

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES  
FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF

# Sustainability Leaders



CHABERTON PARTNERS

HUMAN EXPLORERS 

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The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.

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ROBERT CHARLES SWAN  
EXPLORER AND ENVIRONMENTALIST

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# INTRODUCTION



Dear All,

Welcome to our newest effort: *Essential Competencies for the Next Generation of Sustainable Leaders*. In today's world, sustainability is no longer a peripheral issue but a central element of corporate strategy and global responsibility. As the urgency of environmental and social challenges becomes more pronounced, organizations are increasingly aware of the need for Sustainability Leaders who can adeptly address these critical issues.

This paper leverages our expertise to explore how advancements in sustainability are reshaping leadership expectations. We identify the key competencies that Sustainability Leaders must acquire and develop to successfully interpret their roles, highlighting the essential skills required to drive success in a landscape where sustainability is paramount.

At Chaberton Partners, we take pride in being "Human Explorers," dedicated to guiding our clients through transformative transitions and identifying and developing the leaders essential for organizational success. This commitment drives us to continuously explore how competencies evolve and how they can empower leaders to drive transformative change. We focus on equipping leaders with the necessary skills to enhance organizational resilience and thrive in an era where anticipating future challenges and developing new competencies is essential for business success.

**Christian Vasino**

Founder and CEO  
*Chaberton Partners*



# Essential Competencies

## FOR FUTURE LEADERS

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In today's world, building a sustainable business is a strategic imperative. Customers, consumers, and regulators are increasingly demanding sustainable practices, while competitive pressures and rising risks accelerate the need for change.

THE SHIFT TOWARDS  
SUSTAINABILITY IS  
RESHAPING INDUSTRIES  
ACROSS ALL SECTORS,  
DRIVING THE NEED  
FOR NEW COMPETENCIES  
WITHIN SUSTAINABILITY  
TEAMS.

Sustainability leaders today must be equipped at navigating a dynamic landscape and a set of complex challenges, marked by rapid geopolitical shifts, changing consumer behaviors, environmental policies, and rising expectations from both investors and employees. This reshaping necessitates multidisciplinary leaders who can foster innovation, while addressing the intricacies of the sustainability agenda.

Building on our expertise, we share insights on three key competencies that C-Level Executives and Board Members will increasingly expect from the next generation of Sustainability Leaders.

### THE THREE KEY COMPETENCIES

1. **Forward-thinking and innovation** to reinvent business models and position companies for long-term success;
2. **Technological capabilities** to address exponential advancements and bridge the gap between traditional business practices and truly sustainable models. The need to accelerate the transition towards net-zero has never been more urgent.
3. **Stakeholder engagement and collaboration** the ability to effectively engage with a diverse range of stakeholders to foster collaboration and drive collective action towards sustainability goals.

Sustainability leaders must possess the vision and diverse experience to guide their organizations through the complex sustainability transition, ensuring value creation for both the business and its stakeholders.

# 4 Key Archetypes OF



## COMMUNICATOR

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The Communicator excels in articulating sustainability goals and strategies to various stakeholders. They are adept at crafting compelling messages that resonate with internal teams, external partners, and the public. Their role involves managing corporate reputation, driving engagement through effective storytelling, and ensuring transparency in sustainability reporting. This archetype is crucial for fostering understanding and support for sustainability initiatives across all levels of an organization.



## FINANCE GURU

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The Finance Guru specializes in incorporating sustainability criteria into financial decision-making. They are responsible for assessing the financial implications of sustainability initiatives, managing investments in green technologies, and evaluating the return on sustainability-related projects. This archetype ensures that sustainability efforts align with financial goals and provides insights into sustainable investment opportunities, helping to integrate environmental and social considerations into financial planning and reporting.



# Sustainability Leaders



## OPERATIONS EXPERT

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The Operations Expert focuses on integrating sustainability into everyday business operations. They leverage their expertise to optimize processes, reduce waste, and improve resource efficiency. This role involves implementing sustainable practices in production, supply chain management, and facilities management. Their goal is to enhance operational performance while minimizing environmental impact, ensuring that sustainability is embedded into the core operational strategies of the organization.



## STRATEGY THINKER

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The Strategy Thinker brings a high-level perspective to sustainability leadership, focusing on long-term strategic planning and innovation. They analyze market trends, identify opportunities for sustainable growth, and develop strategies that align with the organization's overall goals. This role involves guiding the organization through complex sustainability challenges, setting ambitious targets, and driving transformative change. Ensures that sustainability is a central component of the organization's strategic vision and future growth.

# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

For **ORGANIZATIONS**, the path forward is clear: embedding sustainability at the core of business strategy is no longer optional, but essential for long-term success. By empowering Sustainability Leaders who possess the right vision, skills, and commitment, companies can navigate today's complexities while capitalizing on emerging opportunities. These leaders drive innovation, operational resilience, and stakeholder trust, turning sustainability into a competitive **advantage**.

For **SUSTAINABILITY LEADERS**, your role is pivotal in shaping the future of both your organization and the world. In this era of rapid transformation, your ability to lead with purpose, integrate sustainability into strategic decisions, and inspire others is critical for driving meaningful change. The challenges ahead may be complex, but through fostering innovation, a multidisciplinary approach, resilience, and collaboration, you can harness sustainability as a powerful force for growth and success. Your leadership not only guides businesses toward responsible practices but also ensures a positive impact on society and the environment, paving the way for a more sustainable future.

**Erika Perez**

Project Lead  
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Since November 2024, Ganci Partners, the leading board, executive search and assessment firm based in Lausanne, Bern and Geneva, is part of Chaberton Partners.

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