

Sustainability is the key to innovation and the next frontier for business

By [Tania Morgan-Weyer](#)

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We have undergone the industrial age, the technology age, the people or talent age and now we're on the cusp of the green age. We live in a world where we are undeniably fast destroying our planet and heritage for our children through excessive consumerism and capitalism. Gone are the days where we can view sustainability as a 'nice to have' or as something too expensive to consider.



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In fact, many studies, including the *Harvard Business Review*, are calling sustainability a core business goal and priority, and one that should drive most business innovation going forward. Traditional approaches to business that do not include greener approaches are simply not good enough anymore and are likely to be disadvantaged. Having a low carbon economy is now critical and no longer an added business bonus but core to business success and sustainability.

Corporate collaboration

But in order for a company to adopt and prioritise a solid sustainability strategy, it requires the CEO and leadership team to commit to doing whatever is necessary to create this framework. It requires hiring the right talent and requires collaboration across industries and categories and potentially even amongst competitors in a category.

We are part of a local industrial forum that has created a dialogue with local government to discuss challenges. The AAI (Atlantis Industrial Forum) has had successes with electricity challenges with Eskom and load shedding. Local businesses, like us at Promeal, dealt with the Western Cape Municipality by committing to reduce our power outage to below a certain level at critical times which then resulted in us not getting turned off for load shedding periods. This is a great example of corporate collaboration and commitment to finding a compromise.

At the heart of linking business strategies to societal needs, sustainability has moved from CSR to CSV – with *value* being the operative word. Companies who have been driving these practices ahead of the curve are experiencing top and bottom line profits from the programmes implemented, and have created competitive advantage as well as environmental benefit.

Waste management

Another process that we put in place at Promeal in our move to encourage sustainability was our 'Waste Management' programme. Up until our implementation, our raw waste was sent to Vissershok dump site. Fully aware that South Africa, together with rest of the world, is running out of dump sites and supporting the 'zero waste to landfill' goals, we sought and found a more responsible solution.

Agriprotein is a Cape Town-based company using German waste farming technology, which instead feeds waste to the flies. The waste-eating flies in turn lay larvae, which is rich in oils and protein. These larvae are harvested, sterilised and pressed to extract the oil. The dry materials, which remain behind are also rich in protein and both the oil and protein are further utilised as compost. We now not only save profits on waste management by only paying transport costs but are also contributing to saving the planet by doing our part to keep the country cleaner.



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Energy and water efficiency

A second example towards maintaining our sustainability ethos was to partner with Oxbow Eco Energy which replaced all our neon lighting with more energy efficient LED lights throughout the factory, warehouses and offices. This not only equated to less power generation and a lesser amount of coal usage, but also means Promeal will be emitting a reduced amount of fumes, which in turn reduces hot house gases and can only impact positively on the environment.

At the heart of sustainability, we have innovation and design across; systems and processes, equipment, our products, our services, industries as well as captains of industry.

As with most industries in the Western Cape, our current challenge is water. Traditionally we've used consumer water for product preparation and for cleaning, but as this is no longer possible, nor responsible and so again we've had to adapt. We have removed all hose pipes from our floors and recycle water safely. In the future, we will be looking to move to waterless cleaning as well as investigating self-cleaning equipment.

Ultimately integrated design and innovative use of sustainable materials, equipment and processes are at the heart of sustainability – better design automatically under engineers by using less but purer materials.

Sustainability frontier

Brands with purpose are also a part of the sustainability frontier. At Promeal we have a pure intent in the business's core through our processes, our recipes, our ingredients and through our people.

The internal values and commitments cover our ethos in brand and product design. Effective carbon management strategies along with corporate social responsibilities provide businesses with a foundation to reduce their carbon footprint whilst at the same time showing that it cares for its community, employees and the environment.

We're very proud to be a local brand and manufacturer who sources mainly local raw materials which means less of a carbon footprint for our consumers. We are also dedicated to the use of raw materials which are less "engineered" where possible or eco-friendly. We aim to source as much of our ingredients locally as possible in order to sustain the local economy. We drive job roles and build programmes which support the local Atlantis community.

We are evidentially on a greener journey, not only due to the possible long-term savings but also to the long-term effect on our planet. It is not just an ethical choice, but a business choice. We are constantly challenging our organisation's processes and production elements for more eco-friendly solutions. Promeal will continue on this voyage, as long as more earth-loving solutions exist. And we challenge you, our partners and industry members to follow suit on a journey to

greener, lighter footprints. A greener planet today, is a better future for tomorrow.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tania Morgan-Weyer is the MD of [\[\[http://www.promeal.co.za/ Promeal\]\]](http://www.promeal.co.za/), a South African wet pet food manufacturer.

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