

# Sustainability Leadership Competencies

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## ABSTRACT

Sustainability involves the development of current practices that will have the ability to support the present without damaging the future. Consumers are increasingly examining businesses from a perspective of sustainability, often, seeking organizations with overtly sustainable practices. With that said, many organizations are shifting towards sustainable efforts. There are several steps organizations can take to build a culture of sustainability, first and foremost, the organization must identify and develop leaders that are able to facilitate sustainable efforts. Based on literature and interviews, this research study seeks to further ascertain the characteristics and competencies of effective organizational leaders involved in sustainability efforts. The conclusions will be presented in a Sustainability Leadership Competency Model.

## AIM

The focus of the study will be to gain a better sense of the key leadership characteristics needed by an individual serving in a leadership role supervising sustainability effort.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question 1: What leadership characteristics are most important for supporting sustainability efforts in organizations today?

Research Question 2: What leadership characteristics are most important for supporting sustainability efforts in organizations in the future?

## INTERVIEWS

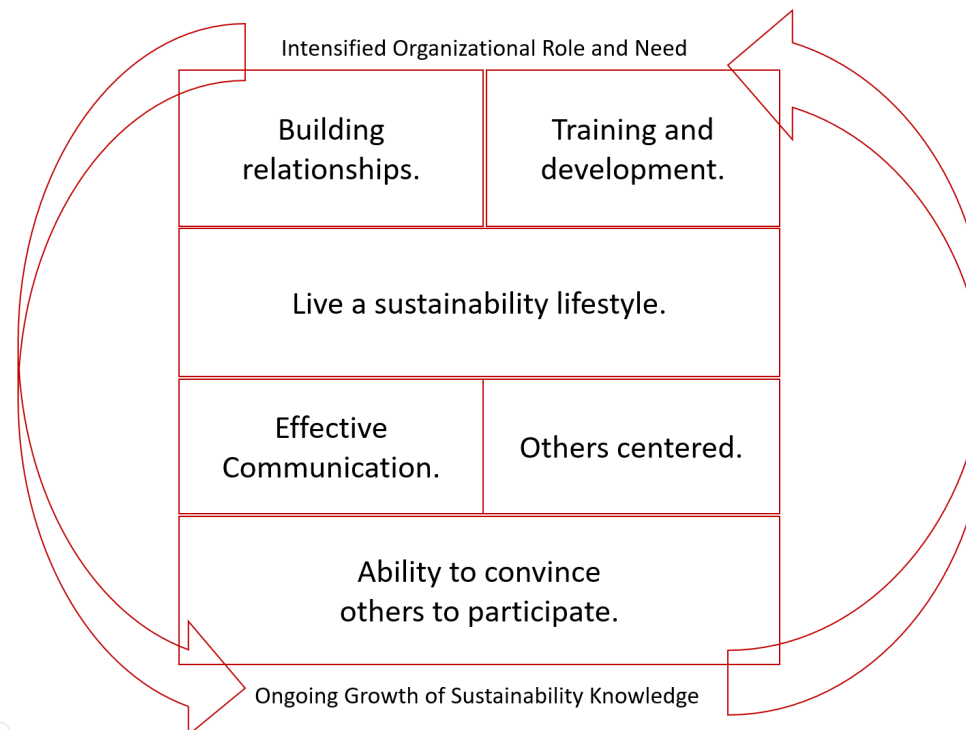
What are the characteristics of an effective multigenerational team?

- 24 interviewees, ages 18-75
  - 11 from academic
  - 5 from industry
  - 8 students

## CONCLUSIONS

What leadership characteristics are important for the sustainability-based leader of today?

1. **ability to convince others to participate,**
2. **ability to communicate effectively,**
3. **others centered, live a sustainable lifestyle,**
4. **building relationships,**
5. **training and developing others.**



## METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research.  
Phenomenological research design.  
Participant interviews.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS and RESULTS

1. How has the concept of sustainability evolved in the last five years?
  - No change- 1
  - Increased awareness- 5
  - Politicized- 4
  - Expect sustainable operations- 5
2. Do you believe that the leadership characteristics of sustainability professionals are different than general leadership characteristics?
  - No- leadership is leadership- 4
  - Yes- priorities are different- 11
3. What leadership characteristics are important for the sustainability-based leader of today?
  - Other centered- 6
  - Transparency- 2
  - Forward thinking- 5
  - Ability to communicate broadly- 2
4. Will the characteristics of the sustainability leader change in the future? How? Why?
  - The importance will intensify- 6
  - Everything changes- 5
  - Everything fundamental remains the same- 4
  - Needs will change so leadership will change- 1
5. Can you think of a sustainability professional that possess leadership ability? Describe the person.
  1. No- 4
  2. Yes- 11