

1 in 5 businesses admit to greenwashing with half saying their sustainability efforts are failing, poll finds

Submitted by: Clearly PR

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Almost half (44%) of UK businesses say they are failing to deliver on their sustainable commitments, with one in five (18%) admitting to publicly exaggerating their green credentials, according to a poll of more than 1,500 senior executives by corporate and ESG communications agency, Clearly PR.

A further one in four (24%) executives admit they do not know if their sustainability efforts are making any positive difference at all, and 20% say they are unaware if their business has any metrics in place to measure the effectiveness of their environmental initiatives in the first place.

Only 19% of respondents believe that their business is making genuine progress on its sustainable initiatives.

The poll, conducted between 22nd-23rd September, aimed to provide real-time insight into how UK businesses are responding to growing investor and consumer demand for organisations to operate along more sustainable and socially responsible lines.

Paul MacKenzie-Cummins, managing director at Clearly PR, commented: "We need acts, not ads.

"These findings are extremely disappointing and equally revealing. ESG has been catapulted to the top of the business agenda in recent years. Yet despite the rhetoric and their public commitment to sustainability, a considerable number of businesses are simply not making good on their promises.

"More worrying is the unacceptably high number of businesses admitting they have resorted to use greenwashing in their ESG communications in a deliberate attempt to mislead consumers, investors, and other stakeholders. To make themselves look good.

"Once exposed, however, such false claims are not only damaging to the brand and reputation of these businesses, but their stock value will also depreciate, and bottom-line sales are likely to be negatively impacted too."

The findings of the poll could suggest that the rise in businesses guilty of greenwashing may partly be the result of a lack of understanding among businesses of how to measure the impact of their sustainability initiatives in the first place.

"Most leaders understand they have a responsibility to operate their businesses more sustainably and that when done right this can drive business value.

"However, where it fails is when there is a lack of knowledge on how to embed sustainability into their business processes, workforces, and supply chains and where there is an absence of any clearly defined sustainability goals.

"This, I believe, is in part responsible for some of the greenwashing activity we are seeing right now.

Businesses know they need to be seen to be doing more to reduce their carbon footprint and feel under pressure to say ‘something’ positive to appease their customers. It is desperate, yet a position that can easily be avoided.”

Ends

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Media assets:

A high-resolution profile picture of Paul MacKenzie-Cummins is available upon request.

About Clearly PR:

Established in 2014, Clearly PR is a Certified B Corporation that provides corporate communications and content marketing services to organisations throughout the UK and US. Under its ESG policy, the company gifts 2% of net sales to sustainable and social impact initiatives.

Notes:

A total of 1,541 respondents took part in the poll, which was conducted between 22nd-23rd September 2022. The poll was conducted on Twitter, whereby the target audience included specific keywords including: ‘chief executive’, ‘chief operating officer’, ‘chief marketing officer’, ‘marketing director’, ‘head of marketing’, ‘marketing manager’, ‘managing director’, ‘founder’, ‘chairman’, ‘chairwoman’, ‘chairperson’, and ‘director’.