs to drive responsible business in hospitality.

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## CASE STUDY

### The power of social enterprise

"Social businesses can have a dramatic impact on really big companies," says Ian Rosenberger, founder and CEO of Thread International. Thread, a Certified B Corporation based in Pittsburgh, transforms plastic bottles from the streets of Haiti and Honduras into what it calls "the most responsible textiles on the planet." Rosenberger and his team hope to revolutionize the fashion industry by connecting workers in the first mile of the supply chain directly with apparel companies and customers.

Since commercializing in 2015, the mission-driven startup has created over 3,000 income opportunities for self-employed refuse collectors. Thread's network had saved over 30 million pounds of plastic from landfills and oceans as of October 2017, and it landed high-profile contracts with apparel manufacturers Timberland and Marmot in the process. "The SDGs allow us to put a unifying face on our objectives and connect with other businesses that are doing the same thing," Rosenberger says.



## ENGAGE EMPLOYEES

“In a very simplistic way, the SDGs ease internal conversation because it provides a framework and a common language,” says van der Ploeg of SAP. After noticing that the SDGs were being discussed in several areas of the company in isolation, SAP now convenes regular phone calls for all employees working on the company’s approach to the agenda — which van der Ploeg says is “incredibly helpful.” As you look to expand your employee engagement efforts around the SDGs, multi-stakeholder partnerships like [Impact 2030](#)<sup>13</sup> and the [SDG Fund](#)<sup>14</sup> can help.

## CASE STUDY

### Educate the public

Awareness of the SDGs is still budding among the public, but in today’s hyper-connected age, that’s not likely to last long. As consumers continue to demand more sustainable products, aligning public-facing communications with the SDGs helps companies burnish their reputations and demonstrate their commitment to a stronger world.

Pfizer, for example, came on board as an early partner with the U.N. Foundation in support of the global goals, particularly SDG 3: good health and well-being. The company now supports 18 global programs and commercial transactions aimed at increasing medicines in emerging markets. Equally noteworthy is Pfizer’s unique approach to communicating progress and engaging the general public around the SDGs. Installed in November 2015 at the pharmaceutical giant’s New York headquarters, the Global Goals window display educates passersby about the agenda and how the company hopes to help. Buzz got out quickly thanks to the office’s location, a mere two blocks from the United Nations headquarters.

# CSR FOR THE WIN

Clearly, the ambitious social agenda embodied within the SDGs has the potential to influence the way companies do business. Working toward the agenda will bring teams together from all corners of a business — plant operators with employees, suppliers with sustainability teams, CSR heads with executives — and connect them with public- and private-sector partners. Indeed, it is impossible to make measurable impact on a goal as lofty as zero poverty or universal energy access without a new way of thinking that makes the most of talent and aptitude across a company — and beyond it.

This unavoidable reality offers an opportunity to break sustainability and CSR from their silos and integrate them into the overall mission, vision and day-to-day operations of a company. This kind of change can sound scary, but companies can rest easy knowing they aren't the only ones that are making moves to meet global goals. "Working in silos and in isolation within companies and also amongst companies is not just a private-sector disease," says van der Ploeg of SAP. "It's the same thing in the social and public sector as well."



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## CASE STUDY

### Strategic CSR delivers real impact

Global information technology giant Cisco wants to positively impact 1 billion people by 2025, a bold goal that it cannot possibly reach alone. "Partnerships are key," says Kathy Mulvany, who leads Cisco's CSR operations and sustainability work as vice president of corporate affairs. Through nonprofit partnerships and seed funding of technology-based and impact-driven solutions, Cisco is already well on its way.

Case in point: The nonprofit Living Goods empowers a network of women in rural Africa to educate their neighbors about healthcare and earn a living selling necessities like hygiene kits, bed nets and malaria medication. With less than \$1 million in funding from Cisco, Living Goods was able to create a mobile app, expand its reach from 200,000 people to more than 5 million across Kenya and Uganda, and reduce infant mortality by 27 percent among its clients.



# CONCLUSION

## CHALLENGES AND VAST OPPORTUNITY

Achieving the SDGs is a challenge — but also a vast opportunity to deliver growth while ensuring a better future for all. Alignment with the SDGs will allow businesses to play an even stronger roles in improving our world — and early adopters will be rewarded with better reputations, future-proof supply chains and stronger business growth. If ignored, experts warn, the societal ills addressed by the SDGs will weaken communities, create an even more dramatic rush for resources and foment political and social unrest.

“This is our clarion call to counter global warming and climate change and put the world on a trajectory for inclusive growth and sustainable development,” says Lise Kingo,



CEO and executive director of the U.N. Global Compact. “There is only one way we can become the masters of our collective destiny. We need to work together to create a new normal. We need to recalibrate our business models, our financial systems, our incentive structures and our way of collaborating — all to become future-fit for meeting the 2030 agenda. We must, and we can, do this — together.”

SVCF is committed to being part of this journey with its corporate partners. SVCF works with companies of all sizes to help them align CSR programming with the SDGs, and provides businesses with customized services to fit their needs. Contact [donate@siliconvalleycf.org](mailto:donate@siliconvalleycf.org) or visit [siliconvalleycf.org](http://siliconvalleycf.org) to learn more!





# RESOURCES

**SDG Compass:** A guide on how companies can align with the SDGs, with continually updated tools to help them get there: <https://sdgcompass.org/>

**SDG Business Hub:** A guide to help CEOs understand the SDGs and one of the most expansive, continually updated online databases of tools and resources related to SDG alignment for business: <http://sdghub.com/>

**The SDG Business Dashboard:** Originally developed by MillerCoors and Earth Security Group, the dashboard is now an open-source tool that helps companies identify the SDGs that are most critical to their long-term strategy and upon which they can have most impact. <http://sdgbusinessdashboard.com/>

**Business Reporting on the SDGs:** An evolving database of resources about reporting on the SDGs from the Global Reporting Institute (GRI) and partners. <https://www.globalreporting.org/information/SDGs/Pages/Reporting-on-the-SDGs.aspx>

**Business Reporting on the SDGs: An Analysis of the Goals and Targets:** A report published by GRI and the U.N. Global Compact to help companies integrate the SDGs into their non-financial reporting. [https://www.globalreporting.org/resource/library/GRI\\_UNGC\\_Business-Reporting-on-SDGs\\_Analysis-of-Goals-and-Targets.pdf](https://www.globalreporting.org/resource/library/GRI_UNGC_Business-Reporting-on-SDGs_Analysis-of-Goals-and-Targets.pdf)

**Business and the United Nations:** A Framework for Action: This 2015 report outlines the business and development case for increased U.N. business engagement. <http://www.sdgfund.org/business-and-un>

**Blueprint for Business Leadership on the SDGs:** This report from the U.N. Global Compact aims to inspire all business — regardless of size, sector or geography — to take leading action in support of the SDGs. <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/library/5461>

**The U.N. Global Compact 2018 Toolbox:** Learn about the tools and resources UNGC plans to launch in 2018 to further the conversation around business and the SDGs: [https://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/publications/2018\\_Toolbox.pdf](https://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/publications/2018_Toolbox.pdf)

**Project Breakthrough:** Explore how executives and entrepreneurs can harness an evolving set of business model features to deliver on the SDGs: <http://breakthrough.unglobalcompact.org/>

**Business for 2030:** Showcases business' past and continuing contributions to sustainable development through the prism of the SDGs: <http://www.businessfor2030.org/>

**The U.N. Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) Knowledge Platform:** The Knowledge Platform offers continually updated resources for business, government and civil society to implement the SDGs. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

**SDGs Mean Business:** How Credible Standards Can Help Companies Deliver the 2030 Agenda, jointly produced by ISEAL Alliance and WWF: How to use sustainability standards to align with the SDGs: [http://www.standardsimpacts.org/sites/default/files/WWF\\_ISEAL\\_SDG\\_2017.pdf](http://www.standardsimpacts.org/sites/default/files/WWF_ISEAL_SDG_2017.pdf)

**Impact 2030:** A coalition of corporate partners committed to leveraging employee volunteerism to further the SDG agenda. <http://impact2030.com/>

**The Business and Sustainable Development Commission (BSDC):** A business coalition looking to make the business case for sustainable development. <http://businesscommission.org/>

**Better Business, Better World:** The BSDC's flagship report that makes a business case for the SDGs. <http://report.businesscommission.org/>

**The SDG Fund:** An international cooperation mechanism supporting sustainable development. <http://www.sdgfund.org/>

**Unreasonable Goals:** A partnership between governments, multinationals and Unreasonable Group to support entrepreneurs looking to align with the SDGs. <https://unreasonable-goals.com/>

## Stay Informed

The U.N. Foundation, the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, the Index Initiative and Aviva announced the World Benchmarking Alliance in September 2017. "The goal is to create, house and safeguard corporate benchmarks that are aligned with the SDGs," says Pratik Desai, an officer in policy and private-sector engagement for the U.N. Foundation. An eight-month consultation phase runs through May 2018, allowing companies to weigh in on the future of business benchmarking for the SDGs. Stay informed by following [worldbenchmarkingalliance.org](http://worldbenchmarkingalliance.org).

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*Guide written by Mary Mazzoni*

## ENDNOTES:

1. **The U.N. Sustainable Development Goals:** <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
2. **Business and Sustainable Development Commission: Better Business, Better World:** <http://report.businesscommission.org/uploads/Executive-Summary.pdf>
3. **PwC: Millennials at Work: Reshaping the Workplace:** <http://www.pwc.com/m1/en/services/consulting/documents/millennials-at-work.pdf>
4. **U.N. Global Compact, World Business Council for Sustainable Development and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI): The SDG Compass:** [https://sdgcompass.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/019104\\_SDG\\_Compass\\_Guide\\_2015.pdf](https://sdgcompass.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/019104_SDG_Compass_Guide_2015.pdf)
5. **Accenture Strategy and the U.N. Global Compact: The Path to 2030, a CEO Study:** <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insight-un-global-compact-ceo-study>
6. **World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD): CEO Guide to the Sustainable Development Goals:** [http://docs.wbcsd.org/2017/03/CEO\\_Guide\\_to\\_the\\_SDGs/English.pdf](http://docs.wbcsd.org/2017/03/CEO_Guide_to_the_SDGs/English.pdf)
7. **Governance & Accountability Institute: Monitoring and analysis of S&P 500 Index company reporting:** <http://www.ga-institute.com/press-releases/article/flash-report-eighty-one-percent-81-of-the-sp-500-index-companies-published-corporate-sustainabi.html>
8. **Symantec Cyber Career Connection:** <https://www.symantec.com/about/corporate-responsibility/your-information/cyber-career-connection>
9. **GRI G4 Standards: Materiality:** <https://g4.globalreporting.org/how-you-should-report/reporting-principles/principles-for-defining-report-content/materiality/Pages/default.aspx>
10. **World Health Organization JMP 2015 report: Water, sanitation and hygiene:** [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/monitoring/jmp-2015-key-facts/en/](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/jmp-2015-key-facts/en/)
11. **U.N. Global Compact and GRI: Reporting on the SDGs: An Analysis of the Goals and Targets:** [https://www.globalreporting.org/resource/library/GRI\\_UNGC\\_Business-Reporting-on-SDGs\\_Analysis-of-Goals-and-Targets.pdf](https://www.globalreporting.org/resource/library/GRI_UNGC_Business-Reporting-on-SDGs_Analysis-of-Goals-and-Targets.pdf)
12. **ISEAL Alliance and World Wildlife Fund: The SDGs Mean Business:** [http://www.standardsimpacts.org/sites/default/files/WWF\\_ISEAL\\_SDG\\_2017.pdf](http://www.standardsimpacts.org/sites/default/files/WWF_ISEAL_SDG_2017.pdf)
13. **Impact 2030: A multi-stakeholder effort to leverage employee volunteerism to accomplish the SDGs:** <http://impact2030.com/>
14. **The SDG Fund: A multi-donor and multi-agency development mechanism to leverage public-private funding and partnerships for sustainable development:** <https://www.sdgfund.org>







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