

5 WAYS TO EVALUATE A COMPANY'S APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY



Denise Starcher, Vice President of Human Resources at Menasha Corporation, shares tips to gauge a company's commitment to sustainability.

A sustainable company offers job seekers a level of certainty in terms of business growth, opportunities, and long-term competitiveness. But what does sustainability encompass and how do you know if it is part of a company's culture? Today, the term "sustainability" often extends beyond environmental factors and includes a company's commitment to operating responsibly on all fronts. Programs for employees, involvement in communities and societal issues, and an emphasis on innovation and change are considered sustainable business practices. Companies that incorporate social, environmental, and financial targets demonstrate accountability and commitment to sustainability. These business traits are of particular importance to millennials, who are estimated to be the nation's largest living generation. A 2017 [Deloitte](#) survey revealed 86 percent of millennials surveyed believe business success should be measured by more than just financial performance. Job seekers can evaluate if a company's approach to sustainability is a good fit by looking at its philosophy and actions. Here are five ways you can gauge a company's position on sustainability:

1. Read vision, mission and value statements.

These statements identify an organization's top priorities and core beliefs. Do the statements include direction and guidance you can align with? Do they reflect a core ideology that is meaningful to you? It's important to identify if the organization lives by these statements by providing examples of their values in action.

2. Check out sustainability or responsibility reports.

A publication or document that transparently provides information about goals and activities can reveal a company's intent. Not too long ago, companies produced environmental reports in order to highlight its key green activities. Today, "responsibility" reports are replacing environmental reports and provide not only environmental data, but also information on a broad range of business policies and practices. These reports shed light on the company's focus and culture. At Menasha Corporation, we publish an annual [Corporate Social Responsibility Report](#), which clarifies our three-tiered approach to operating responsibly and includes a report card on our progress. We structure our report using the framework of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), a global organization that has set the standards for sustainability reporting. When compiling our data, we looked at more than 150 issues that could impact a company and identified those most relevant to our customers, employees and shareholders. We report on those issues so others can see how we're doing in terms of living up to our commitments.

3. Identify a company's customers.

Customers that prioritize sustainability and responsibility want to do business with companies that can support its philosophy and can demonstrate a similar commitment. Menasha Corporation's customers include large, global companies that have economic, environmental, and social sustainability goals. In fact, the number of large companies that report on sustainability is steadily increasing. In May 2017, the Governance & Accountability Institute [reported](#) 81% of the S&P 500 companies published corporate sustainability reports in 2016. We have been able to show our customers we practice what we preach by our decision to transparently disclose our activities and progress by publicly sharing our information in our Corporate Social Responsibility Report for the past seven years.

4. Determine if internal tools or processes support a company's purpose.

A good sign that a company is serious about its commitment to sustainability is the presence of tools and processes that are built into daily activities and products. Are there employee development opportunities and safety programs? Does a company survey customers and have avenues where innovation can thrive? One of the ways Menasha Corporation supports our customers' environmental goals is with customized packaging environmental calculators that measure energy, waste and greenhouse gas for a product or compares product options in order to evaluate savings data and environmental improvements.

5. Evaluate a company's community or philanthropic activities.

A company culture that values people and equality typically also appreciates its role in a community and society. Companies that "give back" in some form show it is an engaged and responsible business. Employee volunteerism and formal philanthropic programs can help you identify causes important to a company. Many companies, like Menasha Corporation, have established a Foundation whereby a percentage of company profits is designated to be donated to nonprofit organizations and causes.

If you want to work for a company that measures its success in more ways than just short-term financial performance, you can evaluate how sustainable a company is through any of these channels outlined above and determine if its core values align with yours.



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