

# **YOUNG LEADERS RECOMMENDATIONS**

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## AD NET ZERO YOUNG LEADERS



# CONTEXT

40+

Businesses across the industry involved with the Young Leaders

37%

of agency employees feel demoralised about climate change vs 14% of the public

8

Meetings, workshops and forums

1/4

of agency employees do not feel comfortable voicing concerns to colleagues about a client's impact on the environment

4

Presentations to industry leadership

In 2025, the Young Leaders Group, a cohort of more than 40 emerging professionals from across the advertising industry, took part in a series of gatherings to examine [IPA research](#) which highlighted high levels of climate-related anxiety amongst industry professionals, and explore possible solutions. Through these discussions, they developed a set of recommendations for senior leaders across the industry. These proposals are designed to help integrate sustainability more deeply into business strategy, building awareness into action, and turning passion into education, for your entire workforce.



ANZ Young Leaders Group meet for a workshop at ITV

The participation of the group also highlights the need for collective industry action, which can establish these practices as a standard part of business strategy.

The findings underline the importance of recognising and empowering emerging talent - the lifeblood of the industry. Their passion, ideas, and vision are vital for the future of a creative sector that holds the power to make change. Advertising can shape desires, and reframe our approach to consumption to support a more sustainable world from which we shall all benefit.



ANZ host a Young Leaders Carbon Literacy Workshop led by The Guardian

**This report presents the Young Leaders final 4 recommendations, alongside case studies of where these are already being implemented across the industry.**



# 1 MAKE CLIMATE LITERACY A STANDARD SKILL

Building climate literacy across the advertising industry is essential to ensure all employees understand the realities of the climate crisis and the sector's role in achieving net zero. Climate literacy combines knowledge of climate science with awareness of individual and collective solutions.

Best practice involves at least half a day of training for all staff, covering climate fundamentals, the industry's responsibilities, and practical pathways to carbon reduction. Training should include personal and team pledges, and be embedded in onboarding processes.

While delivery formats may vary, in-person workshops are recommended for maximum impact. Industry bodies like Ad Net Zero can support members by curating approved training materials, developing industry toolkits, and exploring accreditation schemes.

Successful implementation will require leadership endorsement, coordination across HR, communications, and sustainability teams, and systems to track participation.



**68%**

**of Open Media teams have been upskilled with Carbon Literacy training, delivered by the Better Business Network.**

**Participants expressed how the training improved their confidence to talk about the subject and understand what more they could do to have an impact.**



In December 2025 Ad Net Zero hosted Carbon Literacy training, led and funded by The Guardian, certifying 9 Young Leaders as Carbon Literate.

## Carbon literacy at The Guardian

The Guardian rolled out climate literacy training to its 120 advertising team. Accredited by the Carbon Literacy Project, their workshops significantly improved staff knowledge, confidence and engagement.

**The Guardian**

**84%**

**of participants now feel confident talking to peers about the climate crisis, up from 28%.**



# FLIP THE MODEL WITH REVERSE MENTORING

Sustainability often feels disconnected from leadership conversations, with a detachment between the interests of junior staff, and wider business goals.

We recommend implementing reverse mentoring by pairing senior leaders with Young Leader representatives to embed sustainability thinking at the highest levels of decision-making. Regular one-on-one sessions, guided prompts, and structured feedback will create space for open dialogue and knowledge sharing.

Reverse mentoring combines the energy, ideas, and on-the-ground experience of junior staff with the strategic insight and implementation expertise of senior leaders. This approach flattens hierarchies, fosters collaboration, and ensures sustainability challenges and opportunities are understood from multiple perspectives - ultimately driving more authentic, informed leadership decisions.

Success indicators include integration of insights into decision-making, positive feedback from participants, and external communication of programme impact.

“

Participating in the CEO Reverse Mentor program has been a defining moment in my personal and professional journey at ELC. The experience has reaffirmed the value of cross-generational dialogue and the power of leveraging individual expertise to spark innovation.

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**Anna Boykis**

Analyst, AI and Emerging Technologies, Estée Lauder Companies

**Reverse Mentor - Nancy Mahon, Chief Sustainability Officer**



**ESTÉE  
LAUDER  
COMPANIES**

**Reverse  
Mentoring  
Programme**

Estée Lauder Companies launched a global reverse mentorship program, pairing early-career employees with senior leaders. Monthly sessions created space for open dialogue on sustainability, innovation, and leadership challenges.

The initiative strengthened cross-generational collaboration and embedded fresh perspectives into decision-making. Participants reported significant professional growth, expanded networks, and a stronger culture of inclusion and continuous learning.



# MAKE SUSTAINABILITY PART OF EVERYDAY CONVERSATION

Companies should incorporate sustainability into their internal communications, to keep all employees, regardless of department or seniority, informed about the company's targets, initiatives and progress throughout the year.

This would help employee engagement with ESG schemes, achieve uniform external communications, in turn improving trust on both B2B and B2C fronts.

With recent research suggesting that nearly 1 in 2 employees want the company they work for to demonstrate a commitment to ESG ([KPMG](#)), it's more important than ever for companies to be transparent about their sustainability progress, particularly within their own teams.

## Bridging the Gap Between Leadership Ambition and Workforce Reality

While over 80% of employees say they've heard something about sustainability goals, fewer than half receive regular, clear updates – and almost 40% report receiving no formal sustainability training whatsoever.

[The Corporate Sustainability  
Disconnect Report 2025](#)

**Astutis.**

## EcoStars @ the7stars



the7stars integrates sustainability into internal communications through its EcoStars leadership team.

EcoStars drives engagement with initiatives like annual Green Weeks, regular clothes swaps, and monthly newsletters sharing industry, client, and company sustainability news.

These efforts promote sustainable media buying and foster a more sustainable office culture, ensuring employees remain informed and involved year-round.

## September Newsletter



Industry News: IPA to Launch new Carbon Calculator built using GMSF



The IPA is set to launch the first industry-commissioned carbon emissions calculator developed in line with Ad Net Zero's Global Media Sustainability Framework (GMSF). This tool will help agencies and advertisers measure and reduce the carbon footprint of their media campaigns across six key channels: TV, digital, print, audio, outdoor, and cinema.



## Green @ Global

Earth Week campaign across national offices, featuring smoothie bikes.

Opportunities for committee members to share their favourite environmental documentaries.

Internal speaker sessions on sustainability in advertising.



# 4

## INTRODUCE SUSTAINABILITY IN METRICS AND APPRAISALS

This recommendation proposes integrating sustainability metrics into the KPIs and performance appraisals of all employees, from senior leaders to practitioners. The core idea is to establish shared responsibility and maintain a focus on sustainability, preventing it from being overlooked or deprioritised.

By making sustainability goals tangible and embedding it in personal reviews, companies ensure alignment with wider business goals, enhance accountability, and significantly reduce the risk of greenwashing. Best practice involves setting SMART KPIs for all staff and conducting reviews at least every six months.

Implementation requires defining clear company targets and departmental ownership (0-6 months), followed by communicating and integrating these new responsibilities and appraisal updates across the organisation (6-12 months). Success can be measured by environmental KPIs (e.g. carbon footprint), employee engagement, and training completion rates.

**10%**  
of ITV Group  
Executive  
Committee's annual  
bonus is tied to ESG  
targets.



### Incentivising sustainable action



Senior management at ITV have broad ESG objectives as part of their remuneration package, including targets for the Commercial team on climate action, with particular focus on campaigns and advertising partnerships.



# SPEAK TO US

**This work wouldn't be possible without the participation and enthusiasm of so many industry representatives.**

To join the Young Leaders group in 2026 you must:

- Be an Ad Net Zero Accelerator-tier supporting organisation.
- Have fewer than 10 years' industry experience.
- Only have one representative per organisation, though rotation across colleagues is possible.

To find out more, please [get in touch](#).

If you want to find out more about the general Ad Net Zero Programme, see [here](#).