

PATHWAYS IN CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

GOALS

- Provide a guide for students to think about the many faces of corporate sustainability across sectors, companies and organizations
- Provide resources, courses, events and alumni examples to help students understand their career options

UNDERSTANDING CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

What is Corporate Sustainability?

Corporate sustainability can mean various different programs, jobs and skills to different people in the field of business and the environment. The most important element of corporate sustainability is that it is work that strives to build a cooperative relationship between the private sector, the environment and social good. This can take many forms from large multi-national corporations that have sustainability teams to B Corporations with a triple bottom line to non-profits with private sector engagement departments.

Ways to think about your career in Corporate Sustainability

YOURSELF

The questions below are a helpful starting point to think about what your career and impacts in corporate sustainability could be.

- What are your environmental and social priorities? What causes are you most passionate about?
- Where are the major leverage points for those causes within the private sector world?
- What are your skill sets? What transferable skills do you have to bring to a new corporate sustainability role?
- What type of day to day work are you interested in doing?
- What are your deal breakers (i.e. would you be comfortable at a large fast food company working on corporate sustainability but still based on promoting unhealthy food)?

THE COMPANY

There are many factors to keep in mind around the history and support of a company's sustainability initiatives to understand how it is prioritized, where in the sustainability journey they are and what type of work would be available.

- What is the culture of the company?
- What are the company's priorities? Does the mission align with your values?
- How large is the company's impact? What would be the reach of sustainability initiatives you would be a part of?
- Where is sustainability and social responsibility located within the company (e.g. communications, strategy, supply chain etc.)?
- Which internal actors do sustainability initiatives at the company have the active support of? Board, CEO, VPs, middle management, general employees? This gives you an idea of how a company will take up and respond to sustainability related initiatives.
- Consider that you can make change from any department that interests you and think about the ways you could bring more sustainability and social responsibility into those programs.

UNDERSTANDING CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

Skill Sets for Corporate Sustainability

The following are a series of examples of skill sets that one would need for corporate sustainability roles. What is important to keep in mind is that every company and organization has different priorities and strategies around their corporate sustainability which require different skill sets.

- Knowledge of Environmental, Health and Safety Regulations
- Metrics and Materiality Reporting
- Communications
- Brand Management and Marketing
- Operations Management
- Materials Management
- Supply Chain and Sourcing
- Financial Analyses and Modeling
- Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement
- Project Management
- Environmental topic specific expertise (e.g. water policy, green design, etc.)

Checklist and Yale Resources

- Make a list of 10 companies and organizations you admire that are doing corporate sustainability work
- Sign up for CBEY Newsletter
- Connect with current students that have experience in the field of corporate sustainability
- Connect with alumni that are doing work you are interested in through the CDOs, CBEY, Yale Alumni Network, and LinkedIn
- Connect with CBEY Faculty and Staff
- Attend events and workshops hosted by CBEY, Business and the Environment student groups, Industrial Ecology student groups, Energy student groups and Tsai CITY
- Refer to the Business and Environment Track at FES for suggested courses
- Consider a client-based course or independent research project that gives you the chance to work on a corporate sustainability issue with a company
 - Business and Environment Consulting Clinic
 - Corporate Environmental Management and Strategy
 - Corporate Water Risk
 - Business & the Environment Solutions
- Consider the corporate sustainability conference options (Greenbiz, BSR, etc.)
- Consider social innovation and Tsai CITY resources as part of your personal strategy for making change
- Sign up and check relevant job boards
 - <https://weinrebgroup.com/>
 - <http://jobs.greenbiz.com/>

ALUMNI IN CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY



NAME

Sarah Mihalecz

DEGREE/S, FOCUS, YEAR

MEM, IEM, 2005

CURRENT ROLE

Head of Sustainability, Tata
Sons North America

How do you approach corporate sustainability in your current role?

This role is a bit unique – I’m working for a holding company. Sustainability is collaborative and cooperative in this group. We view it as a core value of our group but the material issues, priorities, and execution differ for each company within the group.

What does corporate sustainability mean to you?

Triple bottom line is the best way to think about it for Tata – we often quote our founder in saying that “In a free enterprise, the community is not just another stakeholder in business, but is in fact the very purpose of its existence.”

What are the career realisations, decisions, or opportunities that led you to your current position?

I had a long career that consisted of consulting in a top firm (Deloitte). After reaching a point in my career where I was deciding whether to stay with the firm for the rest of my career or try something new, I decided to try something new. I wanted to be closer to implementation of the ideas and strategies that I created while a consultant.

What Yale resources (classes, clients, clubs, etc.) have been the most helpful for you on your path?

Professors too! Marian Chertow has been immensely helpful since graduating as has the entire alumni network. My first job out of school (World Bank) I worked with an alum of the program.

Classes – all of them – the ones that surprised me the most that they were helpful included Ethics, Environmental Campaigns, Macroeconomic – none of these ostensibly fit into what I wanted to do but gave me great perspective.

What’s one piece of advice you would give for working in corporate sustainability?

There’s no one right path and corporate sustainability is executed very differently from company to company. If you want to know whether sustainability is a priority for the company you are hoping to work for then look to the CEO. How loudly is he talking about sustainability, what commitments have they made? Unless you are a supreme force, it will be hard to execute on sustainability without the leadership from the top.

ALUMNI IN CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY



NAME

Laura Meadors

DEGREE/S, FOCUS, YEAR

MESc. Natural Resource Economics 2002

CURRENT ROLE

Global Conservation Programs Lead, Apple

How do you approach corporate sustainability in your current role?

I endeavour to bring a level of subject matter expertise to a broader strategic approach that can be applied across a range of geographies, facilities and operations. Today, I focus largely on water, waste, and carbon, doing everything from due diligence to identifying opportunities for efficiency, new technology, or resource alternatives.

What does corporate sustainability mean to you?

It means focusing on discrete issues – emissions, materials, energy, water – in ways that are relevant for a corporate business but impactful for the environment, and together can be rolled up into a coherent strategy.

What are the career realisations, decisions, or opportunities that led you to your current position?

I've always been able to take a nugget of what I was doing in a prior role and parlay it into a new opportunity. Coming into my current role, I had a background in energy, water and carbon, and experience negotiating large utility contracts, so it was the perfect confluence of practical and strategic skills. Coming out of FES, I took a job at a commodities hedge fund, where I learned that I loved markets and saw an opportunity to use market forces to deliver environmental goods and services. Later, I moved to a small non-profit doing innovative water

market development for conservation, and that set a foundation for much of the work I do now. In between, I made a decade-long detour into renewable energy markets just as they were getting up and running, and am thrilled to be back doing water conservation, just as that field is becoming more sophisticated.

What Yale resources (classes, clients, clubs, etc.) have been the most helpful for you on your path?

Environmental Law & Policy, Hydrology, Brad Gentry's classes, all of my nat. resource economics classes, my thesis work on non-market water valuation and e360 magazine coverage (e.g. the recent FSC article).

What's one piece of advice you would give for working in corporate sustainability?

Develop an expertise in something – anything – and then leverage that for future growth into other areas. It's very hard to get in the CSR door with a generalist degree or skillset. Develop a technical skill – like economic analysis – and a subject matter expertise, like energy, materials or water – and look for entry opportunities doing something in that area. CSR is a catch-all term that covers all of these areas of expertise; you're unlikely to find a job that is "CSR Manager" for example, especially at the entry level.

CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY CAREERS ACROSS THE SECTOR

Learn about all of the roles and work being done in corporate sustainability by following the life cycle of a single product. Example below is for the life cycle of a cellular phone and offers [positions] and departments where individuals are carrying out **Corporate Sustainability** work.

Cross Departmental Positions



Beyond Company Positions

