

EFFICIENCY

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Since 1970, the human population has doubled. We use the planet's resources to live. However, we often use them inefficiently.

The solution

Efficiency is a common sustainability action. It means making the same with fewer resources. Examples are energy-efficient (less energy) or fuel-efficient (less fuel). Efficiency can often save money.

Start with an Efficiency question.

NET ZERO

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Greenhouse gases cause climate change. If we don't act, Earth could be 5°C warmer by 2100. This would be very bad because 5°C colder caused an ice age.

The solution

We can slow climate change by releasing fewer greenhouse gases. If we take out as much as we put into the atmosphere, we reach net zero emissions. Earth is already +1.2°C warmer. We need to stop new emissions and take old ones from the atmosphere.

Sources: IPCC (2021). Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; University of Oxford (n.d.) What is net zero?.

CIRCULARITY

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A third of food is thrown away. 60% of fast fashion goes to the bin after one year. We waste a lot of resources.

The solution

When a leaf falls to the ground, it breaks down and feeds other plants. In a circular economy, we also circle resources and keep their value. Businesses can promote circularity through R-strategies, such as Reduce, Reuse, or Recycle.

Sources: Ellen MacArthur Foundation, SUN, McKinsey & Co. (2015). Growth Within: a circular economy vision for a competitive Europe.; McKinsey & Company (2016). Style that's sustainable: A new fast fashion formula.

SUFFICIENCY

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If everyone lived like a U.S. citizen, we would need 5 planets. But the average Indian lifestyle only uses 0.8. While many live in poverty, others consume too much.

The solution

Sufficiency means a good life for all with the resources we have. We use more than Earth can renew, so we need to consume less and distribute more fairly. Business can offer sustainable options and focus on what people really need.

REGENERATION

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Since 1970, we lost 70% of our wildlife populations. In Europe, air pollution kills over 1,200 children every year. We damage nature and suffer ourselves.

The solution

Companies and humans are part of nature and need a healthy planet. Regenerative business has products and services that do not only make things less bad but make them better for people and nature.

Sources: European Environment Agency (24.04.2023). Air pollution and children's health.; Konietzko, J., Das, A., & Bocken, N. (2023). Towards regenerative business models: A necessary shift? Sustainable Production and Consumption.; WWF, 2022. In: Almond, R.E.A., Grooten, M., Juffe Bignoli, D., Petersen, T. (Eds.), Living Planet Report 2022 – Building a Nature- Positive Society. WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

FLOURISHING

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You followed the path to flourishing. Academic John Ehrenfeld said companies need to work for “the possibility that humans and other life will flourish on Earth forever”.

All levels you crossed are important for business action. While some might be easier, the more difficult changes often have the most important impact.

How will you work towards flourishing?