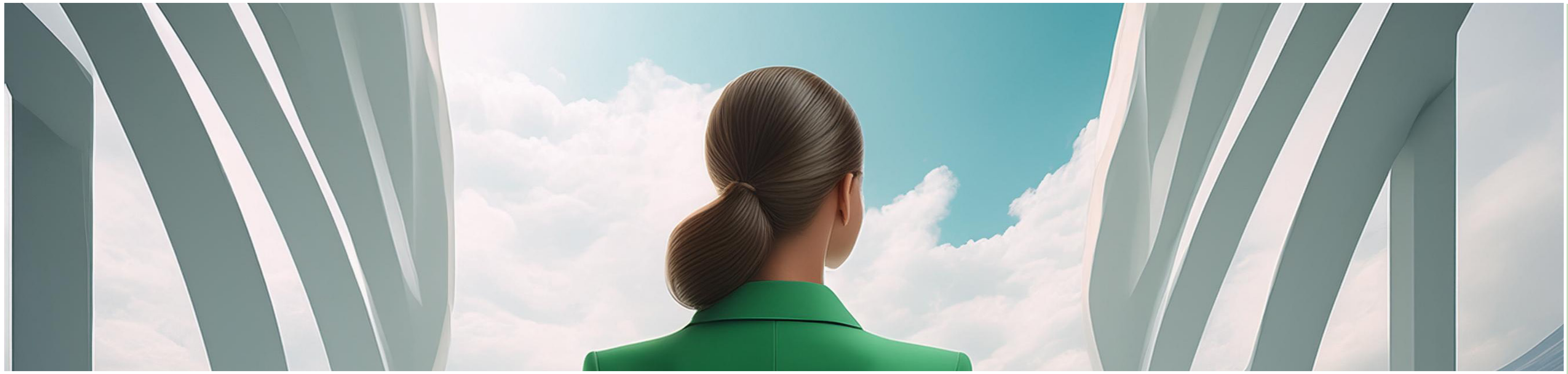
From Compliance to Competitiveness

The CSO's Journey to Strategic Value

Content

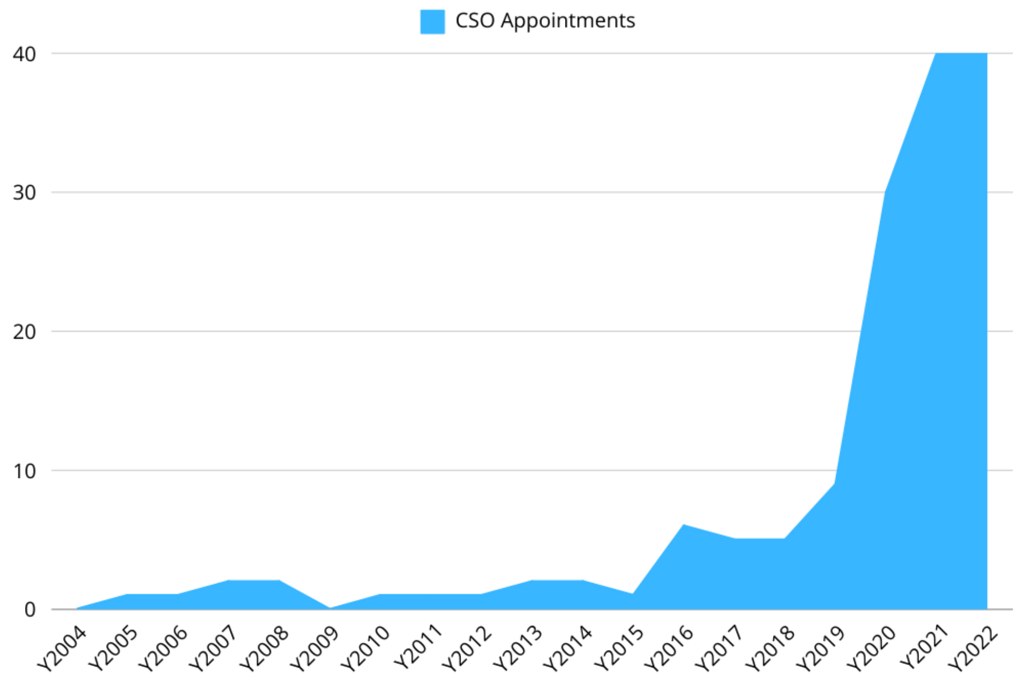


Introduction

The role of the Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) is evolving rapidly as companies recognize the strategic importance of sustainability. This eBook, "From Compliance to Competitiveness: The CSO's Journey to Strategic Value," delves into the critical aspects of the CSO's role, highlighting the challenges and opportunities faced by sustainability leaders today. Covering topics from greenwashing allegations and complex reporting regulations to the necessity of a cross-functional mandate, this eBook provides a comprehensive guide for CSOs aiming to integrate sustainability into their core business strategies. With insights from industry data, case studies, and actionable frameworks, it equips CSOs with the tools needed to drive impactful change and enhance corporate sustainability.

Evolving role of the chief sustainability officer

In recent years, the role of the Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) has evolved from being primarily focused on communication to encompassing compliance and now value creation. Companies are increasingly recognizing the strategic importance of sustainability, leading to a surge in recruiting C-level CSOs. According to a 2022 report by the Weinreb Group, there has been a 228% increase in the number of CSOs since 2011, highlighting the rising demand for dedicated sustainability leadership. This section explores how the growing importance of sustainability is driving companies to integrate sustainability into their core business strategies by appointing specialized CSOs who report directly to the CEO, ensuring comprehensive oversight and strategic alignment.



» *Source: Weinreb group report*

1. C-Level recruitments on the rise

The growing importance of sustainability in corporate strategy has led to an increasing number of companies recruiting C-level Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs). This trend is driven by the recognition that effective sustainability leadership requires strategic oversight at the highest levels of management. According to a 2022 report by the Weinreb Group, there has been a 228% increase in the number of CSOs since 2011, reflecting the rising demand for dedicated sustainability leadership.

Recruiting C-level CSOs ensures that sustainability is integrated into the core business strategy, enabling companies to navigate complex regulatory requirements, meet investor expectations, and enhance their reputations. For instance, Salesforce appointed its first CSO in 2021 to steer its sustainability initiatives and achieve its ambitious environmental goals. Similarly, Walmart elevated its sustainability leader to a CSO role, emphasizing the importance of sustainable practices in its global operations.

The presence of C-level CSOs also facilitates better cross-departmental collaboration, essential for implementing comprehensive sustainability strategies. These executives have the authority to influence decision-making across various functions, ensuring that sustainability considerations are embedded in all aspects of the business. As more companies recognize the strategic value of sustainability, the trend of recruiting C-level CSOs is likely to continue, driving substantial progress in corporate sustainability efforts.

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2. Revenue & size matter

Companies with revenues exceeding $1 billion are increasingly likely to have a Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO). This trend reflects the growing importance of sustainability in driving business success and meeting stakeholder expectations.

A report by the Weinreb Group revealed that over 90% of Fortune 500 companies have designated sustainability leads, with many appointing C-level CSOs to ensure comprehensive oversight and strategic alignment.

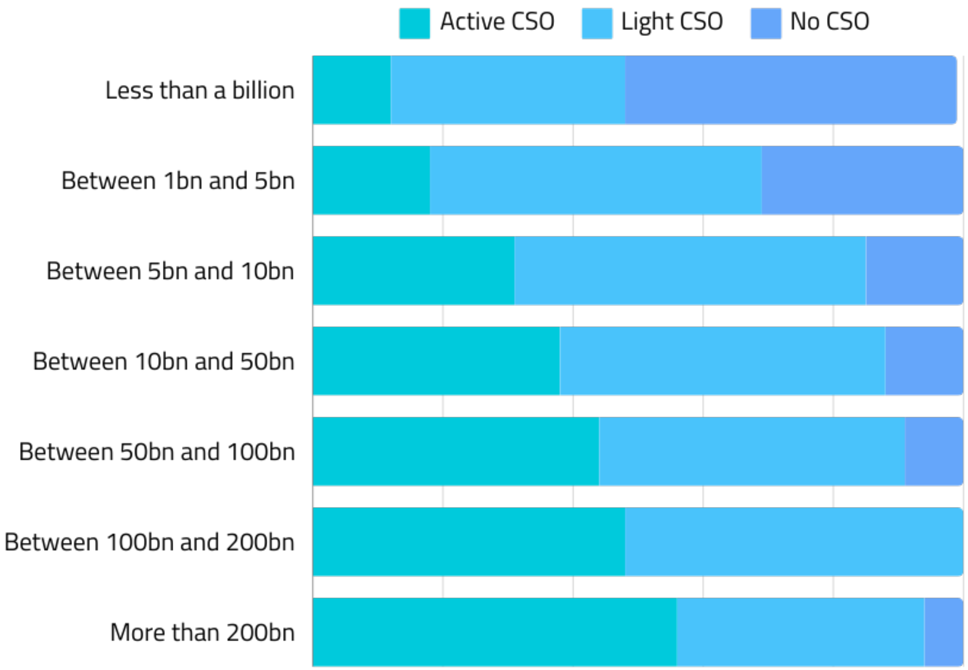
Data from the Governance & Accountability Institute shows that in 2020, 92% of S&P 500 companies published sustainability reports, indicating a strong commitment to transparency and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) performance. This commitment often necessitates the presence of a CSO to manage and integrate these efforts across the organization effectively.

Data from the Governance & Accountability Institute shows that 92% of S&P 500 companies published sustainability reports, indicating a strong commitment to transparency and ESG.

Companies like General Motors, which appointed its first CSO in 2021, exemplify this trend. The CSO at GM plays a critical role in driving the company's vision for an all-electric future, underscoring how large corporations are leveraging this position to spearhead transformative initiatives.

Similarly, Coca-Cola has a CSO to oversee its ambitious sustainability goals, including water stewardship and packaging innovation.

The increasing prevalence of CSOs in billion-dollar companies highlights the strategic value placed on sustainability. These leaders are essential for navigating regulatory landscapes, meeting investor demands, and ensuring long-term business resilience in a rapidly changing global environment.



» *Source: KPMG Report*

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Coca-Cola has a CSO to oversee its ambitious sustainability goals, including water stewardship and packaging innovation.

3. From generalists to specialists

Earlier, many Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs) were often drawn from other departments such as finance, human resources, or marketing.

These leaders typically transitioned into the role, leveraging their corporate experience to address sustainability challenges.

However, there has been a significant shift in recent years. Companies are now increasingly recruiting CSOs with strong backgrounds in sustainability, reflecting a deeper commitment to integrating sustainability into core business strategies.

A report by the Weinreb Group highlighted that over 50% of newly appointed CSOs have substantial experience in environmental science, corporate social responsibility, or related fields. This trend indicates a growing recognition of the need for specialized

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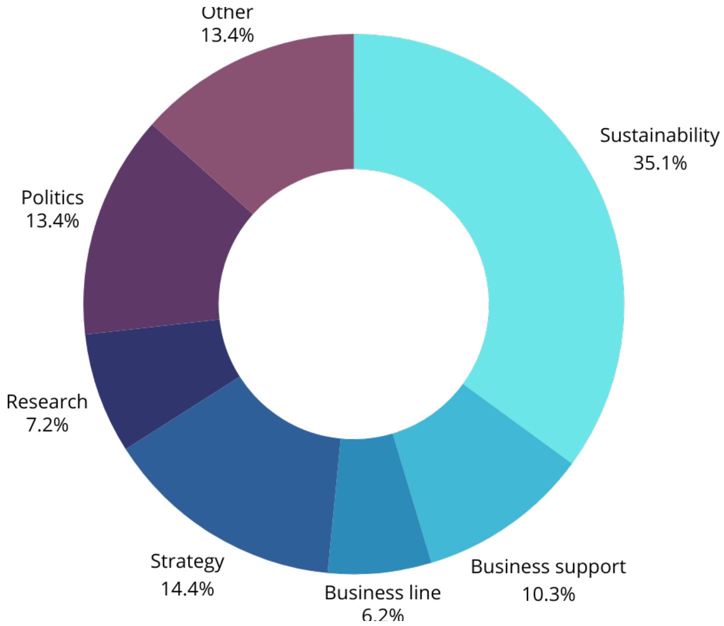
In 2021, Amazon appointed its first CSO, Kara Hurst, who brought extensive experience in sustainability, having previously led the company's sustainability initiatives and served as the CEO of The Sustainability Consortium..

Danone's CSO, Veronique Penchienati-Bosetta, has a strong background in environmental sustainability, aligning with the company's ambitious goals for sustainable development.



» *Source KPMG report*

knowledge and expertise to navigate complex sustainability issues effectively.

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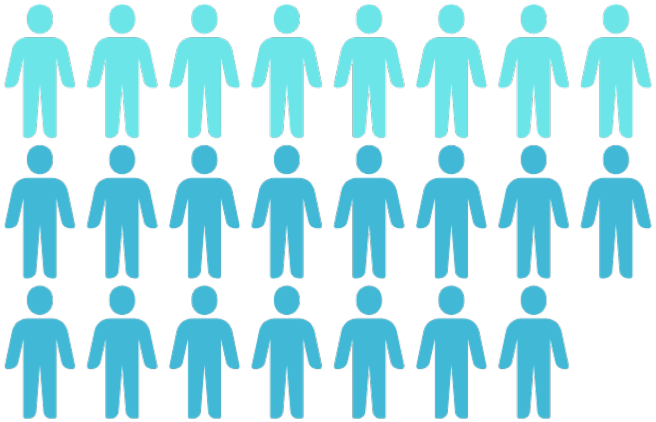
This shift towards recruiting professionals with specialized sustainability expertise ensures that companies can more effectively address regulatory requirements, meet investor expectations, and drive impactful sustainability initiatives. As sustainability becomes increasingly central to business success, the demand for CSOs with deep, relevant experience is likely to continue growing.

4. A seat at the CXO table

The reporting structure for Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs) has evolved significantly over the past decade. Historically, CSOs often reported to various departments such as finance, human resources, or marketing. This fragmented structure limited their influence and effectiveness in integrating sustainability across the entire organization. However, recent trends indicate a shift towards more strategic positioning of CSOs within corporate hierarchies.

According to a 2021 report by the Weinreb Group, approximately 36% of CSOs now report directly to the CEO, compared to only 19% in 2011. This change reflects a growing recognition of the importance of sustainability at the highest levels of corporate governance. Direct reporting to the CEO enhances the CSO's ability to influence key decisions and ensures that sustainability is embedded into the core business strategy.



34% of CSOs report directly to the CEO

» *Source KPMG report*

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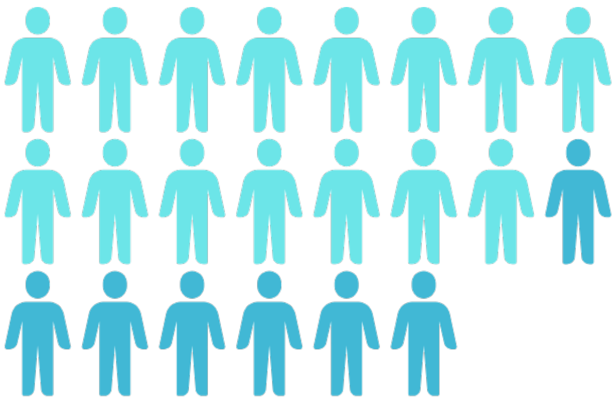


66% of CSOs are two steps to the CEO

» *Source KPMG report*

For example, at Unilever, the CSO reports directly to the CEO, which has been instrumental in driving the company's Sustainable Living Plan and integrating sustainability into its business operations. Similarly, at Microsoft, the CSO's direct line to the CEO has enabled the company to set and pursue ambitious sustainability goals, such as becoming carbon negative by 2030.

This shift not only empowers CSOs but also signals to stakeholders that the company is committed to serious, impactful sustainability practices. As sustainability continues to gain prominence, the trend of CSOs reporting directly to the CEO is expected to grow.

Unilever, the CSO reports directly to the CEO, which has been instrumental in driving the company's Sustainable Living Plan and integrating sustainability into its business operations. Similarly, at Microsoft, the CSO's direct line to the CEO has enabled the company to set and pursue ambitious sustainability goals, such as becoming carbon negative by 2030.

Three reasons why the role of the CSO is critical

The role of the Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) is becoming increasingly important as sustainability rises to the forefront of corporate strategy. This shift is driven by several key factors.

1. Strategic integration

According to a survey by Deloitte, 68% of CSOs identified the integration of corporate and sustainability strategy as a primary factor driving changes in their work. This integration underscores the growing recognition that sustainable practices are essential for long-term business success .

2. Investor pressure

Investor pressure is another significant factor, with 67% of CSOs highlighting it as a major driver . Investors are increasingly scrutinizing companies' ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) performance, recognizing that sustainable practices can mitigate risks and enhance financial performance. For example, BlackRock,

50 %

REGULATORY

CITED REGULATORY PRESSURE AS A MAJOR REASON

» *Source Deloitte report*

67%

INVESTOR

PRESSURE HIGHLIGHTED BY CSO'S AS A MAJOR REASON

» *Source KPMG report*

one of the world's largest asset managers, has made sustainability its new standard for investing, emphasizing the importance of robust ESG practices in its investment decisions .

3. Regulatory pressure

Additionally, 50% of CSOs cited an increase in regulatory requirements as a critical factor influencing their role . Regulatory frameworks like the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC) proposed climate risk disclosure rules are demanding more comprehensive and transparent reporting from companies . These regulations necessitate a strategic approach to sustainability that CSOs are uniquely positioned to lead.

Case studies illustrate the elevation of the CSO role in response to these trends. At Unilever, the CSO reports directly to the CEO, ensuring that sustainability is integrated into the core business strategy. Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan, which aims to decouple the company's growth from its environmental impact, has been a driving force behind its market success and reputation .

Similarly, at Microsoft, the CSO plays a crucial role in the company's commitment to becoming carbon negative by 2030. This ambitious goal involves extensive data collection, cross-departmental collaboration, and strategic oversight, demonstrating the integral role of the CSO in driving corporate sustainability .

In conclusion, the role of the CSO is gaining prominence due to the integration of sustainability into corporate strategy, increasing investor pressure, and stringent regulatory requirements. Companies like Unilever and Microsoft exemplify how elevating the CSO role can lead to successful and impactful sustainability initiatives, positioning them as leaders in the global transition towards sustainable business practices.

According to a survey by Deloitte, 68% of CSOs identified the integration of corporate and sustainability strategy as a primary factor driving changes in their work.

Five Challenges faced by CSOs

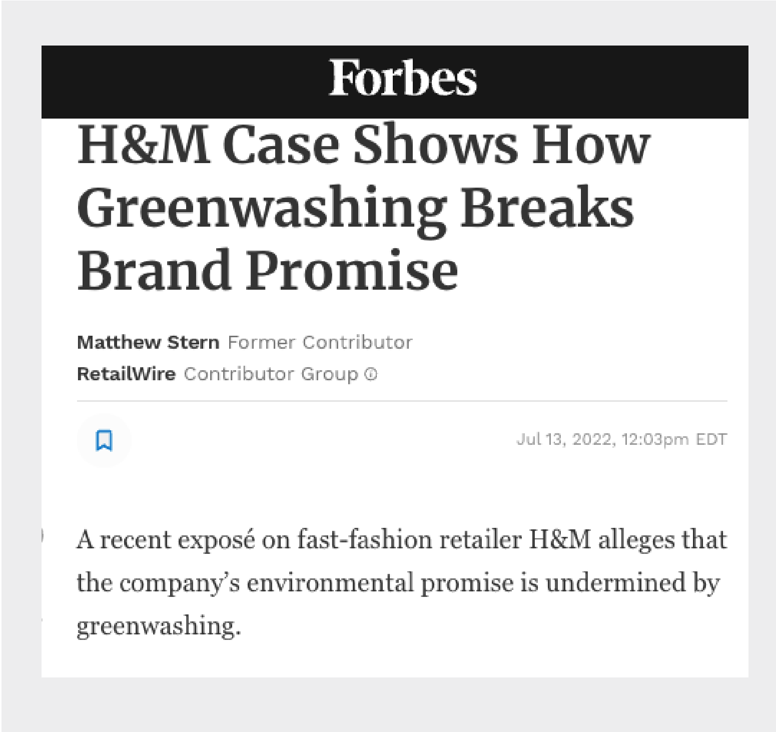
- Green washing allegations
- Complexity of ESG regulations
- Limited organisational power
- Sub-optimal reporting structure
- Data deluge

1. Green-washing allegations

Greenwashing allegations pose significant challenges for Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs), threatening their organisations' credibility and financial stability. Greenwashing, defined as misleading claims about environmental practices or benefits, can damage trust among stakeholders and lead to legal repercussions.

A study by TerraChoice found that 95% of consumer products marketed as green were found to be committing at least one sin of greenwashing, highlighting the prevalence of this issue.

The risks for CSOs are multifaceted. Firstly, regulatory scrutiny is intensifying. In 2021, the European Commission proposed new rules requiring companies to substantiate environmental claims, potentially leading to hefty fines for non-compliance.



Forbes

H&M Case Shows How Greenwashing Breaks Brand Promise

Matthew Stern Former Contributor
RetailWire Contributor Group

Jul 13, 2022, 12:03pm EDT

A recent exposé on fast-fashion retailer H&M alleges that the company's environmental promise is undermined by greenwashing.

66%

CUSTOMERS

NIELSEN SURVEY REVEALED THAT 66% OF GLOBAL CONSUMERS ARE WILLING TO PAY MORE FOR SUSTAINABLE GOODS.

For instance, in 2020, H&M faced a lawsuit for allegedly making misleading sustainability claims about its Conscious Collection, highlighting the legal risks involved.

Moreover, greenwashing can erode consumer trust. A Nielsen survey revealed that 66% of global consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable goods. However, if consumers perceive these claims as deceptive, it can lead to brand boycotts and diminished market share. CSOs must navigate these challenges by ensuring transparency and verifiability in sustainability initiatives.

For example, Volkswagen's emissions scandal in 2015 serves as a cautionary tale. The company falsely marketed its diesel engines as low-emission, resulting in a $14.7 billion settlement and a severe blow to its reputation.

Additionally, internal challenges include aligning corporate practices with sustainability goals. CSOs must implement robust verification processes and engage third-party auditors to validate their claims. They also need to foster a culture of integrity within the organization to avoid misleading practices. Patagonia's commitment to transparency in its supply chain and its use of the Higg Index to measure environmental impact is a positive example of avoiding greenwashing.

Greenwashing allegations present a substantial risk for CSOs, necessitating stringent oversight, transparent communication, and genuine commitment to sustainability. Failure to address these challenges can lead to legal consequences, loss of consumer trust, and significant reputational damage.

PRESS RELEASE

Volkswagen to Spend Up to $14.7 Billion to Settle Allegations of Cheating Emissions Tests and Deceiving Customers on 2.0 Liter Diesel Vehicles

Tuesday, June 28, 2016

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For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

Settlements Require VW to Spend up to $10 Billion to Buyback, Terminate Leases, or Modify Affected 2.0 Liter Vehicles and Compensate Consumers, and Spend $4.7 Billion to Mitigate Pollution and Make Investments that Support Zero-Emission Vehicle Technology

In two related settlements, one with the United States and the State of California, and one with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC), German automaker Volkswagen AG and related entities have agreed to spend up to $14.7 billion to settle allegations of cheating emissions tests

2. Complexity of ESG regulations

The complexity of reporting regulations has significantly increased in recent years, presenting challenges for organizations aiming to comply with evolving standards. This trend is driven by heightened regulatory scrutiny and growing demands for transparency from stakeholders. The European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), adopted in 2021, exemplifies this shift. The CSRD expands the scope of reporting requirements to include detailed environmental, social, and governance (ESG) metrics, affecting around 50,000 companies compared to 11,700 under the previous Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD) .

The complexity is not limited to Europe. In the United States, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) proposed new rules in 2022 for mandatory climate risk disclosures. These rules require companies to provide detailed information on greenhouse gas emissions, climate-related financial impacts, and governance

> "The CSRD expands the scope of reporting requirements to include detailed environmental, social, and governance (ESG) metrics, affecting around 50,000 companies compared to 11,700 under the previous Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD) ."

> The costs of compliance are rising as well. A 2021 survey by EY found that 74% of companies expect their ESG reporting costs to increase over the next five years due to more stringent requirements .

processes, adding layers of reporting obligations .

Furthermore, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) updated its standards in 2021, emphasizing the need for companies to report on a broader array of ESG issues with increased rigor. For instance, the GRI now demands more comprehensive disclosures on human rights impacts and supply chain practices, reflecting a broader and more detailed approach to sustainability reporting .

The costs of compliance are rising as well. A 2021 survey by EY found that 74% of companies expect their ESG reporting costs to increase over the next five years due to more stringent requirements . This financial burden can be significant, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises.

A notable case study is the Royal Dutch Shell, which faced legal action in 2021 for allegedly failing to adequately disclose climate risks and align its business model with the Paris Agreement goals. This case underscores the legal and reputational risks associated with non-compliance and inadequate reporting .

As reporting regulations become more complex and expansive, organizations must invest in robust data collection and reporting systems to ensure compliance. The trend towards more detailed and comprehensive reporting reflects the growing importance of transparency in corporate governance and the increasing expectations of regulators, investors, and other stakeholders.


Shell directors personally sued over 'flawed' climate strategy

Claimants ClientEarth say the oil company's plan puts the company at financial risk as the world transitions to clean energy

Environmental lawyers ClientEarth have filed the lawsuit against the 11 directors at the high court in England. I

3. Cross functional mandate without power

Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs) often face the significant challenge of managing a cross-functional mandate without sufficient organizational power.

This issue arises because sustainability initiatives typically span various departments, including operations, finance, marketing, and human resources.

Despite the comprehensive nature of their responsibilities, many CSOs lack direct authority over these departments, limiting their ability to drive significant change.

A survey by Weinreb Group found that only 26% of CSOs report directly to the CEO. This reporting structure is crucial because it determines the level of influence and access to top-level decision-making processes a CSO has.

When CSOs report to lower-tier executives, they may struggle to secure

A study by PwC highlighted that companies where the CSO reports directly to the CEO are more likely to integrate sustainability into their core business strategy.

Unilever

Under former CEO Paul Polman, the CSO reported directly to him, which allowed for the successful implementation of the Sustainable Living Plan. This top-down commitment ensured sustainability was embedded in the company's strategy, resulting in significant environmental and social impact improvements.

VS

ExxonMobil

ExxonMobil. Despite having a CSO, ExxonMobil has been criticized for insufficient action on climate change, partly due to the CSO's limited influence within the corporate hierarchy.

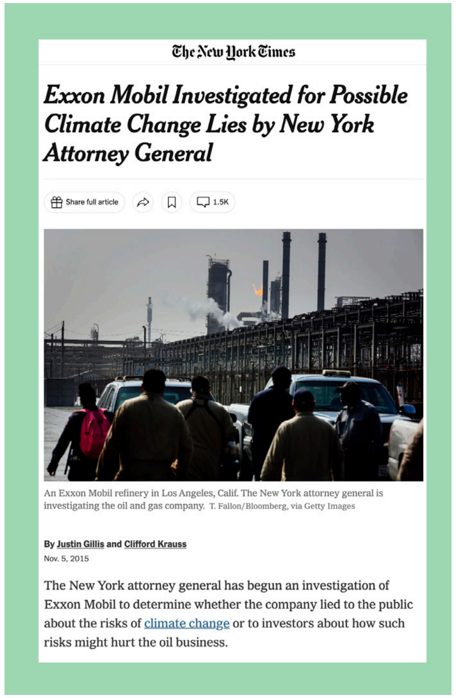
the necessary resources and support for sustainability initiatives, leading to fragmented efforts and slower progress.

For instance, a study by PwC highlighted that companies where the CSO reports directly to the CEO are more likely to integrate sustainability into their core business strategy. These companies demonstrated stronger performance in ESG metrics and were better positioned to meet regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations.

The case of Unilever is illustrative. Under former CEO Paul Polman, the CSO reported directly to him, which allowed for the successful implementation of the Sustainable Living Plan. This top-down commitment ensured that sustainability was embedded in the company's strategy, resulting in significant environmental and social impact improvements.

In contrast, companies where the CSO lacks direct access to the CEO often face challenges in prioritizing sustainability, as seen in the case of ExxonMobil. Despite having a CSO, ExxonMobil has been criticized for insufficient action on climate change, partly due to the CSO's limited influence within the corporate hierarchy.

Moreover, the lack of sufficient organizational power can hinder a CSO's ability to foster cross-departmental collaboration. Sustainability requires a holistic approach, integrating various aspects of the business. When CSOs do not have the authority to coordinate these efforts effectively, it can lead to siloed initiatives that fail to achieve meaningful impact.



The New York Times

Exxon Mobil Investigated for Possible Climate Change Lies by New York Attorney General

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An Exxon Mobil refinery in Los Angeles, Calif. The New York attorney general is investigating the oil and gas company. T. Fallon/Bloomberg, via Getty Images

By Justin Gillis and Clifford Krauss

Nov. 5, 2015

The New York attorney general has begun an investigation of Exxon Mobil to determine whether the company lied to the public about the risks of climate change or to investors about how such risks might hurt the oil business.

4. Sub-optimal reporting structures

Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs) often face the problem of fuzzy reporting structures, which can significantly impede their effectiveness. In many organizations, CSOs report to different departments based on the situational needs: marketing for communication, legal for compliance issues, or finance for reporting requirements. This fragmented reporting can dilute the strategic influence of the CSO and hinder the holistic integration of sustainability initiatives across the company.A 2020 study by the Harvard Business Review highlighted that only 29% of CSOs report directly to the CEO, while the majority report to other departments such as marketing, legal, or finance.

This fragmented reporting structure can lead to a lack of cohesive strategy and slower implementation of sustainability initiatives. When CSOs report to marketing, their role often becomes overly focused on public relations and

A study by the Harvard Business Review highlighted that 71% of CSOs report to other departments such as marketing, legal, or finance.

THE PEPSI CHALLENGE: FOOD AND DRINKS GIANT ACCUSED OF GREENWASHING AND CONTRIBUTING TO PLASTIC POLLUTION

Posted: 12/01/2024

- The State of New York has issued legal proceedings against PepsiCo after finding significant plastic pollution in the Buffalo River.
- Allegations include that the company's packaging has caused or contributed to a public nuisance and it has failed to adequately warn consumers of the harms that its packaging can cause.
- The organisation was also accused of greenwashing in light of purportedly deceptive statements regarding the recyclability of its plastic packaging and its commitment to reducing plastic production.

communication, potentially leading to accusations of greenwashing if substantive actions do not match the messaging.

For instance, the case of PepsiCo illustrates this issue. PepsiCo's sustainability efforts were initially criticized for being more about marketing than actual impact, partly because their CSO reported to the marketing department.

Reporting to the legal department can narrow the CSO's focus to compliance, missing broader strategic opportunities. This is evident in the case of Volkswagen, where sustainability efforts were primarily driven by legal compliance following the emissions scandal. The focus on legal issues overshadowed a broader strategic integration of sustainability into the company's core operations.

Similarly, when CSOs report to finance, the emphasis tends to be on meeting reporting requirements rather than driving transformative change. While financial oversight is crucial, it can restrict the CSO's ability to pursue innovative sustainability strategies.

The case of Unilever underlines the importance of direct reporting to the CEO. Unilever's CSO reports directly to the CEO, which has enabled the company to embed sustainability into its core strategy comprehensively.

For CSOs to effectively manage their cross-functional responsibilities and drive substantial sustainability initiatives, they must report directly to the CEO. This structure ensures that sustainability is prioritized at the highest level and integrated throughout the organization, leading to more effective and cohesive sustainability strategies.

5. Data deluge

Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs) face significant challenges with the overwhelming data requirements for ESG reporting. Regulatory frameworks like the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the SEC in the U.S., and California's regulations make ESG reporting data-intensive.

The CSRD mandates disclosures on over 100 ESG metrics, affecting around 50,000 companies. The SEC's 2022 rules require detailed disclosures on climate-related risks, and California's strict standards add complexity with specific emissions metrics. The GRI updated its standards in 2021 for more comprehensive ESG disclosures.

A Deloitte survey found that 72% of ESG professionals struggle with data collection and management. The vast data volume

A Deloitte survey found that 72% of ESG professionals struggle with data collection and management. The vast data volume can overwhelm ESG teams

> The lack of standardized reporting formats across regulatory bodies further complicates the process, requiring tailored data reporting for each framework. This increases the workload and often necessitates specialized software and collaboration across departments.

can overwhelm ESG teams, challenging their ability to ensure accuracy and completeness. For example, Microsoft's goal to become carbon negative by 2030 requires extensive data collection across its supply chain, necessitating advanced data management systems and significant investments.

The lack of standardized reporting formats across regulatory bodies further complicates the process, requiring tailored data reporting for each framework. This increases the workload and often necessitates specialized software and collaboration across departments.

Inaccurate or incomplete reporting can lead to regulatory penalties, legal liabilities, and reputational damage. For instance, in 2020, H&M faced scrutiny and legal challenges over alleged inaccuracies in its sustainability claims.

Overall, the data deluge from frameworks like CSRD, GRI, SEC, and California regulations presents substantial challenges for CSOs, demanding robust data management systems, technology investments, and skilled personnel to ensure compliance and transparency in ESG reporting.

A roadmap for CSO success

The role of a Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) is crucial in driving corporate sustainability. To navigate challenges like greenwashing, complex reporting regulations, and data deluge, CSOs need a structured approach. This 30-60-90 day roadmap provides actionable steps for new CSOs to establish a strong foundation, build momentum, and integrate sustainability into core business strategies. By focusing on immediate priorities, fostering collaboration, and securing top-level support, CSOs can effectively manage their responsibilities and drive impactful sustainability initiatives, positioning their organizations for long-term success.

First 30 Days: Laying the Foundation

Understand the Current Landscape:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the company's existing sustainability policies, practices, and performance.
- Meet with key stakeholders (executives, department heads, employees, and external partners) to understand their perspectives and expectations.
- Analyze regulatory requirements and assess the company's current compliance status with frameworks like CSRD, GRI, and SEC.

30 DAYS PLAN

UNDERSTAND CURRENT LANDSCAPE

Review sustainability policies, gather stakeholder perspectives, assess compliance, and identify improvement areas

ESTABLISH KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Meet with executives and the board to discuss the strategic importance and vision for sustainability.

ASSESS TEAM & RESOURCES

Assess the sustainability team's skills and resource needs to achieve goals.

60 DAYS PLAN

DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN

Develop a sustainability roadmap with measurable ESG targets and a stakeholder engagement plan.

INITIATE KEY PROJECTS

Begin immediate actions to address compliance gaps and launch a transparency campaign to build stakeholder trust.

ENHANCE DATA MANAGEMENT

Invest in advanced ESG data management systems and establish protocols for accurate data handling and reporting.

FOSTER CROSS FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION

Form cross-departmental groups and conduct training sessions to integrate sustainability throughout the business

90 DAYS PLAN

IMPLEMENT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Establish a sustainability governance framework with clear roles and ensure the CSO reports directly to the CEO.

MONITOR & REPORT PROGRESS

mplement regular sustainability performance monitoring and reporting, and present progress to the board and stakeholders.

STRENGTHEN EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Build partnerships and engage third-party auditors to stay informed on best practices and validate sustainability claims.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Create a feedback loop for continuous stakeholder input and plan long-term sustainable growth initiatives.

- Review past sustainability reports to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement.

Establish Key Relationships:

- Set up one-on-one meetings with the CEO and other C-suite executives to discuss the strategic importance of sustainability.
- Engage with the board of directors to understand their vision for sustainability and how it aligns with corporate strategy.

Assess the Team and Resources:

- Evaluate the sustainability team's skills, capabilities, and gaps.
- Identify resource needs for achieving sustainability goals, including technology, data management systems, and external consultants.

Next 60 Days: Building Momentum

Develop a Strategic Plan:

- Create a detailed sustainability roadmap that outlines short-term and long-term goals aligned with corporate strategy.
- Set measurable targets for environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance.
- Draft a stakeholder engagement plan to ensure ongoing communication and collaboration.

Initiate Key Projects:

- Start implementing immediate actions to address any critical compliance gaps identified in the first 30 days.
- Launch a transparency and communication campaign to build trust with stakeholders, emphasizing the company's commitment to genuine sustainability practices.

Enhance Data Management:

- Invest in advanced data management systems to handle ESG data effectively.
- Establish protocols for data collection, verification, and reporting to ensure accuracy and compliance.

Foster Cross-Functional Collaboration:

- Create cross-departmental working groups to integrate sustainability into all aspects of the business.
- Organize training sessions and workshops to educate employees about the importance of sustainability and their role in achieving the goals.

Final 90 Days: Driving Integration and Impact

Implement Governance Structures:

- Establish a sustainability governance framework with clear roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines.
- Ensure that the CSO reports directly to the CEO to enhance strategic influence and integration.

Monitor and Report Progress:

- Develop a system for regular monitoring and reporting on sustainability performance.
- Prepare and present a progress report to the board and stakeholders, highlighting achievements and areas needing attention.

Strengthen External Partnerships:

- Build partnerships with NGOs, industry groups, and other external stakeholders to stay informed about best practices and emerging trends.
- Engage third-party auditors to validate sustainability claims and enhance credibility.

Continuous Improvement:

- Establish a feedback loop to continuously gather input from stakeholders and adjust strategies as needed.
- Plan for the next phase of initiatives, focusing on long-term projects and innovations that drive sustainable growth.

By following this 30-60-90 day roadmap, CSOs can lay a solid foundation, build momentum, and drive meaningful integration of sustainability into their organization’s core strategy. This structured approach ensures that the CSO can address immediate challenges while setting the stage for long-term success