

Business reporting on SDGs improves, but still long way to go

The number of organisations globally which mention the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their annual corporate or sustainability reports has increased by 10% on last year. This is according to a recent study by PwC - [From promise to reality](#). Concrete measures and integration, however, remain elusive for many as organisations struggle to identify actions beyond business as usual targets.



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PwC's study examines the corporate and sustainability reporting of over 700 listed companies across 21 countries and six sectors, to test on the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into business strategy, planning and reporting. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015, encompassing 17 goals and associated targets and indicators for success. They provide a roadmap to help organisations navigate the major environmental, social and economic challenges the world faces.

Unlocking trillions of dollars

It's estimated that in terms of new business opportunities alone, the SDGs can potentially unlock trillions of dollars in revenue opportunities and cost savings and create hundreds of millions of new jobs.

The study suggests that despite the SDGs being part of global business conversations for over three years, and a significant number of companies pledging a commitment to the goals, there remains a gap between companies' expressed intentions and their ability to embed the SDGs into actual business strategy and report on it.

- 72% of companies in the study mention the SDGs; the majority (60%) in their sustainability reports rather than in main financial or integrated reports.
- 50% of companies have identified priority SDGs.
- Only 28% disclose meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs) related to the goals.
- 27% of the total companies mention SDGs as part of their business strategy.
- Just 19% of CEO or chair statements in annual reports mention the SDGs.

- The average score for reporting quality of those companies that had prioritised SDGs was 2.71 out of 5.
- The broad sectors of technology, media and telecoms and energy, utilities and mining lead other industries examined on mentioning the SDGs in their reporting.

Jayne Mammatt, partner sustainability and climate change, PwC South Africa comments: “Progress on broad awareness and integration is a positive step for the SDGs, but it’s only a small step. For every one of the 17 goals, there are pressing real world issues that directly impact the world of business. While there is a clear appetite for embracing the SDGs, many organisations still lack the strategy, tools and culture needed to transform those commitments into tangible business actions.”

Most popular priority goals

There is no change in the most popular choices in this year’s study of the priority goals - Decent work and economic growth (SDG8); Climate action (SDG13); and Responsible consumption and production (SDG12). In some cases it appears that companies report on SDGs that correspond to existing activities and metrics they are already capturing.

Mammatt further comments: “Success with the SDGs depends on making them a central part of business strategy. What is planned for, measured and reported in public filing is a good indicator of what is embedded in a businesses’ strategy and priorities. Invariably that strategy is shaped at the very top of the organisation by CEOs and embedded with key performance indicators and reporting. The increase in companies indicating the SDGs challenge in their reporting is a positive sign of engagement that will increasingly need to be backed by strategies that look beyond business as usual at the opportunities being presented.”

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