



Supporting Members Starting Out On Sustainability

Article Seven – What Sustainable Certifications and Labels Mean For Your Business

Simply telling people that your business has sustainability accreditation may not be enough to convince them that your claims are genuine, so what else can you do to back up your claims?

There are a number of different ways to gain validated, accredited certification or labels to substantiate your claims, but it can require significant investment and resources to complete the often-rigorous process. Therefore, before setting out on the journey, you need to carefully consider the value to you and your business of gaining accreditation.

It is far more important to implement sustainable business practices than it is to look for certification or labels.

Why Gain A Sustainability Certificate/Label?

A certificate or label can serve as verification of your sustainability claims provided that they are issued externally by a second or third party. Additionally, more and more organisations and consumers are practicing 'conscious consumerism' as they consider the sustainability practices that businesses have implemented before they do business with you or buy your products or services. Gaining a sustainability certificate or label can help you to:

- Build trust
- Gain a competitive edge
- Attract good staff/talent
- Appeal to suppliers
- Improve access to finance
- Grow sales

How Do You Know What You Need?

Before making any decisions as to what certification/ label route to follow you need to consider:

- **Your stakeholders:**
 - who are they?
 - who are you really doing this for?
- **Your business:**
 - where are your environmental hot spots?
 - which impacts are associated with your business?
 - which impacts are you trying to address?
- **The scope of certification:**
 - product level?
 - process level?
 - site wide?
 - organisation wide?

- **Rigour of verification:**
 - self-assessment only
 - second or third party

- **Sector/Industry:**
 - do I need certification related to my industry?
 - does it need to be more broadly known?

There are over 300 sustainability certificates and labels currently available, Sustainable Business Network supports the following:



If you are interested in looking further into this topic here are a couple of useful resources to assist your research:

- Commerce Commission: [Environmental Claims Guide](#)

Consumer NZ: [Greenwashing: Can we trust environmental claims?](#) (A quick read regarding businesses and greenwashing through the use of NON-VERIFIED certifications and claims).

Adapted from Sustainable Business Network – What Sustainable Certifications And Labels Mean For Your Business