

Implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were initiated at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, with the intent of creating a set of universal goals that met the world's urgent environmental, political and economic challenges.

The SDGs play a critical role in focusing business, civil society and governments on a set of common goals to address key global challenges. Connecting your business objectives to the goals may be overwhelming at first glance, but it's important to remember the 17 SDGs are intentionally high-level in nature to ensure they are broadly applicable.

Similarly, while it is not expected that companies can align their goals with all 17 SDGs, they are expected to identify which goals are most relevant to their business and where they have an opportunity to contribute to the goals through the full value chain of their business. It is therefore important to approach the SDGs in an attentive and streamlined manner to ensure you focus in on areas where your actions have real and tangible impacts.

Our approach and services

We have developed this short guide on the steps your business can follow to identify which goals are most relevant to your business, and how you can set targets against these to drive measurable impact.

Step 1: SDG value chain mapping

We recommend starting this process by scanning each of the locations you operate in, as well as key supplier locations, against the risks associated with the SDGs.

We do this through our RiskHorizon™ tool, which aggregates over 100 of the world's most credible data sets to profile risk and/or opportunities related to various global locations. This scan (or perhaps a scaled-down version for businesses with less complex value chains) will help you assess the relevance of each SDG against your entire value chain, taking into consideration the relevant country's and city's SDG performance and opportunities.

From here you should have a qualitative ranking of risks to refine your focus on the relevant SDGs for your company.

Step 2: alignment with SDG targets

After narrowing down the list of SDGs relevant to your business, you will have reduced the 169 SDG targets to a more manageable number. Like step 1, step 2 requires you to review the list of SDG targets based on what is most relevant to your business, which will allow you to prioritize and focus your SDG-related efforts.

This can be informed by any existing data and information from sources including, but not limited to: your business objectives and strategies; sustainability reports; website; CDP disclosure; materiality assessments; and 10-K disclosures.

Step 3: gap assessment

This is where the numerous tools and business indicators summarized in the SDG Compass come into the process. Now that you have prioritized the relevant SDG targets and related goals, you can map your existing company activities against the list of business practices outlined in the compass.



THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

This will help you to engage internal teams regarding improvement opportunities, as well as identify potential program and data gaps which may need to be addressed. You should also gain insight into where you can leverage existing activities, and the supporting reporting practices, to address the SDGs, such as programs related to meeting requirements of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and CDP.

Step 4: goal setting and communication

We believe that transparent, evidence-based reporting and goal-setting can drive positive change within an organization. Ensuring that this type of change takes root is often dependent on creating frameworks and incentives for internal teams to achieve these goals. Having mapped your existing efforts and business strategies in the previous steps, you should be well positioned to set the appropriate SDGs and supporting efforts to achieve these. Furthermore, as with any goal-setting process, it is important to keep in mind how these goals will be communicated, who will be accountable for achieving them, and how they may compliment or otherwise impact other activities already underway in your business.

Once your goals are set, you should broadly communicate these efforts to demonstrate your commitment to the SDGs externally, but also to demonstrate the importance of the goals internally. The SDG Compass suggests making all or some of your company's goals public, stating that doing so "may inspire and engage employees and business partners and can provide a good basis for constructive dialogue with external stakeholders". However, it is also important to consider their business value against any potential risks, e.g., criticism for not meeting your targets. Companies can announce goals aligned with the SDGs on the United Nations website, using www.business.un.org.

Next steps

If you are one of the many companies already engaged in the SDGs, it is worthwhile to review your process against the above steps to be sure you have captured the full intent of the global goals.

Also, as with any goal-setting process, it is essential to continually monitor your progress against these goals, as well as ensure the initial scan of the goals is re-visited should your company expand into new geographic regions or product markets.

Our experience

We have over 15 years' international experience in the chemical management services outlined, and a reputation for finding common ground among stakeholders within consortia. Our clients include: Alkanolamine Borates, Resorcinol and ATC REACH consortia, and a range of corporate, non-governmental and government organizations.

About Anthesis

Anthesis is a global sustainability services and solutions provider, which believes that commercial success and sustainability go hand in hand. We develop financially driven sustainability strategies, underpinned by technical expertise and delivered by innovative collaborative teams across the world.

For further information, contact:

Josh Hendry

Principal Consultant, North America
Josh.Hendry@anthesisgroup.com
M: +1 613 581 1819

Andrew Noone

Associate Director, Europe
Andrew.Noone@anthesisgroup.com
M: +44 (0)7944 780 223

