



# SUSTAINABILITY

The New Marketing Edge

## Takeaways

Improve your profit margins

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See the big picture and plan for the long term through a balanced approach

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Gain efficiencies across your business

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Develop new customer markets

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Develop competitive advantage in your business

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Make a difference to the environment, your local economy and your community

# THE NEW MARKETING EDGE

## Cool Links

[!\[\]\(99f58673407353e96a019fbca558fd72\_img.jpg\) Sustainability and Climate Change](#)

[!\[\]\(0f848bbd71cef6b345273b16f905912a\_img.jpg\) ACCC](#)

[!\[\]\(339a16584d5da0f0a3ca4e9ec17bf6a1\_img.jpg\) Environmental Management](#)

[!\[\]\(a870788d6ed9b8fd294b7654a8c8526b\_img.jpg\) Environmental industry publications](#)

## Introduction

These days everyone talks about sustainability. It's the buzz term giving new meaning and purpose to just about everything we do.

The way we think, behave and live, our decisions as consumers, how we manage natural resources, primary industries, manufacturing, industrial and commercial development and population growth are all changing to meet a new set of values. More than ever, we are holding ourselves and collectively, our communities, industries and governments accountable for how we act and shape the future.

This is a dynamic and wholesale attitudinal shift that affects everyone, you and your business included. It's an exciting time when opportunities and new ideas, if recognised and acted on, can lead to big profits and sustainable growth.

A common view is that being sustainable means being 'green' or eco-friendly. Certainly, that's one part of it but there's a lot more. A sustainable business bases its planning and development on three core areas of responsibility – economic, environmental, and social. Together, these are called Triple Bottom Line (TBL) measures. By using TBL to plan and develop your product, and promoting your sustainable practices as a point of difference, you can win competitive advantage.

The idea behind Triple Bottom Line is to think holistically about your business planning and development, realising that everything you do has consequences – for the economy and employment, for the natural environment and the social and cultural fabric of our community. The sustainability mantra is Think global, Act local.

Connecting your TBL measures to sustainable values and practices makes your business accountable for its actions on every level. To think of it in simple terms, you are working to reduce the negative impacts of your business and increase the positives, to the benefit of all.

## Hot Tips

- Network with other sustainable tourism operators and share ideas
- Attend sustainable tourism conferences and seminars
- Subscribe to sustainability newsletters
- Find out about [TQ's sustainability programs](#)



Sounds great, right? But you're probably wondering exactly what these benefits are and how they will improve your business.

## The benefits

Becoming more sustainable leads to:

- **business efficiency** – through better management of resources and energy/water/waste
- **increased profits** - through savings on your consumption and waste minimisation, buying local, business growth and competitive advantage
- **improved business capability, planning and management** – through smarter ways of doing things and creating a motivated and high-performance workforce and positive work culture
- **competitive advantage** – puts your product and services ahead of the pack and adds to your credibility in the marketplace
- **effective marketing campaigns** – consumers are more likely to hear your messages, trust what you are telling them and make your business a product of choice
- **networking opportunities** – links you with other local sustainable businesses, producers and suppliers and offers opportunities to share ideas and leverage off or cluster with them on profit-generating campaigns
- **industry innovation and best practice** – benchmarking your business against others and growing your business through best practice improvements
- having a reliable **risk management plan** and being prepared for extreme weather events and other crises likely to impact on your business
- **feeling good about what you do** – being an active contributor to your community, giving something back and making your community and world a better place to live.

All these benefits give you marketing leverage.

Designing your product to be more efficient and focused on the things that are important to consumers will draw them to you. Take a look at your marketing plan and what you found when you did your internal research on the business. This will give you some good clues of where to start. Choose areas that need improvement and will easily adapt to sustainable solutions and win you competitor advantage.

Once the changes are in place you can promote these points of difference through your marketing. When promoting your sustainability edge, be careful not to overstate your claims though. Unless it can be proven, broad statements of being an 'eco-friendly' or 'green' product or service can mislead the public. This is called 'greenwashing' and it's against the law. The ACCC has a [Green Marketing Guide](#) that's well worth a read before you begin marketing and promoting your sustainable features.

## Jump on board – follow the 5 steps to sustainability

Not so long ago, a small frog complained to the world that it wasn't easy being green. Well, that was then and this is now. It's an exciting time of change and innovation as companies and communities clamber for new and better ways to be green. Demand is driving rapid and widespread policy reform, product development and business renewal, providing huge scope for growth.

If you haven't looked into sustainable options for your business, now is probably a good time to start. You don't have to take on the world. The important thing is to work through your ideas and alternatives and change what makes sense for your circumstances and offers solid returns.

TQ has a fantastic website dedicated to the topic of sustainability. As well as heaps of information and resources, there's a [Five Step plan](#) to help you get on board and gain some sustainable quick wins. We'll cover that now and provide helpful links to guide you along the way.



## Hot Tips

- Plan for success and promote your advancements
- Share your ideas with staff and customers and get their feedback
- Look at what others do and see if you can improve on it
- Buy local produce
- Use bio-fuels
- Buy 'green' alternatives
- Develop your own directory of sustainable businesses to link and do business with
- Support local conservation efforts
- Strive for the best solutions and never give up!
- Read up on the ACCC Green Marketing guidelines
- Read up on how to plan for and survive extreme weather events at [www.tq.com.au/weatherproofyourbusiness](http://www.tq.com.au/weatherproofyourbusiness).

# 5 STEP PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY

## The Pathway to Sustainability for Tourism Operators



## Step 1 – Getting started

To kick things off, think about who can help you, both from within and outside your business, to set goals and implement your plans, i.e. partners, staff members, government officers who work in environmental and sustainable development, business and conservation groups. The goals you set might be along the lines of:

- improving your environmental efficiency
- educating and raising staff awareness of the environmental impact of the workplace
- exploring and developing sustainable alternatives to these environmental impacts
- monitoring, maintaining and improving your sustainable initiatives
- promoting your sustainable qualities and milestones

This step includes a sustainability [Checklist](#). You'll need about 5 minutes to answer yes or no to 20 questions that highlight the key areas of sustainability, such as:

- **sustainable policies and practices** – working with local suppliers, sharing information and encouraging better use of resources.
- **energy** – managing your energy usage and gaining efficiencies
- **CO<sub>2</sub>** – calculating and offsetting your CO<sub>2</sub> emissions
- **water** – managing your water consumption, water storage, recycling and irrigation
- **waste** – waste minimisation, reuse and recycling methods and strategies.

To keep your sustainable aims top of mind, it's a good idea to develop a clear statement of your commitment to the environment and the community. This can be displayed in your business and on marketing and other business collateral so your staff and customers can see what you stand for and how you are making a difference. An example could be:

**'Our business values the natural environment, our workplace and people, our community and its cultural diversity and heritage. Our aim is to make our community cleaner, greener and an even better place to live through our sustainable business principles and actions.'**

You will also want to include the relevant sustainable strategies, actions, timeframes, measures and budget allocations into your marketing Action Plan.

## Step 2 – Your sustainability action plan

Now that you've moved through the first step you'll have a good idea of what to include in your sustainability plan. Again, there will be activities that are vital to your marketing approach, so make sure you look at your planning from both business and marketing perspectives. Your plan involves:

## Hot Tips

- *Reuse materials. Find out about what can and can't be recycled in your area. Have large, clearly marked recycling bins, and smaller rubbish bins for other waste.*
- *Replace incandescent bulbs with fluorescent lamps to reduce costs by up to 75%.*
- *Turn off lights. Install automatic timers and solar powered lighting on pathways.*
- *Look into and consider alternative energy sources such as solar power.*
- *Replace outdated equipment with models that offer high energy efficiency ratings.*
- *Replace disposable cups, plates, cutlery, and paper towel with reusable alternatives.*
- *Change to biodegradable cleaning products.*
- *Reduce water use through rain water storage, water efficient appliances, sweeping rather than hosing paths, and planting water efficient gardens.*
- *Measure your use of electricity, gas, materials and water and communicate and celebrate the savings.*

## Case in point

*One Queensland example of a sustainable project is the Scenic Rim 100 miles project. A group of food growers, hospitality and tourism operators have come together to manage their environmental impact by reducing the production and transport chain. They source local and regional food within a '100 mile' radius of their businesses, community and economy.*

*Buying local produce is a great way to support sustainable farming, business enterprise and the local economy and community. It gives the participating operators a unique point of difference for showcasing their regional product as part of a compelling and sustainable experience and story. The project has reduced each business's carbon and ecological footprint, resource costs and consumption and economic risk. Close bonds have formed between the group members and together, they are expecting to achieve real Triple Bottom Line results for their local economy.*

## Crisis Management Plan

*Queensland has seen its fair share of extreme weather events in recent times including major floods and cyclones. Many scientists predict climate change will increase the number and severity of these types of weather events in the future. Having a Crisis Management Plan is a key way to protect your business from major setbacks in the event of a disaster. Good preparation usually means a quick recovery.*

*To help develop your Crisis Management Plan use TQ's [Step by Step](#) weather proofing process. Once the plan is in place, it's a good idea to run your staff through a drill each year, for example annually just before the cyclone season.*

- **risk management** - identifying possible risks, including weather and other events likely to impact business, weighing up the costs and benefits of different actions and developing suitable responses
- **regulatory requirements** – following the Australian environmental regulations. A [factsheet](#) will help to explain how the regulations will affect your business
- **Sustainability Action Plan** – a plan to define what you aim to achieve, by when and what resources you'll need.
- **measuring your carbon footprint** – having a measurement tool in place to track what is happening in your business. Remember you can't manage what you do not measure!

## Step 3 – Reduce your impact

Reducing your environmental impact is the number one goal of any sustainability plan. You can follow key themes such as the four Rs – reduce, recycle, reuse and renew and TQ provides [factsheets](#) on how to reduce your energy use, water use and waste.

As a Queensland operator, you are able to tap into numerous [state and federal programs](#) that assist businesses to implement sustainable initiatives.

As you go further down the path of reducing your environmental impact, you might like to consider off setting any remaining emissions. Carbon Offsets are simply credits you buy to offset the emissions you produced. The credits are made through activities such as tree planting and energy efficient projects. Your credits reduce your net impact on the environment.

If you want to go carbon neutral, in other words, offset your entire business or individual carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>-e) producing activities you'll need to prepare for some serious carbon footprint accounting. It's complex but certainly possible for individual operators, as well as profitable.

## Step 4 - Promotion

You've done the hard yards, now that you've reached Step Four you're probably in a good position to get the message out there about your sustainability commitment and initiatives.

Consumers are in-the-know and discerning when it comes to product choice. They have a social conscience and often want more than just value for money. They look for the cues that tell them you are an ethical company and good corporate citizen. A big part of the appeal is having the confidence that your product and services are trustworthy and meet their higher ideals and expectations.

These cues are used in product marketing to convey brand values and gain competitive advantage in the marketplace. You can tell your customers about your sustainable initiatives in simple ways such as on your website, brochure, room stationery, inside lifts or foyers, arrival and departure areas and telling them through your conversations.

### Promote your credentials

*Accreditation is a further option to promote your sustainability credentials, if you choose to go down this path at some stage.*

*It's easy for consumers to identify with accreditation symbols. Through recognition, they are instantly assured the company they are dealing with has high standards and delivers genuine economic, environmental and social benefits.*

*You should get to know the various tourism industry eco and sustainability accreditation programs and what they involve, as well as other programs and the agencies that support sustainable management.*

AGENCY	PROGRAMS
Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP)	Accredited Tourism Business, Australia
Ecotourism Australia	ECO Certified Ecotourism ECO Certified Ecoguide
Aboriginal Tourism Australia	ROC Accreditation
Sustainable Tourism Australia	Climate Action Australia Certification
EC3 Global	Green Globe Certification Earthcheck Benchmarking
Queensland Government	ECOBIZ Program
Commonwealth Government	National Accreditation Framework
AAA Tourism	Eco-Friendly Star Rating Accreditation
International Organization for Standardization	ISO 14001 Environmental Management System



[T-QUAL Accreditation](#) is the new national tourism accreditation framework that brings together accreditation programs in the industry that are committed to the programs high standards, under

a single sign of quality - the TQUAL mark. It provides a single, overarching framework for the many existing accreditation and ratings programs. Tourism Australia will spread this message to consumers across a range of channels to build recognition and trust.



Another great way to market your sustainability is to nominate for local, state, national and international awards programs that recognise operators' contributions to sustainable tourism. Most awards programs have, at the very least eco and/or sustainable categories while other programs are entirely based on sustainable tourism achievement.

It's important to remember that sustainability plugs into all areas of your business and marketing planning. In marketing, it's not just about developing sustainable product and services but also how you show your sustainability in the ways you promote your brand. Let's take SceneXtreme Tours as an example. The business has a number of sustainable practices that it likes to promote. These include:

- The business is ECO-Certified
- Running tour vehicles on high grade EPA approved bio-fuel
- Using sustainable methods and where possible, organic alternatives in the printer and in the production of all printed brochures and marketing collateral
- Never using disposable containers
- Where possible sourcing provisions from local suppliers
- Buying green electricity for the main office

- Employing Indigenous tour guides from the local community
- Hosing down equipment and vehicles with rain water from storage tanks.

It also promotes these activities to customers and the community through:

- displaying the ECO-Certification logo on vehicles, brochures, other promotional materials and uniforms
- references throughout the website content
- press releases and media coverage
- displays in the reception area
- consumer and trade expo displays
- award entries and wins
- sponsorship of community clean waterways and native bush regeneration programs.



## Step 5 - Monitoring and Evaluating

Just like your marketing Action Plan, the final step is to monitor your progress. An easy way to do this is go back to your Checklist in Step 1 and tick off what you've done. In some cases, results may take a little longer than others and monitoring can help you to:

- assess how long the task might take
- assess how much work has already been done
- highlight changes
- guide future planning.

It's up to you how often you monitor, but a general rule of thumb is at three, 6 or 12 months. Once you've ticked off an item on the checklist you can set new goals. Celebrate these wins along the way and update staff, suppliers and customers on your progress and your plans ahead.

## BUZZ WORDS

Every industry has its own jargon and the environmental movement is no exception. We could go on forever with the terms. Here are a few [buzz words](#) you're likely to hear:

**eco-chic / green chic** - the trend of being environmentally conscious and buying 'green' products.

**eco-consumer** - an environmentally conscious person who buys products that are 'green'.

**ethical goods & services** - companies that make sure that their suppliers uphold employee conditions and allow employees standard rights.

**greenwash** - to overstate or mislead consumers on the extent of your product's green credentials. Stick to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) [guidelines](#) on Green Marketing.

**natural** - a product or material which does not come from man-made origins e.g. timber, leather, beeswax, etc.

**organic** - an alternative farming method for crops, dairy foods and livestock that removes toxins, manufactured chemicals, synthetic additives, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and provides biodegradable products.

**virgin product** - products manufactured with 100% new materials.



### TQ Resources

Contact: [industryinnovation@tq.com.au](mailto:industryinnovation@tq.com.au)

[Sustainability website](#)