

Why upskilling in sustainability is good for business.

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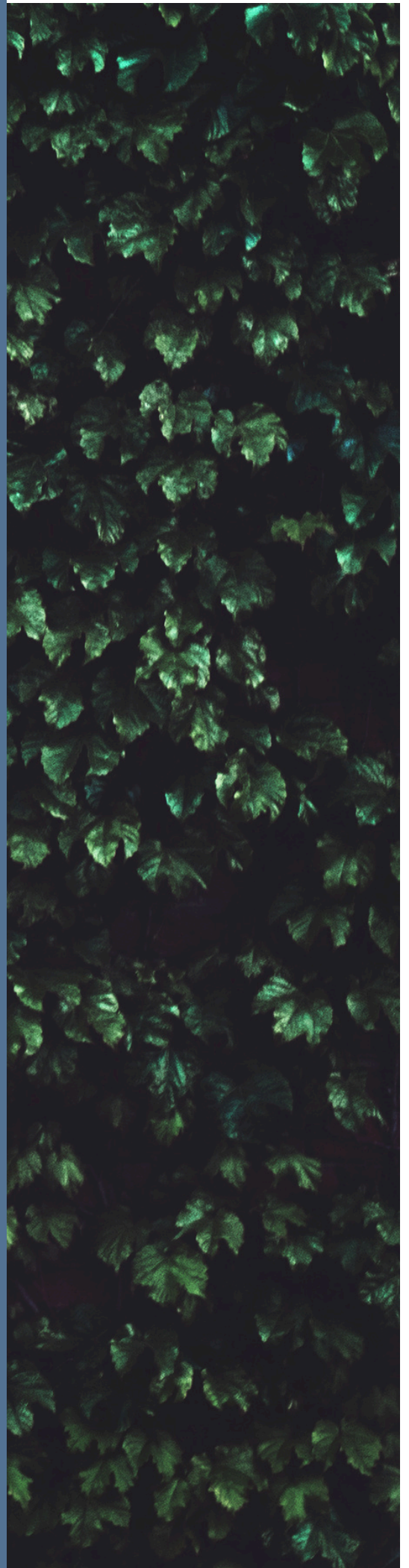


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01. Executive Summary

Sustainability is increasingly core to business success — not just in specialist roles, but across entire organisations. From customer service to procurement, HR to finance, every function now plays a role in meeting environmental and social expectations.

But while the demand for sustainability skills is rising fast, **the supply isn't keeping pace**. Research from the World Economic Forum, Microsoft and BCG shows that most organisations — especially SMEs — aren't equipped to upskill their workforce at the scale or speed required.

This report explores the growing need for sustainability fluency across all job roles, the types of skills now in demand (from systems thinking to social awareness), and **the benefits of upskilling from within**.

We also introduce **Future Leap's Skills Bootcamp on Sustainability in Business** — a practical, partially funded training programme designed to help SMEs build internal capability quickly and effectively.

“ The corporate world needs an army of employees, in all areas of business, thinking about sustainability in their decisions every day ”

World Economic Forum (1)

(1) <http://weforum.org/stories/2023/01/green-jobs-booming-plug-sustainability-skills-gap-work/>

02. Sustainability is in every role

Sustainability is no longer the responsibility of a single role, team, or department. It's a mindset and a skillset that must be embedded across the entire organisation — from front-line teams to senior leadership.

Every role has the potential to influence — or accelerate — your sustainability goals (Fig. 1). Whether it's reducing carbon emissions, minimising waste, supporting fair and inclusive workplaces, reporting on ESG performance, or creating long-term value beyond profit, you'll need your entire workforce pulling in the same direction.

That means sustainability must be integrated across roles, not isolated in specialist positions. **The business world needs more than a handful of sustainability managers — it needs a workforce empowered to act.**

Sustainability isn't a silo. It's a system. And like any system, its success depends on every part understanding its role and working toward the same goal.

That's why basic sustainability fluency **across all functions** is essential — enabling everyone in your business to contribute meaningfully to long-term performance and impact.



Figure 1: Environmental and social impact happens across every role



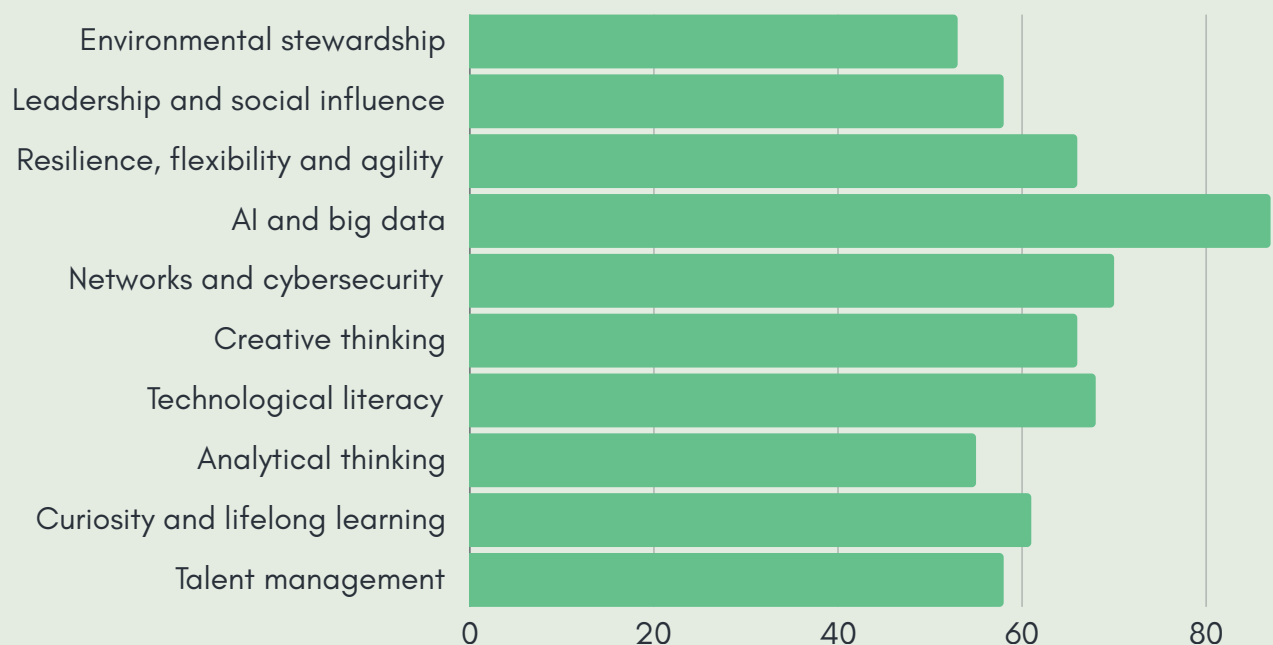
03. Sustainability skills on the rise

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report (2) identifies sustainability-related capabilities among the top skills on the rise between now and 2030.

While only one of these skills overtly references the environment, every one of them is critical to making businesses more sustainable when applied through a sustainability lens.

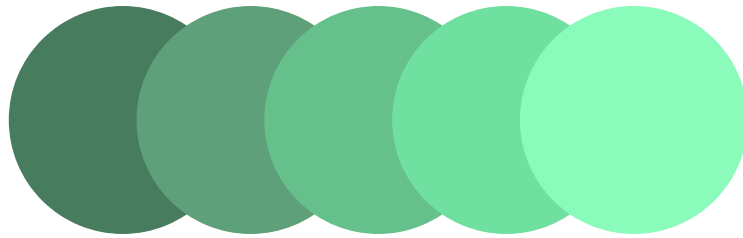
Skills on the rise, 2025-2030 (2).

Skills are ranked by the net share of employers who see them growing in importance, out of 100.



(2) https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_Report_2025.pdf

04. From dark to light green roles



When we think of green jobs, we often imagine **dark green roles** — environmental specialists working in renewables, conservation, or climate policy. These roles are vital, but they make up **only a small share of the workforce**.

The real shift is happening in **light green jobs**: everyday roles across all sectors that integrate sustainability into how the work gets done — even if sustainability isn't in the job title.

Light green jobs are how sustainability becomes business-as-usual. They don't require deep expertise — but they do require the right mindset and the right tools.

Not everyone needs to be a specialist. But **everyone needs to be fluent**.

Sustainability fluency is about understanding key concepts — like net zero, circularity, equity, and climate risk — and **being able to apply them in the context of your role**.

“When teams are fluent, sustainability becomes a shared language.

And that's what unlocks collaboration, innovation, and progress — across your whole business.”

05. Upskilling from within, wins

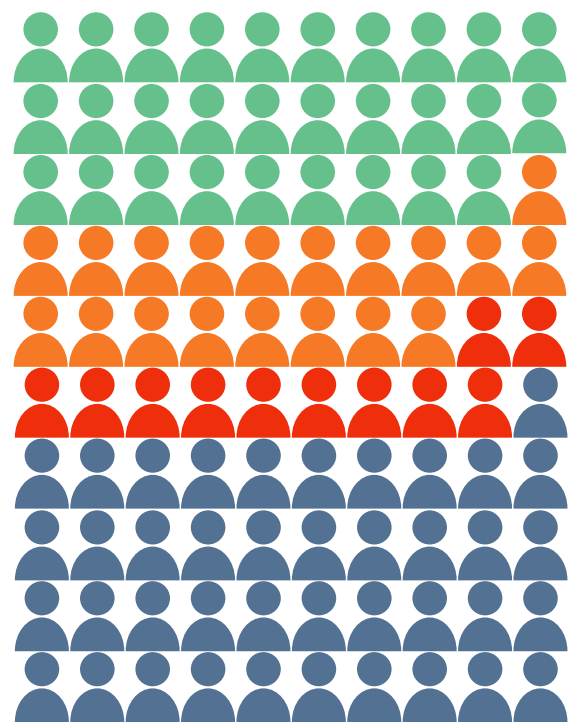
If sustainability fluency is the goal, the next question is: **how do we get there?** Business have two options, wait and hire specialists or conduct internal training to build lasting capability.

According to the World Economic Forum, if the global workforce were made up of 100 people (Fig 2): 59 will need training by 2030. Of those, **29 can be upskilled in their current role** and 19 could be retrained and redeployed.





Unfortunately 11 are unlikely to receive training, putting their employment at risk. There are only 41 who will remain in roles that are unaffected (2).

The workforce training needs by 2030 highlight **a major missed opportunity** — especially when internal training is one of the most effective ways to build lasting capability.

Figure 2: Workforce training needs by 2030 (2)



Key:

-  Can be upskilled in current role
-  Can be retrained and redeployed in within their organisation
-  Unlikely to receive training and roles are at risk
-  Roles are unaffected

(2) https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_Report_2025.pdf

The businesses that will lead on sustainability aren't the ones waiting to hire in scarce specialists. They're the ones equipping their existing teams to act with confidence, consistency, and clarity.

Why upskilling from within works.

Joint research by BCG and Microsoft (3) found that many leading companies are already moving in this direction.

Their sustainability teams aren't made up of lifelong environmental professionals — they're **built from people already inside the business.**

- 68% of sustainability leaders were promoted internally
- Most didn't have formal training — they learned on the job
- Many came from roles in operations, finance, procurement or HR

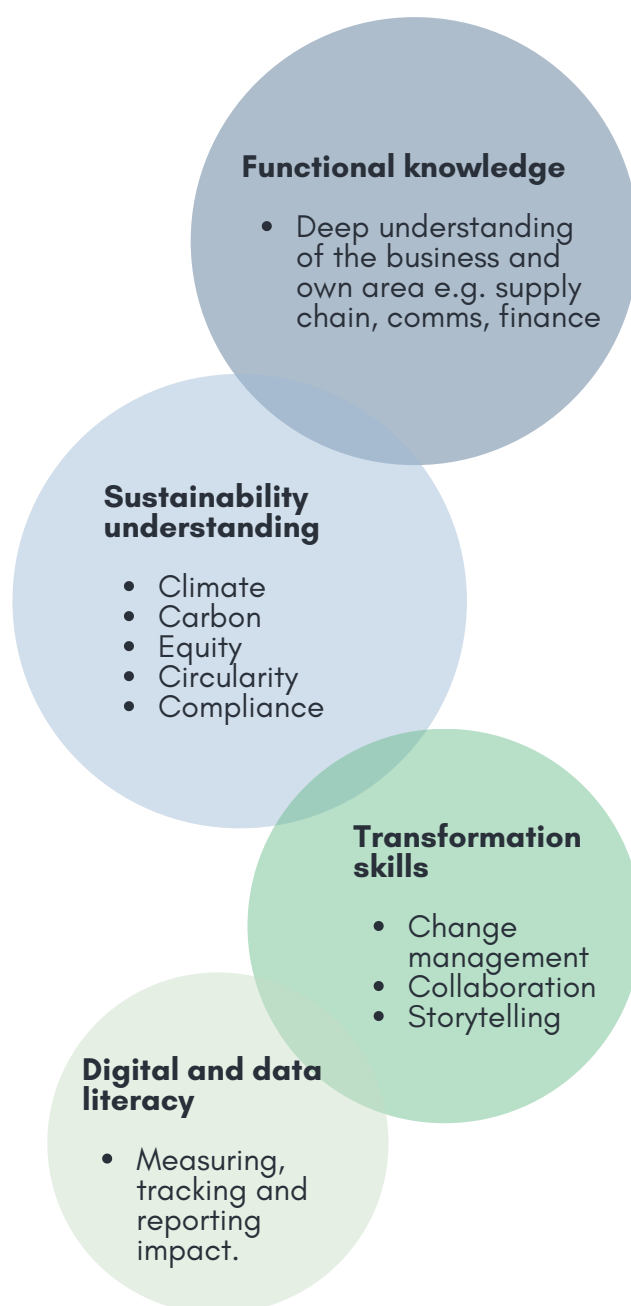
This tells us something important: what matters isn't where people start, it's what support they're given to grow.

The skills that make the difference.

According to BCG (4), the most effective roles combine multiple skill clusters (Fig 3), including functional knowledge, sustainability understanding, transformation skills and digital and data literacy.

This isn't just theory — it mirrors how companies handled past transformations like digital and data. And it's especially relevant to SMEs, where agility, culture, and connection can make the biggest difference.

Figure 3: Sustainability teams skills clusters (4)



(3) <https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2022/11/02/closing-sustainability-skills-gap/>

(4) <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2023/prioritize-talent-within-sustainability-agenda>

06. The skills your business needs

With awareness growing and businesses recognising the value of internal capability, the next challenge is clear: **how do you train your team at scale, affordably, and in a way that actually sticks?**

The missing link — especially for SMEs — is access to practical, scalable, and role-relevant sustainability training.

While large companies may build internal academies and dedicated teams, **small and medium-sized businesses are often left without the time, tools or budget to upskill their people effectively.**

That's why many businesses are calling for training that is:

- Relevant across departments, not just for specialists
- Easy to implement, without major disruption
- Affordable, and ideally supported by external funding
- Designed for real business application, not theory

Future Leap's Skills Bootcamp on Sustainability in Business was created to address this exact gap — helping businesses in the South West take meaningful action by upskilling the teams they already have.

Participants leave with the fluency to act on sustainability — not just talk about it. And your business benefits from more informed decisions, stronger employee engagement, and clearer progress towards your goals.

07. Future Leap's Skills Bootcamp

1.

Skills for life

The content focuses on the tools and information you need to be able to apply sustainability to everyday business decisions.

2.

Accessible to all roles

Designed for people across all functions: operations, HR, marketing, finance, sales, leadership.

3.

Partially funded by authorities

The programme is delivered at low cost to eligible businesses, thanks to support from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority.

100%

Of our past learners would recommend the Skills Bootcamp to a friend or colleague

67%

Of our past learners now feel extremely confidence applying their sustainability knowledge and skills at work

08. Equip your team for the future

Sustainability is no longer a siloed function — it's a shared responsibility. And the organisations that succeed won't be the ones waiting for the perfect hire or the perfect moment. They'll be the ones investing in their people, building internal capability, and moving forward together.

The **Future Leap Skills Bootcamp on Sustainability in Business** is a practical, partially funded way to do exactly that — designed specifically for small and medium-sized businesses looking to upskill their teams across functions.

Spaces are limited, and demand is high — so we encourage interested businesses to get in touch as soon as possible to secure a place.

Let's make sustainability everyone's business — and your business fit for the future.

**Register your
interest for
September 2025
& January 2026
start dates**



About Future Leap Consultancy.

Unlock growth with expert advised carbon reduction strategies.

Our mission is to measure, manage, and reduce organisational carbon emissions; ensuring compliance, driving long-term sustainable growth and empowering businesses to navigate the complexities of sustainability.

Certified



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