

**.planetly**

# **Net-Zero Will Be a Must for Professional Services**

## **How Can Your Business Get There?**



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Germany work in the  
service sector



**445 m**

business trips take  
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From consulting and financial services to agencies or law firms, around **75% of all employees** in Germany work in the service sector. Each of these services generates emissions, especially considering the prevalence of travel in this industry. Experts estimate that approximately **445 million business trips** take place each year – with a significant portion of that attributed to organisations within the professional service sector.

Many companies in the industry have already realised the need to act here and began their journey towards net-zero – fulfilling the expectations of their stakeholders to operate more sustainably.

Your company can be next to embark on this journey. Transitioning to net-zero is more than doing your part for the environment, it is worth it for companies for a variety of reasons: strengthen your corporate reputation, be prepared for climate-related regulations likely to impact your business and stay competitive in your industry to attract clients and employees.

Are you curious why carbon neutrality especially matters to professional service companies and what you can do to get there? We are happy to walk you through step by step and to provide effective actions that you as a consulting business, law firm or agency can easily implement.

# Reasons to Act for Professional Service Companies

## Sustainability Is Becoming the New Industry Standard

Since 2019, the professional service sector actually has its own [sustainability standard](#), the General Sustainability Assessment Criteria for Professional Services, or in short [NSF 391.1](#). This voluntary standard provides companies in the industry with point-based criteria to guide and evaluate their sustainability efforts. Professional service companies that follow this path and achieve certification for their sustainability engagement have the opportunity to [truly stand out](#) from their competition.

Evidently, driving sustainability and becoming net-zero is no longer a nice-to-have but a must-have, driven by the expectations of stakeholders. Many professional service providers already recognised this need to act and started their journey – this includes companies of all sizes such as [BCG](#), [BearingPoint](#), [Zühlke Germany](#) and [Protéma](#). Are you next?



## Employer Branding: Attract and Retain Top Talent

According to the [Edelman Trust Barometer](#), most people around the world believe that companies have the ability to positively impact the social and environmental conditions surrounding their business – and they prefer employers that live up to that.

We often hear from our customers across industries that applicants increasingly ask about the company's sustainability strategy. Carbon footprint transparency will be the way to go in order to continue to attract and retain top talent. Employees are also an important driver of sustainability themselves – educating and involving them in your efforts will create even more impact and, at the same time, really pays into [motivation and productivity](#).





50%

of buyers monitor the environmental and social performance of suppliers

## Buyers Prefer Sustainable Business Partners

More and more public bodies and businesses want to create transparency in their value chain. 50% of buyers therefore monitor the environmental and social performance of suppliers, external service providers and business partners.

On top of that, many public and corporate buyers now include sustainability requirements in procurement contracts and requests for proposal (RFPs). Microsoft, for example, requires all suppliers and business partners to disclose their carbon emissions. Gaining transparency about your carbon footprint is key in order to successfully participate in RFPs today and moving forward.



**It is not only important to advise customers on environmental topics and their carbon footprint but to make an active and transparent contribution yourself.**

**Kai Wächter**  
Managing Director, BearingPoint

## Drive and Inspire Your Clients

Sustainability became one of the major consulting areas in the service industry as the topic is not just important for professional service companies themselves, but also for their customers.

Kai Wächter, Managing Director of Management Consultancy BearingPoint, puts it right by saying that it is not only important to advise customers on environmental topics and their carbon footprint but to make an active and transparent contribution yourself.

Not only will being committed to climate action yourself support the credibility of your services, you also have the great opportunity to act as a role model for your customers and create even more impact. We have seen various examples in the service industry where clients made similar commitments to understand and reduce their carbon footprint when the professional service company itself actively drives climate action internally.

**Now let's have a look at how to get your journey to becoming a net-zero business started.**

# 6 Actions to Kick off Your Net-Zero Journey



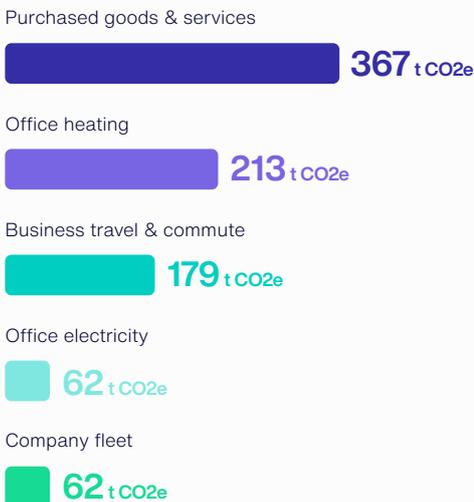
## Start a Green Team and Nominate a Climate Officer

When it comes to driving sustainability efforts in your company, the impact of establishing a green team is still widely underestimated, yet very effective. A green team is a group of employees who are truly engaged in driving sustainability within an organisation, focusing on finding opportunities within the company’s own operations.

BearingPoint, for example, has their so-called “Sustainable Change Makers” – a group of employees highly engaged in sustainability initiatives who proactively drive this topic across the organisation.

To start your net-zero journey, you do not necessarily have to hire a full-time CSR or Sustainability Manager – involve your employees instead. Initiate a green team and nominate a climate officer within your organisation who can drive this initiative.

## Typical Emission Hotspots for Professional Services



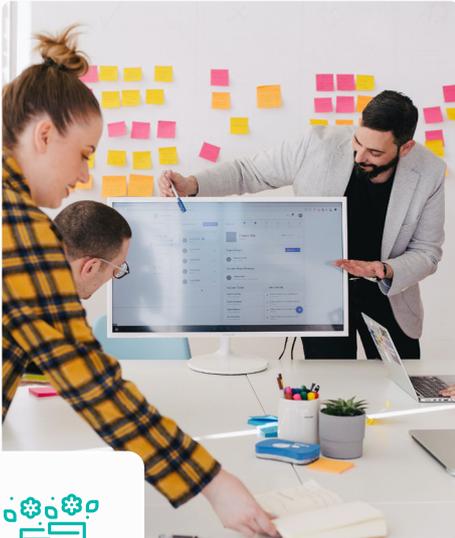
Source: Footprint of a creative agency (2020)

## Understand Your Corporate Carbon Footprint

You can only manage what you can measure. Analysing and understanding your corporate carbon footprint is paramount on the journey to a net-zero business. Doing so will shed light on your company’s emission hotspots and enables you to identify important levers to take action.

Especially in the consulting sector, commuting and business travel typically account for a significant amount of a company’s carbon footprint – for some companies, travel makes up to 80% of their total footprint. Emissions generated through your office operations as well as external products and services should not be underestimated either.

Software solutions such as the Planetly Climate Impact Manager can help you easily understand which elements are your biggest emission drivers and take effective action.



## Initiate Change Management and Involve Your Employees

For many service companies, successful sustainability efforts require effective innovation as well as culture and change management. Make sure to involve all employees on this journey – not just your climate officer(s) and green team.

Openly share your efforts around embarking on the journey towards net-zero – including the results and your plans to reduce carbon emissions over time. However, your engagement does not have to stop there. Raise awareness and provide education around environmentally friendly behaviour – in the office and beyond. How about encouraging your team to look into their private carbon footprint?



Boston Consulting Group  
wants to cut business  
travel-related emissions  
by at least

**30%**

## Cut Down on Business Travel

We know that business travel is an integral part of the way professional service companies operate and is essential to keep up a good client relationship. That said, 2020 and beyond showed us that virtual meetings can be a true alternative moving forward – at least to some extent.

Professional service companies have already recognised the need to act here. Global management consultancy Boston Consulting Group, for example, wants to cut business travel-related emissions **by at least 30%** per full-time employee by 2025. BCG intends to reduce trip numbers and find more climate-friendly alternatives wherever travel cannot be avoided.

“We know there is no single lever we can pull. We are dependent on traveling to put our teams together with our clients. [But] BCG believes that we have a responsibility to the planet”, says Managing Director and Partner for Global Operations Services Kathryn Bell.



25%

cost savings by using smart solutions for heating and lighting

## Improve Energy Efficiency and Save Costs

Improving energy efficiency, including electricity, heating and cooling, is a very effective way to reduce carbon emissions. Switching to green energy is, in fact, one of the biggest levers for emission reduction. Does your office run on green energy yet?

Many professional services companies, including Accenture, WPP and McKinsey, already joined [RE100](#), the global corporate renewable energy initiative, and therefore commit to 100% renewable electricity globally.

You can also improve your energy efficiency with the help of smart solutions for heating and lighting that match working hours in the office. This will not only reduce your carbon footprint but also leads to cost savings of [up to 25%](#).



Afforestation Projects



## Invest in Climate Action Projects

Climate action projects are a great way to offset any residual emissions that currently cannot be avoided – an important step on your path towards becoming a net-zero business.

Such projects are designed to reduce and remove carbon from the atmosphere, by protecting the rainforest or driving the development of renewable energy as just two examples. At Planetly, we work with a vast variety of great [climate action projects](#) that meet the highest quality requirements and standards, including the Gold Standard.

While compensation is an important first step, it is crucial to not stop there but develop a long-term reduction strategy for your company that combines a mix of some of the activities we already mentioned and more.

**We are happy to guide you every step of the way – [reach out to us](#) to get started.**

