

The Art Of Sustainable Workplaces



DEVONO



Introduction

In today's evolving workplace, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles are redefining the standards of corporate responsibility, employee well-being and ethical governance. Achieving ESG goals is more than just a commitment to sustainability – it's a strategic approach that integrates these principles into every aspect of the workplace.

ESG success requires a collaborative effort, where relationship-building and alignment across all stakeholders are paramount. By fostering strong partnerships and embedding ESG into workplace culture and the broader industry, companies can drive meaningful change, ensuring that initiatives are not only met but deeply ingrained within the fabric of our organisations, contributing to a more sustainable and equitable future.



Driving Change: A Journey to B Corp in Real Estate

Devono are proud to be a certified B Corporation firm, having made the commitment to be a purpose-driven business, embracing transparency, sustainability, and community driven decisions in all our actions.

To get us to this point in our journey has taken a significant level of work and dedication, led by Equity Partner, Stephanie Cowles.

“The higher purpose of values that the B Corp movement stands for was the main reason we were motivated to be certified.

We liked the incumbent accountability for making business decisions that placed those values at the forefront of the decisions and the idea of being part of a club of global businesses who feel they can simultaneously run successful private businesses whilst leaving a positive imprint on the world.

Securing B Corp status was incredibly rewarding. It was the culmination of 18 months of hard work, with nine months of intensive effort. It validated our commitment to the goals we set ourselves and it was a proud moment for the entire business.”



Stephanie Cowles - Equity Partner at Devono



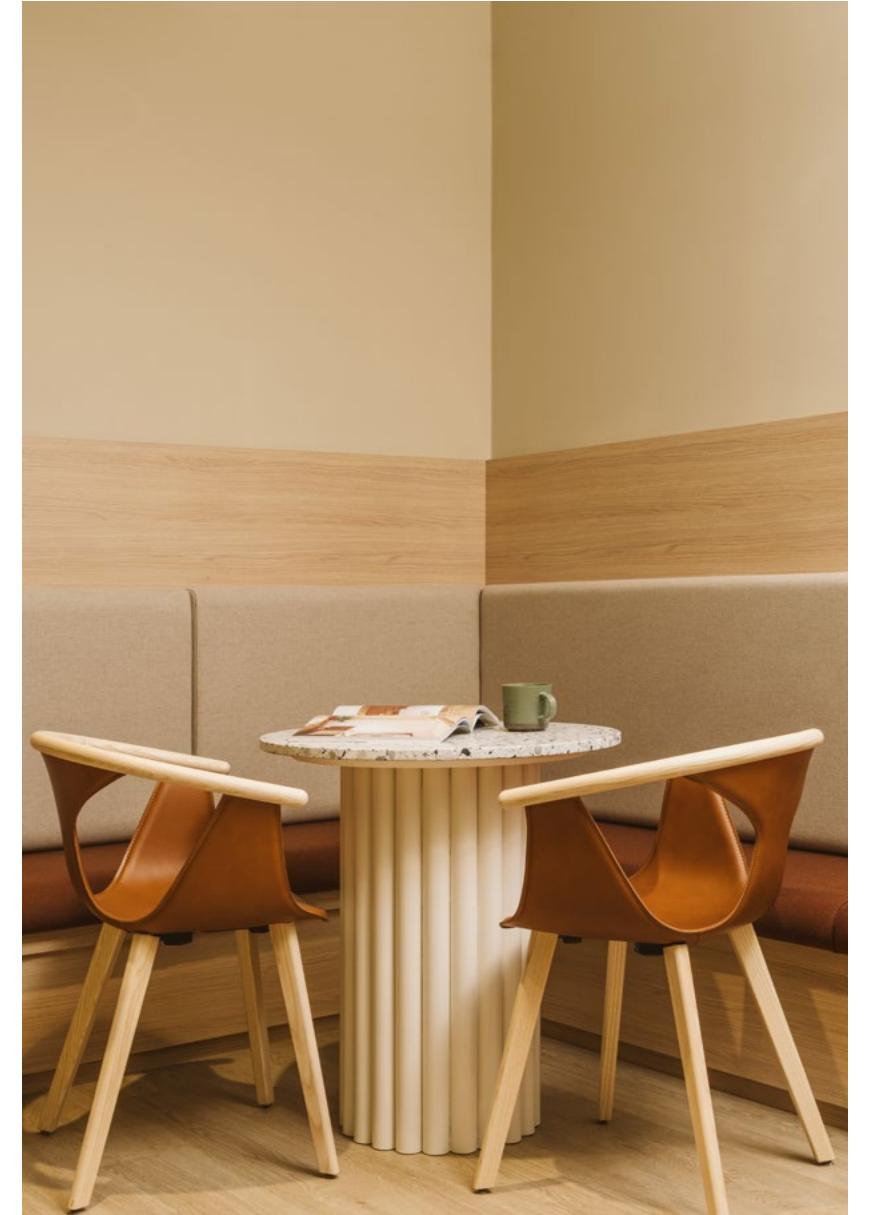
To begin, I first familiarised myself with the certification requirements and established specific objectives. Next, I assembled a dedicated team, defined roles, and developed a comprehensive project plan to maintain our progress. Given the extensive nature of the B Corp application with over 1000 questions, meticulous tracking of data and activities was crucial to staying aligned with B Corp standards throughout our journey.

One of the biggest challenges during the B Corp certification process was managing time and resources effectively. Balancing the rigorous B Corp requirements with my operational and sales responsibilities was demanding. Unlike many firms that hire a dedicated B Corp manager, it was crucial to ensure that our daily operations ran smoothly while dedicating time to the certification process. Additionally, navigating market uncertainties during the pandemic and economic shifts in the UK added complexity. Effective task management, strategic delegation, prioritisation, and some late nights were essential to successfully completing the process.

Achieving B Corp status has

fundamentally transformed our operations and strategy, placing a strong emphasis on sustainability and community engagement. We now integrate these values into every decision, from client interactions to internal policies, including those related to diversity and inclusion. This focus has always been vital to our success, and the B Corp process has highlighted the significance of embracing diverse perspectives and experiences. As the only female equity partner, I am dedicated to fostering an inclusive culture where everyone feels valued and empowered, enhancing our operations and client engagements.

We focused on improving our sustainability practices, diversity topics, enhancing our community engagement, and ensuring transparency in our operations. This included setting up recycling programs, participating in local community projects, and improving our reporting processes. Importantly, we set up a Board Advisory Team that participates in the company Board Meetings. It is not always easy for Business Owners to expose employees to such a meeting where business vulnerabilities are discussed but it was important to us to dive right into the B Corp recommendations.



Focus on the positive impact you will make

Stephanie Cowles, Equity Partner, Devono

After taking stock of the enormity of what we have achieved, we have exciting plans ahead. We aim to create a support network for other businesses looking to achieve B Corp status. This includes developing guides, offering workshops, and sharing best practices to help others integrate sustainability into their real estate strategies. We also want to build a circle of industry accredited companies who can contribute to the above and be a source for topics like governance, sustainability, community and workforce.

This is information that is valuable for all businesses, especially those who wish to start their B Corp journey. Start by understanding the requirements and be prepared to invest time and resources. It's a challenging journey, but incredibly rewarding. Stay committed, involve your entire team, and focus on the positive impact you can and will make.





Designing For Tomorrow:

Lyndsay Blue, Head of Sustainability, Dthree Studio

As Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations become increasingly prevalent across all business sectors, the way in which companies select and then design their office spaces is evolving. Sustainable office design is proving to be a strategic business move which not only prioritises the Planet but also signifies a commitment to People and Profit.

This holistic approach to our office environments goes far beyond simply earning accreditations which, while impressive, are merely the cherry on top. True sustainable design starts with the fundamentals; responsibly sourced materials, a commitment to a circular economy, and recognition that carbon reduction is critical.

“ Working on various accredited projects has highlighted the environmental impact of our decisions at Dthree. Therefore, defining and prioritising our own set of standard practices, irrespective of accreditations, means clients can rest assured that they are in safe hands when it comes to inspirational sustainable design.”

Charlotte Toon, Dthree Managing Director



Leading By Example

Some of the key themes we consider from an environmental perspective include an ethos of designing for the future with an emphasis on flexibility and potential for seamless adaptation as the client’s requirements naturally evolve over time. Designing bespoke joinery, partition structures, and even MEP systems that can be easily demounted and reconfigured when required is the most effective way to prolong the life of the fit-out and, crucially, avoid unnecessary waste material being sent to landfill.

We are increasingly seeing that the definition of quality in the design world is changing and the potential for re-use and repurposing of existing materials is beginning to take precedence over being ‘box-fresh’. We embrace the principles of a more circular economy and encourage clients to opt for responsibly sourced materials from UK manufacturers that hold certifications such as EPDs (Environmental Product Declarations) or are Cradle to Cradle approved.

Spaces That Support

From a more social point of view, we understand that the increase in hybrid working models means that our clients and their employees expect much more from their offices – a sea of desks, a few plants, and a trendy looking teapoint are no longer enough to entice people away from the comfort of their own homes. Employees now crave spaces that seamlessly support hybrid working behaviours, with dynamic areas designed for meaningful collaboration that result in stronger team bonds.

Another key demonstration of ESG presence within workplace design is the increased ubiquity of wellbeing, diversity, and inclusion measures that are being implemented across all sectors. Features such as quiet zones for concentration, adjustable lighting for comfort, and fully accessible ergonomic furniture contribute to creating safe and welcoming environments. Coupled with other elements of sustainable design, such as ample natural light, and the inclusion of biodiversity, all of these components helped to boost overall health and happiness.

Governance In Design

Finally, not forgetting the often overlooked ‘G’ of ESG, good governance is about investing in people – whether that be via the provision of excellent employee training facilities and innovation hubs, or collaboration spaces which foster continuous learning and personal development, such environments empower employees to grow and succeed.

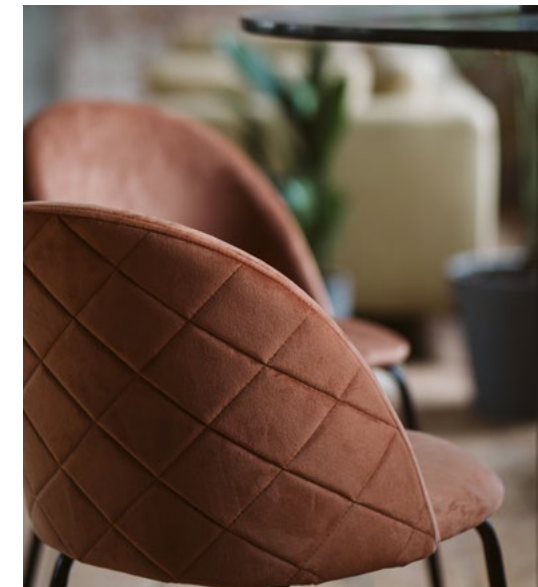
Workspaces that enable transparency from management through accessible, open office layouts, meeting rooms that encourage dialogue, and open-door policies that promote trust and communication – the correct physical environment can help build a culture of openness and mutual respect.



To conclude, incorporating ESG principles into office design is much more than a box ticking exercise - it's about creating vibrant, dynamic, and sustainable spaces that inspire.

By embedding environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and robust governance at the very beginning of the design process, we can craft office environments that not only meet today's needs but are ready to adapt to tomorrow's challenges.

At DThree, our mission is to build workplaces that are not just places to work, but places to thrive, innovate, and drive positive change for the future. For more information please click [here](#).





Collaborative Change: Cripp's Road to B Corp

Liz Carter, Senior Purpose & Impact Manager, Cripps

We wanted our business to make a positive and lasting difference to a world in crisis. No business can do this alone. B Corp offered us the best framework to start embedding sustainability principles at every level and opened up a community of changemakers, including our clients, all working together towards this goal.

The length of the process was a challenge, requiring project management. The disclosure exercise on the potentially controversial industries had us triple checking our data and delivering a substantial report.

The questions were not sector-specific so parts of the process felt a bit abstract - B Lab are addressing this. Our partnership business model was also not easily understood by our analyst.

B Corp is bringing a new lens to our strategic and operational decision-making. Our business objectives were already well aligned to our purpose but now our business plan signposts B Corp impact topics helping us thread through ESG performance metrics.

It has given us a renewed commitment to transparency and continuous improvement. We are more conscious and confident about where we do well, and where we need to focus. This is meaningful in our relationships with all stakeholders.

We are committed to reporting our impact annually. Our impact report acts as a 'single source of truth' to help us share our story but also set targets to create a long-term measurable impact across people, planet, clients and community.





Collaborative Force For Good

Catherine Ramsden, Director and Martha Smellie, Sustainability Consultant
Useful Simple Trust

The Useful Simple Trust is a family of professional design practices consisting of architects, engineers, designers and strategists. Our journey to becoming a B Corp in 2020 followed our change in governance, to an Employee Benefit Trust, a decade earlier. B Corp certification was a natural progression for us.

The collaborative force for good, which is thriving and growing, has influenced how we operate internally and raised our game in regards to outward positive outcomes for our clients. We are currently in the recertification process where we are rigorously recording our impacts and outcomes to demonstrate our commitment to continuously improve.

We are awaiting final confirmation but anticipate a 35% uplift from our baseline score in 2020. This achievement has been possible through collective energy and commitment, exceeding our goals and targets against all the impact themes.

Commitment to Sustainability

Catherine Ramsden, Director and Martha Smellie, Sustainability Consultant, Useful Simple Trust

For our colleagues, it has led to process improvements and enhanced training. For our clients, it demonstrates our genuine commitment to sustainability, a commitment that is evidenced in the way we deliver our projects and the significant outcomes which we measure across the business and record in our annual Impact Report. Examples in the workplace sector include strategic plans, design services including fitout and retrofit, audits, and certifications including SKA and Fitwel.

More and more we are collaborating with fellow B Corps as clients and team members. Our like-minds and shared ambition enable a quick leapfrog to tangible outcomes. An example is our work in recent years with x+why, a leading B Corp workplace provider. We acted as SKA Assessors for their fitout schemes, helping the design to meet circular and sustainable performance criteria. Our wealth of experience with responsible materials, especially the second-hand & recycled markets, coupled with a design philosophy for lean and adaptable installations, aligns well.





About Devono

Devono is the UK's leading occupier-only advisory firm. We specialise in advising businesses of all sizes and sectors, on commercial real estate solutions that best support their wider business objectives.

A significant part of our role is helping our clients to understand and define their occupational requirements. We take into account key factors including talent challenges, headcount forecasts, operational priorities and cost considerations, to help craft a brief that is not only fit for purpose today but will also deliver a sustainable occupational footprint moving forward.

Our ultimate goal as an organisation is to navigate real estate opportunities in such a way as to positively influence a company's culture, productivity and financial performance.

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