

The Middle East & Africa Forum for Sustainability Leaders

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Sustainability is every employee's responsibility

As a luxury and retail family business group that has been operating in the Gulf for the past 65 years, sustainability lies at the core of our values. A pivotal moment occurred in 2014 when we became a member of the United Nations Global Compact, which made annual sustainability reporting mandatory for us. This led to the creation of the Chief Sustainability Officer role. Following the establishment of this role, we developed a sustainability strategy in 2015 that enabled us to take stock of the group's operations and conduct a materiality assessment, helping us identify specific areas of focus. Throughout these years, we have maintained a small sustainability team, as we believe that sustainability is not solely the responsibility of the CSO but of the entire organization.

Effectively communicating sustainability across departments

The starting point is reporting to the CEO. This aspect is crucial because the message needs to originate from the top. We cannot report to other business units as doing so could result in a loss of execution freedom. Another key point is to ensure the alignment of the sustainability strategy with the business strategy of the group. From an organizational perspective, having a sustainability committee in place is critical. For our organization, this takes the form of a cross-functional committee chaired by our President and including representatives from different departments such as logistics, facility management, and finance. This committee is more hands-on than advisory, which is essential in having a representative from each business unit to implement the broader sustainability strategy in every segment. Moreover, engaging with both external and internal stakeholders can help shape progressively your sustainability strategy by identifying the main priorities and areas of focus.