

Briefing: The top team does not always initiate change but they play a critical role if change is to take root and grow. They can bestow or deny organisational legitimacy to initiatives; they lock or unlock resources and are needed to engage with key stakeholders. They also play an important role in creating the culture of their organisation and embedding a vision of sustainability.

By focussing on leadership we can help to clarify the developmental challenges facing the governance of an organisation.

Information

From Documents: Please find at least four examples, two from part A and two from part B of the following list or suggest alternative evidence. Additionally, there might be project plans and learning processes with clear sign off from the top team that you could produce.

A. Senior Level

Company policy or position statement on climate change

Press releases

Speeches

Annual report and accounts statements

Carbon Disclosure Project Response

Environment and CSR Report

The Business Plan

B. Organisational Responsibility level

Statements from significant budget holders/decision makers

Departmental practice/policy statements

Statements affecting awarding of contracts, eg Pre-qualifying Questionnaires (PQQs)

Minutes

Interpretations of ISO14001 in practice

From Interview

Questions

1. How do you see climate change affecting your company now and into the future?
2. What are you pleased about when you consider progress in working effectively on this issue?
3. If you look 4-5 years into the future what capacities will you need to develop to support clients, such as government departments? Where might it be appropriate to take a lead in assisting them?
4. Looking at your own role, how is the issue impacting on the decisions you make?
5. How is climate change changing what you do (e.g. appointments, delegation of responsibility etc)?
6. What then do you see as your own learning challenges/needs?

Pen Portraits (For use by reviewer as a prompt or with client)

Which of the following characteristics best describes the position of your top team on climate change? And/or if you're in the top team how do you think you are perceived? Please highlight the statement with the fluorescent pen. You might also like to fill in the gap and/or add your own pen portrait.

1. They spend money and/or time blocking action, are sceptical or ill informed about the impacts, see the issue as either a threat to or as irrelevant to their business.

2. They are extremely hands-off and insulated from feedback or learning. They make minimal investment in initiatives, or just sufficient to tick the box marked, "takes climate change into account". Show little interest in outcomes of climate change initiatives. Awareness is based more on opinion than evidence. Governance processes ignore the issue. Naive and unchallenging of unrealistic targets and commitments. Seen as lacking in commitment.

3. They take responsibility for their organisation's contribution to the problem. They are visibly engaging with the issues from time to time. They allocate budgets and management time to the issue, including some of their own time. They are interested in the outcomes of initiatives and invest resources in continuous improvement. They set realistic targets based on evidence. They make a clear case to shareholders/investors/stakeholders for committing resources to climate change.

4. They allocate significant resources to key projects, they frame challenges and invite/welcome responses. They raise the public profile of the organisation's climate change strategy/actions and invite others to learn with them. They begin to look further than just a competent response but are willing to express their own need to learn. There is still little consideration of the impact of climate change on their own long-term survival and competitiveness but questions about that are just beginning.

5. They set a clear strategic direction which moves the agenda forward from minimising our contribution to climate change to minimising the impact of climate change on us. They adopt a much longer timescale for action, typically 20 years or longer. They have a keen understanding of threats but also how to maximise opportunities. They also identify and work to remove constraints to changes they want to make. They make big money choices and follow through on the translation of strategy into operations. They talk big numbers and set ambitious targets which are congruent with the capacity of the organisation to deliver. Their commitment is highly visible and unwavering.

6. Not enough information available yet, suggestions welcome!