

5 Tips When Taking Action on Sustainable Procurement!

Summary from BITCI's 2012 Workshop Series on Making Sustainable Procurement a Reality

1. **Build the business case.** Traceability in the supply chain is a prerequisite. If you don't know where the materials & products you use come from, you cannot understand their environmental & social impact. The risks and opportunities depend on the economic, social and environmental impacts associated with items purchased and the location from which products and services are sourced. Start with the largest spends. What assessments are being undertaken to ensure standards are being adhered to? Brainstorm the risks and impacts that might be present in each category. Prioritisation will depend on the nature of the product or service in question, the business's drivers, location of the supplier and level of influence you have.
2. **Get buy in.** Create a narrative about why sustainable procurement matters and why the company needs to change. A short video can be very useful to focus on the key messages, ensure everyone hears the same message and having the voice from the top in the room, when they can't also be there.
3. **Develop a sustainable procurement policy, code of conduct for suppliers & prepare a plan** to improve performance, with objectives and targets. Leverage international standards and tools, including the British Standard on Sustainable Procurement, BS 8903. Procurement specifications must be tied to the organisation's objectives. Before opening a tendering process, identify the social and environmental impact of what is being tendered for. Establish if there are alternative methods of meeting the business need that will have less negative impacts. Use whole of life costing. Use product specifications and kpis on contractual obligations.
4. **Engage suppliers, send signals for innovation** and share the organisation's learning with the supply chain to build capacity to make improvements. Identify areas for collaboration. Understand where the level of influence is – do you have sufficient power in the market? Do industry standards need to change? How can that best be done?
5. **Measure & evaluate all progress.** Build the confidence of all those involved in procurement internally. Provide training where needed and ensure learning is extrapolated from all pilot projects. It is essential that sustainable procurement is built in to all business processes (normal conversations, scorecards, incentives).

Recommended Reading

An Introduction to Sustainable Procurement, published by BITCI at <http://www.bitc.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/An-Introduction-to-Sustainable-Procurement.pdf>

How to Manage Your Supply Chain Responsibly, published by BITC UK at <http://www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/how-manage-your-supply-chains-responsibly>

Advice & Guidance for BITCI Member Companies

If your company would like support with the development of a **sustainable procurement baseline analysis, policy & strategy**, particularly in relation to BS 8903, please contact Darina Eades, Senior Consultant on Corporate Responsibility at deades@bitc.ie