

**Action**

**Why**

**How**

**Get to know your Board**

You may have a strong sense of what you think the Board needs to know when it comes to ethical trade and human rights. The question is, how well do you know them and their individual needs? Understanding their backgrounds, personal interests, familiarity with the topic and how your asks can fit with wider business priorities will increase your influence and impact.

- Stakeholder Mapping – Understand the key individuals – what are their key preferences in terms of communication style? What are individuals interests and influence? How can this work be linked to a wider business priority?
- If possible engage the CEO and board directly with regular meetings to review strategy and progress.
- When you get time with board members do take time to listen, cocreate not just 'broadcast' your points.

**Provide context**

For boards to provide effective oversight of human rights they need the full picture. Companies operate within broader systems which at any given moment, can be subject to events which have an impact, positive or negative, on the business. Your job is to keep your board up to date and address any uncertainty that the current context presents. Have conditions changed? Are there new trends, evolving expectations, or new risks that they should be aware of? As a business, are we doing what we said we would do? Are there reasons why we may need to change our approach? If so, what change is required, why, and what are the potential implications?

- Highlight the risks to business of not taking issues seriously (reputation, customer expectation, access to labour etc.). Always capitalise on a crisis!
- Exploit the use of FOMO – use benchmarks and league tables to drive competition with peer groups and increase both engagement and justification for funding. Share examples of good practice at competitor businesses (FNET can help with this), and this is well regarded by customers.

**Be clear on your objectives and your ask**

Boards are often short on time so it's important to make every second with them count. How can you use your time to have a conversation, socialise the issue, provide new insight and reassure the individuals there is a plan and what they need to do to help deliver it. Are you asking for guidance or input? Are you seeking final sign-off on a policy or position statement? Given time with the board is short, try to get commitment to establish a broader cross-functional working group with senior representation from relevant stakeholders so you can hone future asks and insights for the board.

- Look for existing internal mechanisms to communicate with the board and leadership teams e.g. Risk Committees, Sustainability or ESG Programmes – look for ways to build in HuRi topics.
- Get commitment to establish a broader cross-functional working group with senior representation from relevant stakeholders i.e. Commercial, Technical, Supply Chain. Legal, Marketing. This will help ensure that what you are presenting is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the business.
- Try to assign ownership of HuRi workstreams to senior Commercial colleagues if the work sits in their category as this ensures that messaging is delivered top-down to Buying teams.

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### Tell stories and then back them up with data

Storytelling can help to paint a picture and reinforce the human impact of issues. Stories can be a catalyst for action, but make sure you have any supporting data (external stats, audits/ grievance/EDI/Sedex SAQ) to back up your points and link to how acting on human rights is creating business value and/or what further investment will be required in the future.

- Be a focused communicator when you get to access leadership:
- Avoid talking about supply chain human rights in general – focus on a specific theme/issue/geography and make this relevant to your business.
  - Make it interesting and engaging – reinforce the human impact of issues.
  - Explain why/ importance to wider stakeholders
  - Use data to back up your points – external stats, audits/ grievance/EDI/Sedex SAQ
  - Communication style – Simple factual pitch, use storytelling to explain human impact, be clear on the asks to the board
  - Structure communication so it can be cascaded and explain how it links to broader strategy and HR priorities

### Help to close the knowledge gap

The human rights expectations on business are increasing, the better informed directors are the better positioned to provide meaningful sustainability oversight. Board training on Fiduciary duties, Legislative requirements, customer and investor requirements, benchmarks help reinforce their human rights responsibilities as board directors. For some topics, you may want to consider inviting an external expert or peer to emphasise the points/ recommendations you are making. For example DPS got G's fresh to present to their board on modern slavery. Compliment with a broader delivering and operating responsibly engagement calendar to engage the wider business.

- Provide board with training. Fiduciary duties, Legislative requirements, customer and investor requirements, benchmarks – reinforce their HuRi responsibilities as board directors.
- More broadly develop a delivering and operating responsibly engagement calendar
  - Bring in external voices to emphasise the points/recommendations you are making e.g. DPS got G's to present to their board. Ask the speaker to conclude with practical action that individual directors can take, such as providing a list of key questions that directors can ask
  - Themed weeks e.g. Modern slavery week, Gender equality lunch and learn
  - Measure engagement, attendance and understanding so you can demonstrate impact
- Personal 'R' legal signatory



**Be authentic and interesting: Be genuine, be curious, and be excited about the work. You want to impart a sense of confidence in the direction that you and the business are taking towards meeting its human rights goals. Leave energy in the room so they are keen to have you back!**