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How to Make the Case for Sustainability Investment

Especially when economic conditions are uncertain

As global supply chains grow more interconnected, they also become more vulnerable to geopolitical shifts, trade disputes, and market volatility.

In turbulent times, social and environmental initiatives often become easy targets for budget cuts. But pulling back on sustainability can create even greater risk, from supply chain fragility to reputational damage to long-term financial loss.

Forward-thinking companies understand that sustainability is not a “nice to have”—it’s a business imperative.

> “Ultimately, the only numbers that measure the health of a business long term are the same numbers that measure the health of the planet. There is no healthy business without a healthy planet and healthy people.”
>
> — **Rick Ridgeway**, Co-Founder of Cascale

7 reasons your company shouldn’t shy away from sustainability

1 Leading companies are staying the course

Despite economic headwinds and political shifts, major players like Walmart and Zalando are continuing to invest in sustainability. Their commitments run deep, through supplier agreements, product strategies, and stakeholder expectations—and are not easily unwound.

2 You can’t time the market—and you shouldn’t try

Economic cycles come and go, but climate risk is compounding. Companies that step back today will need to step forward again tomorrow—likely under more pressure, more scrutiny, and with less time to adapt. Companies that stick to their strategy through up-and-down cycles build trust with customers, employees, and regulators, and perform better when conditions rebound.

3 Sustainability *is* supply chain resilience

Sustainability and human rights aren’t side projects. They are core to a resilient business. From traceability and transparency to worker well-being and climate preparedness, these efforts make businesses more stable, adaptable, and future-proof.

4

It's not just your impact on the environment: It's the environment's impact *on you*

From weather disruptions to civil unrest, global supply chains are increasingly shaped by environmental and geopolitical change. Knowing where your materials come from—and the conditions they face—is essential risk management.

5

Show how doing less harm drives business value

Look for initiatives that cut waste and cost while improving sustainability—like right-sizing packaging to save fuel and freight. Walmart, for example, reduced shipping container volume and saved millions through sustainable logistics choices.

6

People will remember what your company did in uncertain times

Customers, investors, and employees are watching. Companies that consistently act with integrity—environmentally, socially, and economically—build loyalty and long-term value (not risk).

7

Don't fear tough questions: Instead, use data to answer them

In uncertain times, scrutiny grows. Expect to be challenged. Meet those questions with transparency and data. Show how your sustainability strategy aligns with core business goals, drives efficiency, mitigates risk, and connects to what your company uniquely offers.

> Don't be scared of the difficult questions. Use them as a springboard for better, more targeted solutions.
>
> —**Christian Smith**,
> Head of ESG Stakeholder Engagement at Zalando

> Consistently do the right thing—environmentally, socially, and economically—because your customers, your investors, your suppliers, your employees will remember.
>
> —**Tony Hansen**,
> Director, Senior Advisor in Sustainability and Natural Capital

> If you can demonstrate to your senior leadership that some of the world's largest companies and leading retailers are still focused on sustainability, that can be very effective. No CEO ever wants to be left behind or look back and see that they should have done something differently, when they see what their peers are doing.
>
> —**Rick Ridgeway**, Co-Founder of Cascale and former VP, Environmental Affairs and VP, Public Engagement at Patagonia