



Soft Skills in the Green Economy

What people skills and leadership skills do businesses think will be essential to thrive in the green industry?





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Overview

Innovative and groundbreaking businesses and teams when striving for growth, entering new markets and taking new opportunities, can often focus on the technical delivery of their product or service.

But without the softer (and sometimes more challenging) skills required to communicate often complex ideas, to lead teams through change and to influence new thinking in non-green industries, we will struggle deliver the impact at the pace our planet needs.

We wanted to find out about which soft skills are critical to the future of the Green economy and which often go unnoticed in fast-paced working environments. Skills that are nonetheless often the difference between “moving along” and “moving mountains” in reaching our goals!

NB We use the term “soft” skills to refer to skills based around the human personality and emotional intelligence that includes communication, leadership, teamwork. We know lots of people prefer to use “human” or “people” skills, but we use “soft” for ease of understanding by a wider audience.

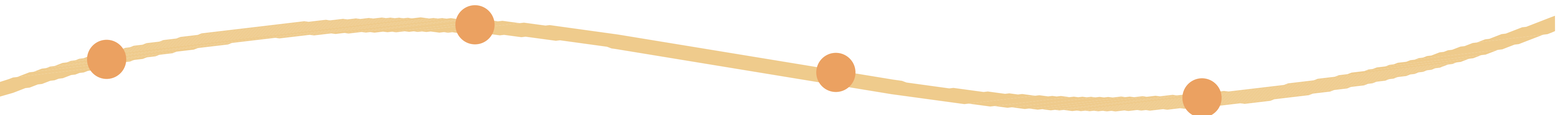


What did we do?

In Summer 2023, we conducted telephone and online interviews with a range of businesses across the Green economy, these included key areas such as renewable energy, recycling, consultancies and social enterprises as well as leaders within green teams (Environmental, Social & Governance, Sustainability etc.). All employed people in the UK and some with involvement in Global markets.

We asked a range of structured and open questions so that contributors could talk freely about what they felt most important to them to achieve success. We looked at recruitment, delivering success, barriers and staff development.

Results were analysed, with around 50 responses given in each area, with some businesses giving more than one reply. This document provides insights on the key themes for all green business and leaders to consider to enable delivery of their goals and ambitions.



**Recruitment
& retention**

**Delivering
success**

**Communication
barriers**

**People
development**



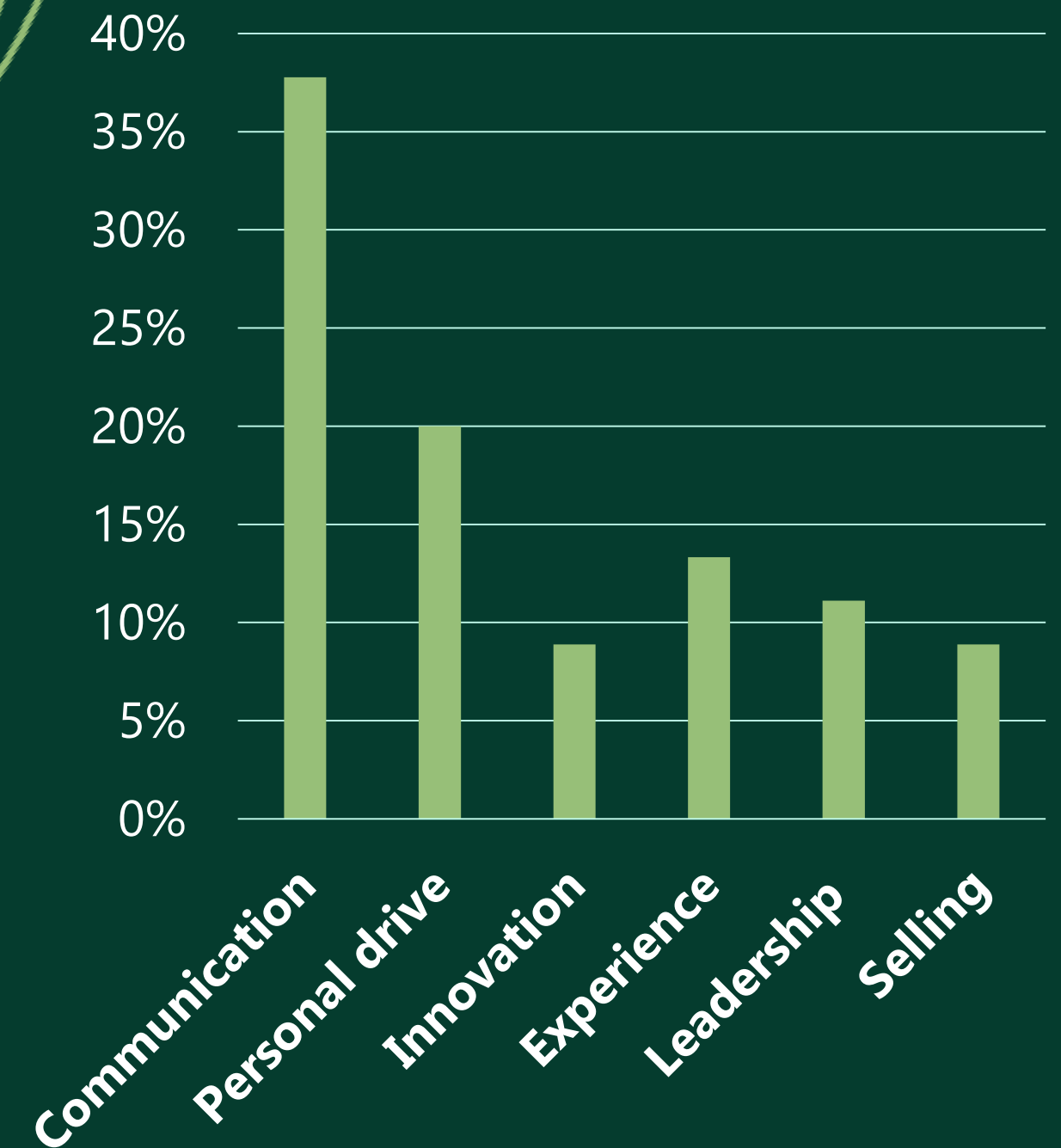
What soft skills do employers look for?

When recruiting new staff, being a good communicator with customers, stakeholders, internal colleagues and across teams was paramount. Indeed “Teamworking” was mentioned more than any other word.

Interestingly several respondents highlighted how Green sector businesses and their customers have strong ethical values and being unable to demonstrate these through strong communication could damage credibility.

Communication is much more than what we say or write. How we convey intangible messages like our values or innovative concepts to those who may have different levels of understanding, is a key consideration.

Characteristics businesses look for



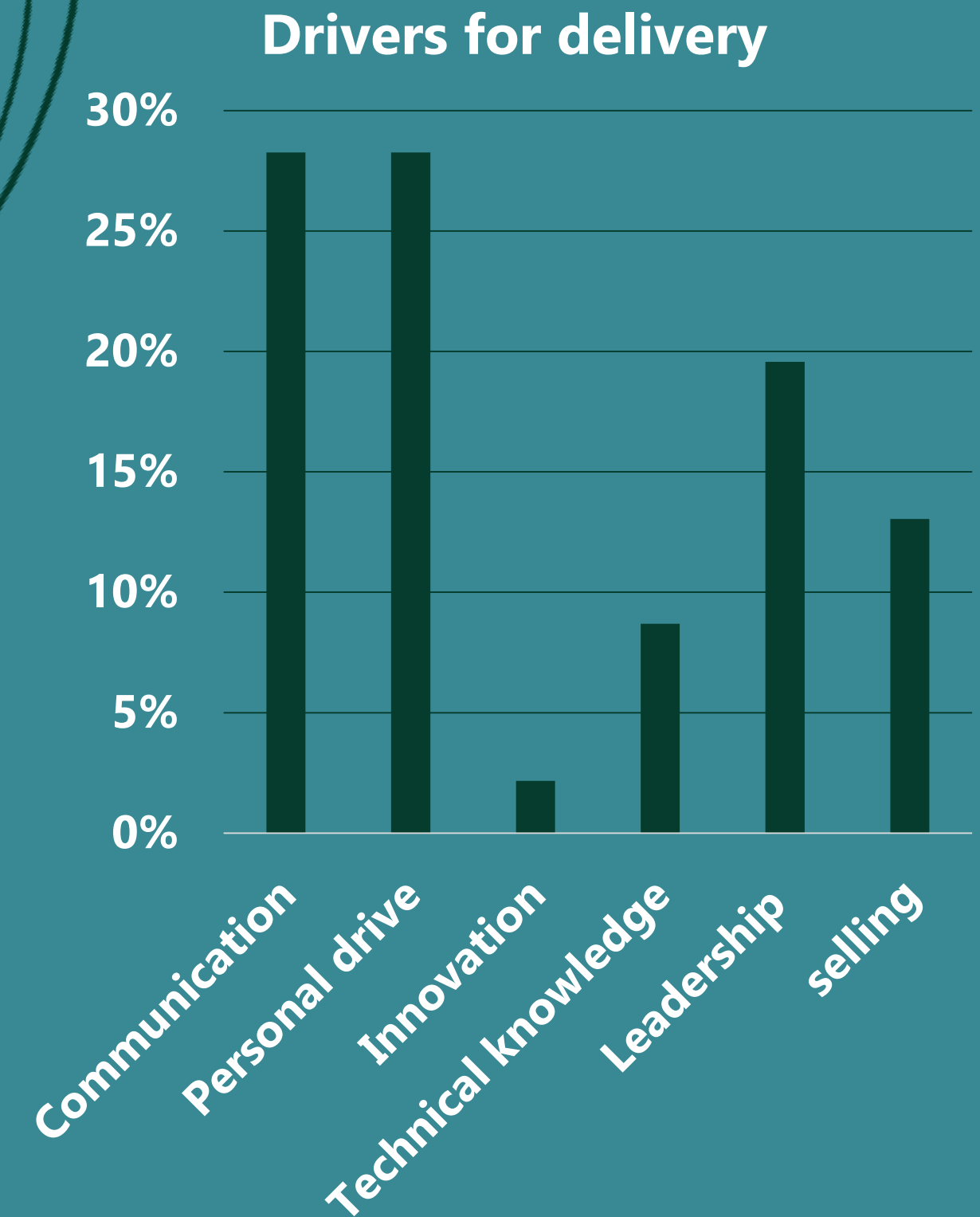


What skills will drive delivery?

Looking to the future, we asked business what soft skills they felt would be vital for their people to develop and utilise in order to achieve business success.

As before, communication was crucial, but there was a subtle shift towards the individual rather than the team, with more talk of leadership, influencing, empathy and emotional intelligence.

The ability for both individuals and teams to communicate in order to bring people with them on a shared journey is key for reaching our goals.





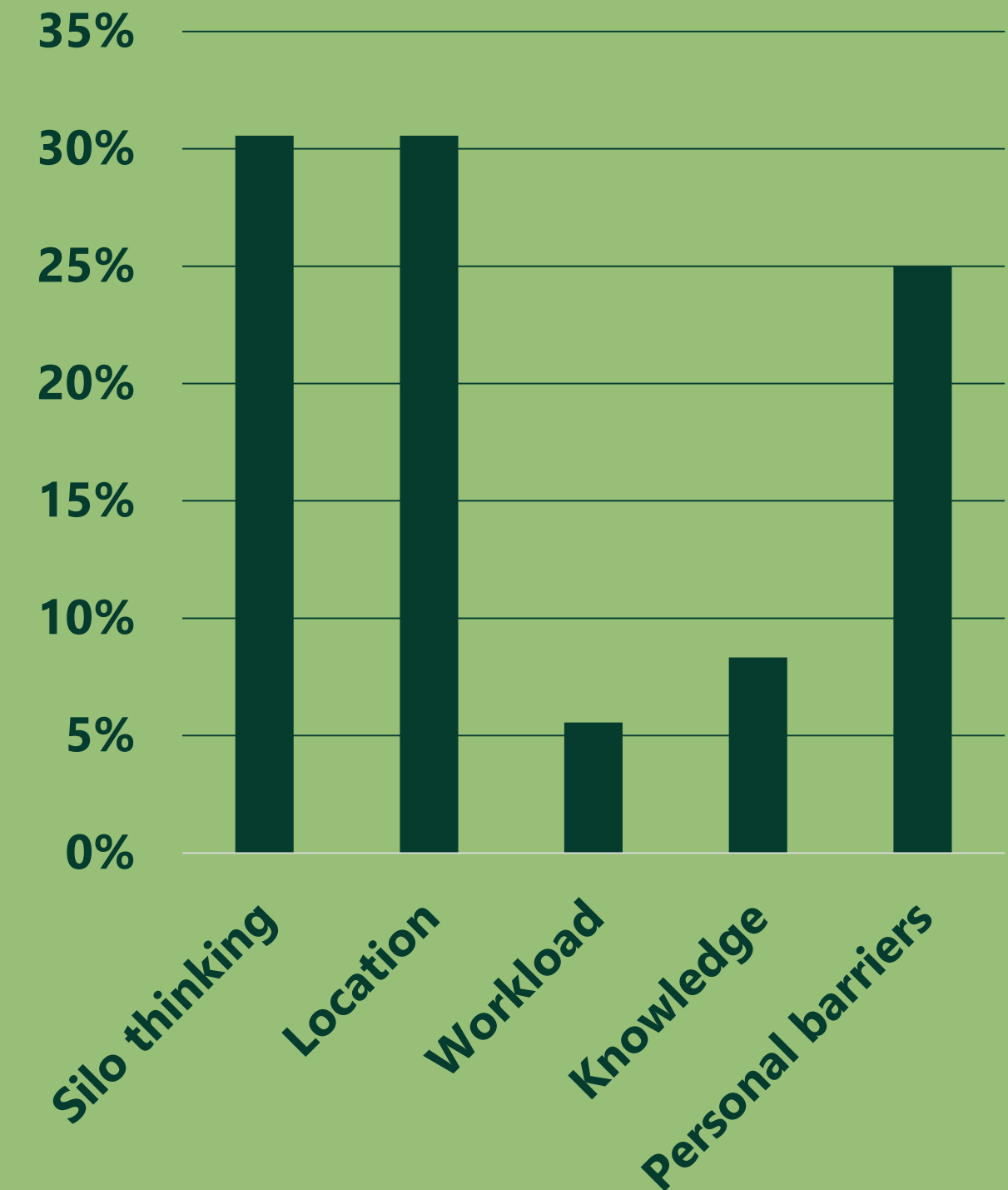
Barriers to communication

With communication being such a strong underlying theme in success, understanding what prevents it was important.

The challenges of remote working, multiple sites and being internationally dispersed were significant; as was “silo thinking”, where there is too much emphasis on individual objectives and not enough on collaborative working across functional groups.

Overcoming people’s personal barriers to “Green” ideas, such as reluctance to change and delivering a technical product to a non-technical audience were also highlighted.

Barriers to communication





Recruiting and retaining staff

We asked what strategies employers used to attract talent to their business.

There was a significant focus on the value that the work itself gave for employee satisfaction; carrying out work that has a positive impact and made a real difference.

The importance of having “Purpose” was mentioned by many, perhaps reflecting the nature of an ethical approach a business has and the importance of communicating vision and values.

Salaries and perks were of less importance, but still needed to be attractive in a competitive landscape.

Recruitment and retention

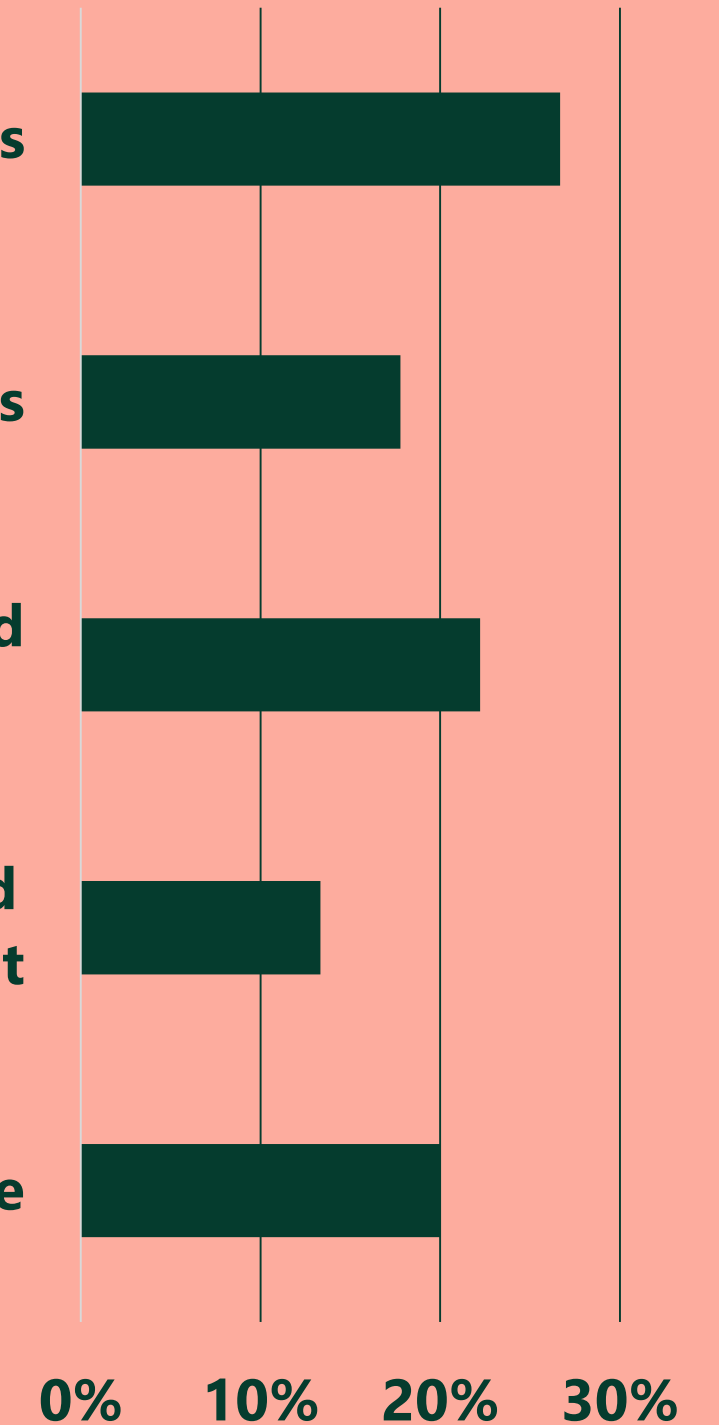
Work outcomes

Employee benefits

Vision and purpose

Training and development

Finance





Summary

For all businesses **effective communication**, both with external customers and stakeholders as well as internal colleagues is vital and the Green Sector is no different. Specifically, there is a need to develop people who can **communicate complexity** and **make change happen** within the Green Sector.

Green businesses and teams are at the **forefront of change** which can bring difficulty in terms of the **ability to challenge existing practices, behaviours and beliefs**. As well as the need for people such as sales, marketing or customer success to distil technical or innovative information behind a product, service or practice into a format that can be **easily understood and embraced** by a person who is unfamiliar with it.

As one contributor put it, “***we can preach to the converted* but that is an easy and comfortable conversation. We need to be able to convince those not already converted**” and this influencing challenge **will limit opportunity to grow and change**.

Although not unique to the sector, it is clear that **ethically driven businesses have more than just a product to sell** - they have a **vision, values** and, perhaps most telling, a **purpose**, which can go hand in hand with driving the commercial success that is essential to thrive. The ability of individuals and teams to develop the skills to **learn, live** and **lead** in these areas and to communicate impactfully is critical.



What's worth thinking about?

Understanding your purpose - As one contributor put it, "Profit with Purpose", or it could equally be purpose with profit.

As an ethical business, do you support customers, stakeholders, employee colleagues to understand and embrace the vision and values that make you who you are?

Understanding your value - Every individual in the organisation has a part to play.

People are attracted to organisations because of the brand or role itself yet can fall out of love quickly! Can every individual within your team articulate the value they add and the difference they make?

Understanding your teams - Remote working, agile communication, use of new platforms have all changed how we communicate.

Consider how the benefits of new ways of working may also have drawbacks and ask if this is hindering your team's development.

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A big Thank You from wayvie

"I'd like to send our thanks to all the people who took the time to offer their invaluable feedback to enable us to put this report together. We couldn't have done it without you and so appreciate all you have done.

We always welcome feedback and love to contribute to related discussions about our passion of developing the soft skills in the green economy and green teams. We are always eager to listen and look forward to playing our part in helping to hit the targets that the earth has set us".

Pete Starr – Managing Director, wayvie



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A bit about wayvie

We're on a mission to be the UK's number one provider of soft skills to the green industry.

We commit to helping people with green objectives be brilliant in all that they do.

We won't stop until every business in the green industry has a culture strong enough to enable them to hit the targets that the earth has set us.

We're committed to helping businesses make small changes that create a ripple effect. Lots of small changes stack up to make big impacts – which is how we want to help as many green firms as possible make their difference.



How we work

Training programmes and workshops blended with a range of learning methods

Every training intervention has an identified carbon footprint and is offset through our partner Ecologi

Every trainer is carbon literate and supportive in your organisational purpose, and driven to help people be brilliant in their roles

To find out more about us and how we can work together, get in touch at hello@wayvie.co.uk
wayvie.co.uk

