

Sustainability for Photo Studios and Creative Industries



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Introduction

Conversations about sustainability have been around for years, yet the mindset within our industry still needs to improve if we want to work towards a positive future for the planet and our businesses. According to the latest Advertised Emissions findings by Purpose Disruptors, the advertising industry was calculated to be responsible for 208 million tonnes of CO2 emissions in the UK alone! Clients and consumers are also becoming aware of the issues and expect more from the brands they love. 73% of consumers believe brands must act now for the good of society and the planet. And 64% of people now prefer to buy from companies with a reputation for purpose as well as profit. (Source: Havas' Meaningful Brands Report 2021). Big numbers are hard to ignore and with many countries committing to Net Zero targets, it's no surprise that photo studios and creative businesses are taking sustainability... seriously.

The main challenge our industry faces is no different to any other - do better! However, the many moving parts of our day-to-day operations (or just a single production) contribute towards a growing footprint and how we reduce that goes much further than deciding how you should travel to your next shoot, although that is a good place to start!

It's easy to get overwhelmed when looking at the complexity of your own operations, let alone those of the entire industry. Thankfully, there's one thing on the creative industry's side when it comes to tackling sustainability issues - creatives! The forward thinkers, the doers, the makers, the visionaries, the dreamers, the innovators, the collaborators; if there's a group of people in this world that can make a change, it's us! Sustainability is a journey, we're in it for the ride and we're in it together. And we'll get there by learning, implementing, and sharing knowledge in a way that encourages action rather than shaming those who may not be as far along on the journey. And that's exactly what this guide is here to do, to get you started and help you along the way.

Greenwashing is the term given when an organization tries to make people believe it is doing more to protect the environment than it really is.

communications and performance at Copenhagen Cartel, recently gave her view on the rise in green hushing at our FLOW: Copenhagen

The fear of being accused of greenwashing has led to a growing trend of “green hushing” as

Before we start, let's deal with the elephant in the room. Greenwashing.

event, “We have to communicate the things that we do, otherwise there is no education...

companies decide to stay quiet about their sustainability strategies to avoid the risk of damaging their brand.

Velua Frost, head of

very specific about what it is that you actually do, even though it's a small thing, it's worth telling because generally the consumers are ten steps behind



because they haven't had all these conversations. So, if it's a small thing and you can tell them that by doing this or by buying this, you are a part of the change, then I think it's super important.”

Taking steps, however small, towards a more sustainable future should be celebrated in an open and honest way with customers. It’s just as important to admit where you lack and explain how you plan to improve. Being authentic with this approach is a powerful way to connect with customers, because let’s face it, nobody’s perfect! And if you can find a way to invite them on the journey with you, then that should be plenty to keep the greenwash mob at bay.

Where To Start

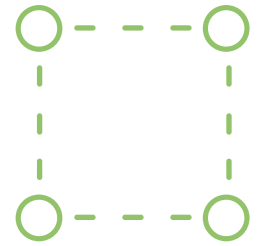


Where To Start

Where To Start

Where To Start

Where to start



A great way to begin your journey to a more sustainable future is by using a carbon calculator to measure your current impact. These reports factor in the many aspects of your day-to-day operations that may have an impact on the environment, including travel, accommodation, energy consumption, venues, materials, food and more. Once complete, the facts and figures should make it clear to see where you should focus your efforts first.

There are several calculators aimed at different areas of the creative industry, so take your time and find one that works best for you. Here's a few to get you started:

- ✓ **AdGreen – Advertising and production (UK / Europe)**
- ✓ **TRACE by Isla – Events**
- ✓ **PEAR by Green Production Guide – Film, TV and steaming (USA)**



Completing a carbon calculation will make you far more aware of the individual contributors to your overall impact on the environment, you might even be able to make some instant improvements.

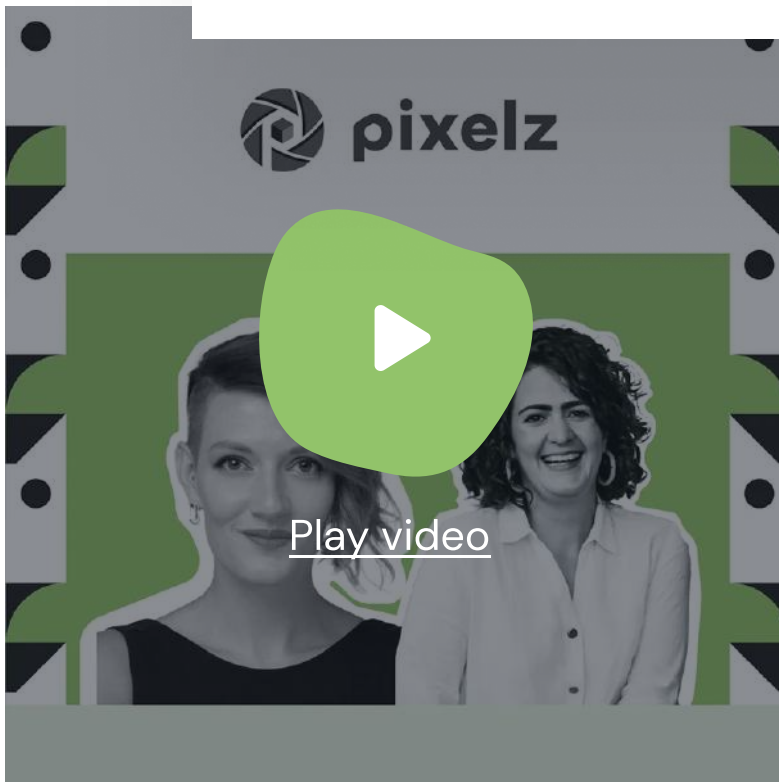


“You can’t manage what you don’t measure”



Katie Hall

Sustainability Consultant



Shifting Towards Sustainable Ways

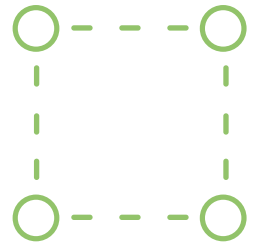
Shifting Towards Sustainable Ways



Shifting Towards Sustainable Ways

Shifting Towards Sustainable Ways

Shifting towards sustainable ways



Working in a way that has less impact on the environment requires a change of mindset, a shift of effort and an adjustment of focus. To your colleagues, this amount of change can just seem like “more work”. It’s a good idea to be open and honest about your sustainability plans and involve your team in the process as early as possible. Create conversations and ask for ideas, then work together to update your policies.

People like to feel a part of something, especially if that ‘something’ is for the good of the planet. By engaging the team early on, not only will you have a better chance of success but you’ll reshape your entire ethos. Pretty soon, changes become a habit and being mindful about sustainability will be part of the day-to-day. You can support this by rolling out changes gradually if required.

The list may seem endless, but with a little creativity, the solutions are many. With advice from industry experts, we've put together a few tips and tricks to help you and your studio and photo shoots get started on your journey to a more sustainable future.





01 Energy efficiency

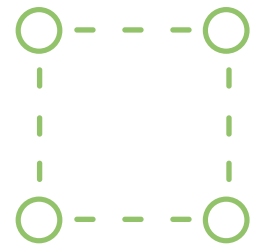
Photo studios and creative businesses can be very power heavy. While there are good habits we can adopt to reduce usage, we rely on electronic devices to create our work, so it's very difficult to avoid the bulk of our consumption. The best and biggest step you can take is to switch to a green energy provider that generates electricity from renewable sources rather than burning fossil fuels.

Katie from CreativeZero gave some great advice during our [webinar](#). “Energy is going to be your biggest contributor usually. So asking yourself what is your own Studio powered by? Are you on a renewable energy tariff? Can you change? Talking to your suppliers... are they on renewable energy? You might be the first person to ask them and that's okay, you can explain why you're asking them. But you might be the fifth or sixth person in that month... it's a collective bargaining tool and you're making people reconsider.”



Switching your own energy provider is as easy as a few clicks, but encouraging your suppliers to do the same starts a chain reaction of positive change that can spread far and wide across the industry.

02 Lights



Any creative business can reduce their energy usage by switching their office and communal area lighting to LED. Those with in-house photo and video studios have the added opportunity to change their lighting kit to LED too. LEDs consume considerably less energy compared to traditional tungsten or fluorescent lamps. They're also hard-wearing, emit less heat and have a much greater lifespan. The initial cost might seem steep, but they'll pay for themselves in the long run and help to reduce your footprint.

03 Offsetting

It's highly unlikely that you will be able to completely mitigate all emissions. Offsetting is a way to balance the emissions that remain after you have reduced as far as you can. This could be achieved by supporting clean energy projects, or environmental schemes such as tree planting or nature restoration.

The scheme you choose to support can be anywhere in the world and the environmental and social “co-benefits” of these projects can have a positive impact on the communities around them, so it’s worth doing your research. [The Carbon Offset Guide](#) is a great resource for learning about offsetting projects and organizations such as [Gold Standard](#), [Plan Vivo](#), [The UK Woodland Carbon Code](#) and the [ICROA](#) can provide assurance of the quality and effectiveness of the scheme you choose.

Remember, carbon offsetting costs money, so reduce before you offset and always look for ways to continuously improve.





04 Travel

Travel is likely to be a big contributor to your carbon footprint (alongside energy). Get into the habit of questioning the need to travel. Can we move this meeting online? Is there an alternative shoot location that doesn't require flights? Should we work from home more often?

If traveling is necessary, travel consciously. Look at the 'how'. Using public transport, car/taxi sharing, only flying direct and even economy seating on airlines (taking up less space on the plane) can all reduce your impact.

When you arrive, choose sustainable accommodation by booking hotels that are certified for meeting sustainability criteria by organizations such as [Green Key](#) and [GSTC](#). Or, self cater and do things your way.

Be mindful that you also have a responsibility to the landscape and the communities you visit. Spend money in ways that'll support the local economy, a little can go a long way in certain locations and you're likely to get a

richer cultural experience as a result. Avoid contributing to mass tourism by keeping beauty spots secret and leave no trace of your presence. And if you've got a little time spare to give back, do it!

05 Go Local

Sustainable photo studios will be thinking local for every aspect of every shoot. Brands got creative during the pandemic and discovered the potential in nearby locations for campaigns instead of hopping on a plane. If there's no substitute for the location or weather at the other end of a flight, compromise! Hire a local crew based at your desired location instead of putting your entire team and all their kit on a plane.

Day to day, try to cast models that live nearby so they don't have to travel as far to get on location or to the studio. Use local suppliers for things such as catering. Even having your photo studio in-house will avoid access emissions caused by transporting samples. Miles equal emissions, so whether you're in the studio or planning

something further afield, take a moment to see who and what's nearby.

06 Plan, plan and plan some more!

Always think about how you can squeeze the most out of every trip, production, or even just the everyday! Be resourceful and look for ways to “bulk out” every opportunity so you come away with more than you originally planned.

“We were invited for a fashion show in Gran Canaria... okay, well now we are there and we have to go, so let's have a photo shoot.” - Velua Frost, Copenhagen Cartel.

As well as reducing your impact, maximizing efficiency makes commercial sense. Put simply, saving time and using less will save you money, so it's worth being creative with your time and resources.



[Play video](#)



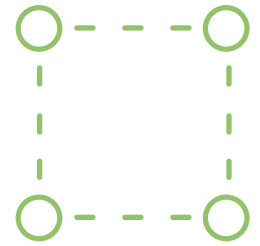
“We think that always being sustainable, it's spending more... what we are talking about is using resources well and efficiently so at the end it's also an economic win.”



Marina Muñoz
Head of studio

ALOHAS

07 Food



You may be thinking “how does what we eat impact our sustainability?” and you’re right to question it. It’s an easily overseen contributor to our footprint both in and out of work but food production is responsible for around 26% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions. That’s a scary number! Being mindful of the catering you offer in-house and on set during a production is not only important, it’s also an opportunity to make considerable reductions to your impact.

“Eat local” is a phrase that’s often heard when discussing a sustainable diet. However, the transport of food doesn’t contribute to emissions as much as you might think, for most produce it accounts for less than 10%. (Source: Food Choice vs. Eating Local) What you eat has a far greater impact on the environment with the farming and processing of meat, particularly red meats like beef, holding a high portion of the overall emissions contributed by the food industry.

"Only offering vegetarian catering... that reduces your footprint so substantially and really sends a message as a studio that you're taking your sustainability policy seriously... and it will usually save you money." - Katie Hall, sustainability consultant at CreativeZero.

Also, try to avoid adding plastic to the ingredients of your production. Your caterers should be able to provide a plastic free service, request all in attendance to bring reusable drinks containers, and offer refills instead of plastic bottles and throwaway coffee cups.

08 Renting Vs. Buying

The amount of equipment and props required to pull off production after production can soon mount up. Holding everything in-house is neither practical or financially logical, especially if you're honest with yourself about how many times that 6ft faux cactus is going to be used on set! After serving their purpose, these things have a tendency to sit in storage until the next spring clean, when they

inevitably reach their destiny - the dumpster!

Landfill contaminates eco systems and produces greenhouse gasses, so reducing waste wherever possible should be a priority. Keep productions efficient by hiring furniture and props that are specific to an individual campaign rather than buying. Be clever with the purchases you do make, only buy items that can be used long-term or repurposed and don't be afraid to get thrifty, buy second-hand and sell what you no longer use. One studio's trash is another's treasure!

The same goes for equipment such as cameras, lenses and lighting. There are obvious benefits to photo and video studios having an arsenal of kit at their disposal, but only if it's getting used. Consider hiring equipment when the need arises for specific equipment that you don't own (yet!). It's cheaper, avoids adding e-waste to the environment and is a great way to test before you invest. We don't need to tell you quality equipment that lasts doesn't come cheap! So, when you do buy new gear, take good care of it and sell when it's time to upgrade.

09 Policy is the best... honestly!

Get everyone on the same page by updating or creating a Sustainable Procurement Policy for your photo studio or creative business. This is a set of guidelines that define best practice when making purchase or supply chain decisions. It's an opportunity to engrain your sustainability ambitions into the very core of the company and build resilience by turning efficiency and effectiveness into policy.

The process of creating a Sustainable Procurement Policy will also increase awareness and promote cooperation as you speak to the many stakeholders throughout the business. And yes, it's still worth doing if your photo studio is a smaller operation. It's something you can always develop and you'll be better prepared as you start to grow.

In addition to the 'dos and don'ts,' you can also set targets or KPIs within this document to help keep you on course to reach your sustainability goals.



Once you've started, **don't stop!**

Once you've started, don't stop! Remain conscious of the contributors and keep measuring them so you can continue to monitor your impact and see how far you've come. Own it, be proactive, and make it a part of your brand's identity and culture. Begin to buddy up with suppliers and partners that are also making sustainable choices or challenge your existing ones to join you on the journey. Their work also has an effect on your carbon footprint and there's value that comes from surrounding yourself with like-minded people.



Social Responsibility

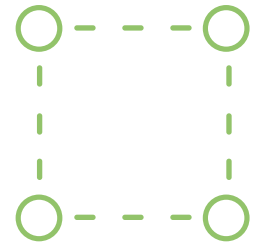
Social Sustainability



Social Sustainability

Social Sustainability

Social responsibility



A sustainable business is not only responsible for the good of the planet but the people on it too. Think about the positive and negative impacts your business has on the lives of your employees, customers, supply chain workers and local communities. Managing these impacts and ensuring people are protected, rights are respected, and working conditions across the supply chain are safe and healthy is essential. As is equality and the needs of specific groups or individuals.

Choose to do business in a way that benefits the lives you come into contact with. In addition to creating job opportunities, there are other ways you can give back. Contribute to community projects, invest in young talent by offering internships or training workshops, or choose a charity partner. Supporting your local community is good for business and good for the soul! So, if you're

outsourcing, you should do the same.

When outsourcing any of your work, your business and social responsibilities might become a multinational affair. Your control over the human impact of your operations is then limited to who you decide to work with. Ensure you only engage with suppliers whose ethical practices align with your own by doing your research and asking the right questions - don't just go with the lowest price.

Impact sourcing is a great practice to adopt when setting up new supplier partnerships. The [Global Impact Sourcing Coalition](#) describes impact sourcing as “a business practice where a company prioritizes suppliers that intentionally hire and provide career development opportunities to people who otherwise have limited prospects for formal employment.” Impact sourcing gives access to competitive suppliers with responsible hiring practices which, in turn, gives you the opportunity to impact the lives of families and communities around the world. At Pixelz, we know a thing or two when it comes to impact sourcing because we do it! To find out more, read

our blog, [Why Impact Sourcing is Good Business](#) or visit the [GISC website](#).



Choose to do business
in a way that **benefits**
the lives you come into
contact with



What are you waiting for?!

There are many benefits to reducing our impact and operating more sustainably. It increases customer and employee engagement, and can even save you money! But most importantly, it benefits the planet. We need to act and we need to act fast, so stop waiting for the right time to begin your sustainability efforts. Even if you make one small change today, stick to it and the long term effects could be huge!

The fact you've read this far means you're serious about sustainability, so whether you're taking your very first steps or you're already on the journey, we applaud you! If you've found this article useful, please share it with your contacts and save it as a guide to refer to in future. You can also join the conversation online, share your thoughts with us on [LinkedIn](#).

Resources and tools

Carbon calculators

[AdGreen](#) - Advertising and production (UK / Europe)

[TRACE by Isla](#) - Events

[PEAR by Green Production Guide](#) - Film, TV and steaming (USA)

Reports

[Advertised Emissions](#)

[Havas' Meaningful Brands Report 2021](#)

Communities

[Creatives for climate](#)

[The Purpose Disruptors](#)

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Offsetting

[The Carbon Offset Guide](#)

[Gold Standard](#)

[Plan Vivo](#)

[The UK Woodland Carbon Code](#)

[International Carbon Reduction and Offset Alliance](#)



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