



Transparency in e-Commerce Sustainability: Impact Reporting & Customer Engagement

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Purpose

Since the company's founding, EarthHero has committed to being an authentic and honest sustainable e-commerce marketplace. After five years of operations, EarthHero is now striving to be more transparent about its impact and areas of improvement with its customers. Our capstone team's goal was to leverage customer and employee insight to develop the company's first public-facing impact report. Customers will be able to reference this and future annual reports to learn more about EarthHero's impact and progress on their goals.

Methods

Our team conducted a materiality assessment via a Typeform survey to engage EarthHero's stakeholders in determining which issues are the most relevant. A materiality assessment is an established process – defined by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) – that is intended to identify those issues which are most germane to a given company, so that they focus on and address the issues that have the biggest impact. EarthHero's most important stakeholders, employees and customers were surveyed about topics in the areas of environmental impact, sustainable content, empowerment, and transparency. Data was gathered about both internal and external social and environmental impacts, and reported according to EarthHero's newly introduced Five Pillars: Materials & Ingredients, Company Responsibility, Ownership & Responsibility, Packaging & End of Life, and Give Back.

Outcomes

The deliverables of this capstone include EarthHero's first annual impact report, a materiality assessment summary matrix, monthly blog posts, and an internal presentation to report our findings to the EarthHero staff. At the end of the year, overall results and recommendations will be showcased in an internal EarthHero presentation. Utilizing this information and the processes created throughout the project, EarthHero can efficiently execute future annual reports and start making improvements to meet their goals.



EarthHero's plan is to publish its first annual impact report in January 2023. At the conclusion of the capstone project, EarthHero will have the framework of the current report to use as a foundation, which they can then update each year to incorporate new data and activities. Once the initial report is published, they can reference this structure and data as needed when developing future annual reports. These reports will allow the company to uphold its transparency regarding its impact with its customer base and community at large.

One of the key learnings of the project is how to develop and analyze a materiality assessment (a process and topic area that was new to our team). Creating the respective employee and customer surveys took more time and planning than originally anticipated. There were constructive conversations between the capstone team and EarthHero on wording, categories for materiality, and the flow of the surveys.

Within the data analysis phase, we found the results between the employees and customers varied drastically in a few categories including sustainably harvested materials, employee diversity, and plastic-free products. This indicates that working with sustainable products versus being a conscious consumer can come with differing perspectives on what matters regarding sustainability.

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