# Our Road to a Sustainable Business

Part ONE

Where It All Started

Coming out of the covid years and looking at how we run our business to recruit and retain the best people the directors spent a lot of time looking at what was happening across the agency landscape. What could we learn from bigger companies with large budgets or smaller start-ups that didn't have any pre-existing restraints on how they managed their workload, teams and clients? The key to running a mid-sized agency is to keep moving forward, keep learning and keep improving.

As a team, we are people pleasers so when considering how sustainable our business was, we started by looking at how we could keep our team happy and continue to recruit the best people. You mention sustainability and everyone immediately thinks of the planet and tree planting but it is so much more than that. One of the key elements of sustainability as an agency is our people and being able to retain the best people. Through a collaborative process, the leadership team devised a set of policies, processes and benefits that the team were able to vote on, to include in our total rewards offering.

This still didn't feel quite enough and our finance manager came to a management meeting with a NetZero proposal. She felt passionate that she wanted to work for a business that left as little imprint on the environment as possible, but a big imprint on the lives of its people, stakeholders, partners, clients and suppliers. She delivered an excellent presentation and it was agreed that we should set some ambitious goals and agreed to get the business to a NetZero position by 2030. Deborah was willing to be the internal champion for this proposal and was the instrumental force in driving this forward initially, spending time looking for how we could calculate our emissions and how we would achieve our goal.
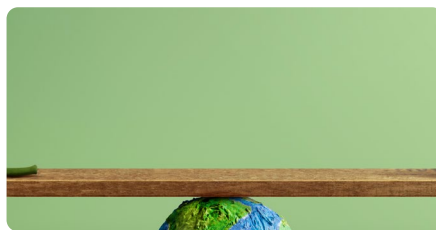
A Range Of Benefits

Whilst there are many benefits to achieving NetZero for the planet and the environment, you can't get away from the fact that achieving NetZero will cost the business money, but, if you approach it correctly, it can also lead to increased revenues, better retention, better recruitment, more inclusive policies and a better, more sustainable business for the future. Businesses around the globe will start realising they need to act now as more policies are pushed down from the top. As Businesses strive to understand their scope 3 emissions fully, they will begin to question their suppliers, so if you have already made a start on your NetZero journey then you are going to be ahead of the game. We are already starting to see more questions around governance, community and inclusion in tender documents. Being able to answer these questions and identifying the business's position on these issues early on will help you drive and adapt your policies moving forward. Even this early into our journey, our sustainable goals, policies and processes are helping to bring in new business and retain staff.

Pushing Forward

During 2022 the directors created three collaborative groups, made up of people across departments and tasked with investigating, researching, estimating and proposing solutions for reward and recognition, gamification and sustainability.
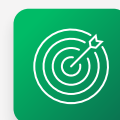
The Sustainability team were tasked with three things:

What role the employees could play in assisting our journey to NetZero

What sustainable solutions or features they could recommend for our LoyaltyStream product

How we could better align with the UN's 17 sustainable development goals

The NetZero Journey

2022

Dipping Our Toes In The Water

The team started tracking their own emissions and focused some of our Wednesday Wisdom sessions on carbon removal versus carbon offsetting and the balance of cost versus inconvenience. This was one of the biggest concerns amongst the team – would they be expected to switch to greener energy immediately, electric cars, and plant-based food? All these things inevitably cost more and how much should their lives have to be impacted by the goals of the business? In general, once talking it through it was agreed that none of these measures had to be instant and it was about making a plan on how to achieve them, how each person as an individual could minimise their footprint and prioritise the factors with the highest emissions that would have the most impact.

Calculating Our Baseline

As a business, we were working with Ecologi on their beta platform to track our own emissions and although we love the platform it wasn't moving quite fast enough for us. As part of our research, we were constantly investigating other platforms, support groups, action groups and programmes. We came across TechNet which already had on board a number of companies we admired – What3Words and Starling Bank – and were helping tech businesses to launch, publicise and manage their NetZero ambitions.

We found Supercritical through Tech Zero and started working with Annie and Sandy to establish our baseline year emissions. There are so many tools out there to calculate emissions but we liked Supercritical's human approach to crunching the numbers. Yes, they used the usual calculators but there was then a real person who had taken the time to understand and assess certain aspects of our business.

2023

Getting Started With Reductions

As we had expected, our emissions weren't that high, and at **2.87 we have a low footprint per employee.** Unfortunately, this makes it harder to reduce because there are no stand-out factors that we can immediately change to make the required reductions. Supercritical gave us 5 key things we could do to reduce our emissions:

Switch to electric cars

We had a few people in the business who travelled a long way to the office and were not using electric cars. We had already reduced employee commuting post-2020 but this was still our highest area of emissions so there was clearly some work to do here.

Home improvements

A number of the team had already started looking at what improvements they could make to their home to make it more energy efficient and as a business we were looking at ways we could help employees to find the right grants or solutions for this.

Streamline digital advertising

We aren't spending a lot on digital advertising at the moment but as we grow this is likely to increase so we have agreed to assess what we are spending our money on and make sure we are choosing the right things.

Reduce, reuse, repair

We had recently changed to introduce more employee homeworking so had purchased a range of equipment for the team to have at home so they weren't carrying large amounts of equipment back and forth to the office on a weekly basis. This won't happen each year but we have agreed to implement a minimum 4-year policy to repair hardware before it is replaced. We had already committed to only purchasing surface laptops for the team moving forward which were one of the most carbon-efficient laptops we could buy. We already donate our old hardware to people either in the company or to local charities once they had been wiped so we didn't need to change anything there either.

Implement a vegetarian company policy

Most of the team said they ate meat when we go out as a company. However, we weren't defining whether this was beef or chicken or fish previously so we are now starting to track the type of food we purchase and where we are purchasing lunches or buffets for the team we have agreed to introduce a plant-based menu. We are going to allow people to choose their preference when we go out as a team but gamify the option to choose plant based over beef. More on that later as we iron out the details.

We have introduced a sustainable procurement policy alongside our new PO process which is already having an impact on the items the team buy and whether they have assessed the sustainability credentials of the business they are buying from.

2023 will be our first year trying to reduce our emissions before we recalculate at the end of the year so we will keep this updated with our journey on implementing these reduction measures and any other ideas we come up with along the way.

The leadership team have joined the SME Climate Hub, TechNation Growth Platform and Leaders for Climate Action so are constantly networking with people who are putting sustainability at the forefront of decision-making in their business and sharing the highs and lows of sustainable thinking.

Sustainability In Loyalty

Having a clear vision of how we wanted to approach sustainability in our business practices wasn't quite enough for us. We are passionate about pushing forward, innovation, leadership and positivity. How could we bring sustainability into our Loyalty Software product and make it an appealing choice for our clients?

2022

Assessing Our Suppliers

One of the easiest ways was with rewards. We looked at our rewards suppliers and went out into the market to choose the best and most sustainable rewards. The members of our client's loyalty programmes aren't yet ready to only see sustainable options in the RewardShop but they are ready to be educated. We are looking at how we display the emissions factor of each reward item so that members can make informed decisions, and where there is a high emissions factor choose to offset that by spending extra loyalty currency on tree planting or carbon removal funding.

Not all of our clients are yet focussed on sustainability and how important it will be in their business practices and in attracting new customers and employees so everything we can do to help educate and inform will assist in moving their thinking along quicker.
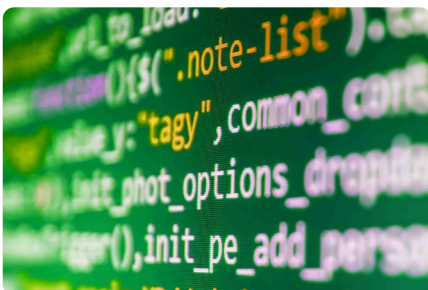
2023

Green Code Credentials

We have designated time this year to look at our code and assess its green credentials e.g. is it written and factored in a way that uses the minimum processing power and can we move high-usage tasks to the right times of the day?

Better Alignment With The 17 UN SDG's

The directors had also looked into becoming a B Corp as the business is passionate about how we recruit staff, trying to work locally and support our local communities as well as having a positive impact on our environment. We were already listed as a Living Wage employer and had managed to find a local charity that we could support both financially and with our time. Our leadership team was 80% female and our commitment to our team in the set-up of flexible working policies, health and stability focused benefits and the governance structures that we already had in place gave us a decent score on our initial B Corp assessment.

The collaborative group then spent time assessing what else we needed to do to achieve the 80 points mark we need to be approved. They went through each section of the B Corp assessment and laid out the case for improvement.

We want to achieve B Corp status by the end of 2024 and I believe we can easily achieve it. We need to ensure that we have the buy-in internally, that we have built sustainability into our thinking and our job functions and that we have carved out the resource and budget to make it happen.

Implementing The Structure To Drive Change

Part of having a sustainable business is that it remains financially viable moving forward and to do that we need to balance profits, innovation and impact. As the next financial year draws closer we are refining our budgets to make sure we have these elements covered and that it will never be just an item on a to-do list. To achieve B Corp status and our Net Zero goal we need the structure, resources and funding to make it happen as an integral part of the business.

We love talking about all things loyalty.

if you fancy a loyalty chat, we'd love to hear from you!

About Stream

Stream are passionate about loyalty – we are the experts after all!

As a tech-enabled consultancy, we seek to understand your business challenges and your audience and work with you to craft a loyalty solution that delivers value. We are both consultants and implementers and use our extensive expertise and software capability to deliver proven, lasting results.

Loyalty is not 'one size fits all' and our team of commercial experts work to ensure that your loyalty strategy is right for you.

Whether you need to increase revenue, grow breadth of spend, or create a referrer programme, we have the experience to help sculpt the right solution. Our proprietary loyalty software- LoyaltyStream® helps to: retain customers, change buying behaviours, build brand loyalty and drive referrals.

Our LoyaltyStream® software is deployed globally, helping our clients to build trust that delivers brand loyalty and commercial rewards.

We guarantee to be able to help you Keep, Grow and Win customers for life.

Contact Us

Address: Carter House, Chilton Business Centre, Chilton, Buckingham, HP18 9LS

Phone: 01844 208 180

Email: contact@streamloyalty.com

www.streamloyalty.com