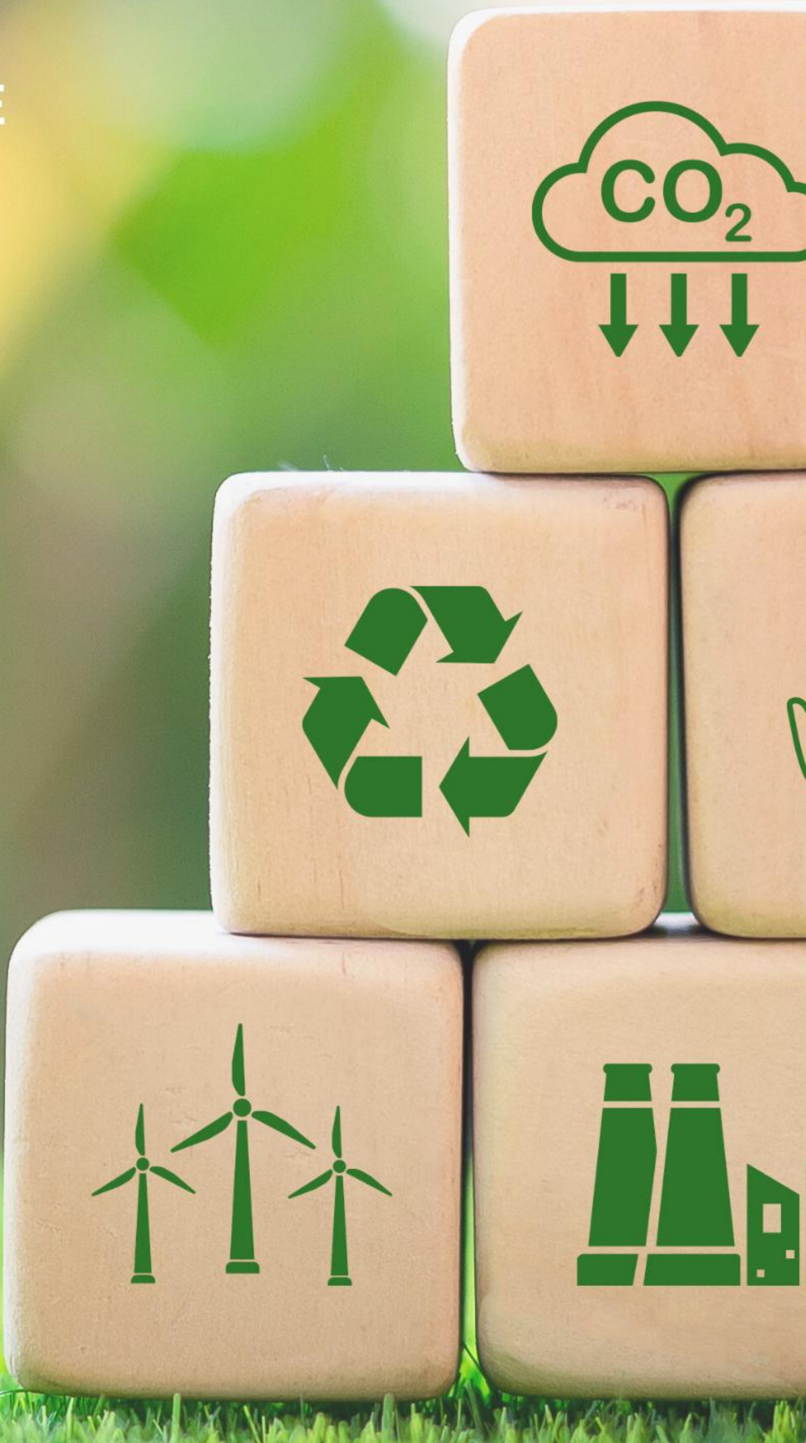
SUFABU

CASE STUDIES

GREENING WORKPLACE



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Introduction

Green companies, also often referred to as *sustainable businesses*, seek to balance their profit objective with the need to protect the planet's health. These companies integrate sustainability principles into all their activities, adopting practices that reduce the negative environmental impact globally and locally. The main objective of green businesses is to minimize their environmental impact while contributing to economic and social well-being [1].

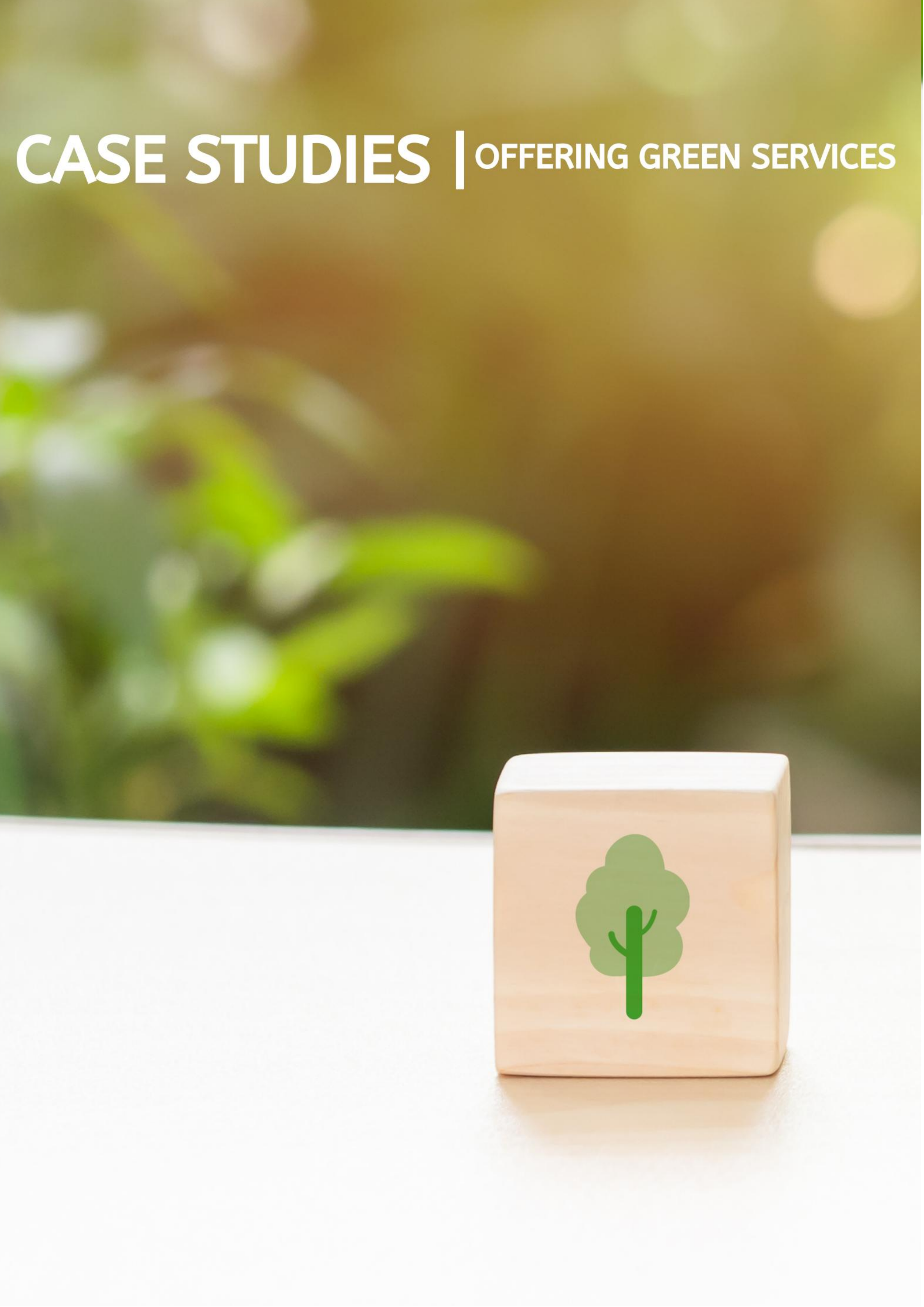
As the threat of climate change and its devastating effects on our ecosystem become more acute, green businesses are focusing on strategies that allow them to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a significant cause of global warming. These companies adopt greener practices in their production processes and create products that promote sustainability, such as renewable technologies, low-impact products and circular solutions and adoption. For many enterprises and workers today, the greening of workplaces can significantly reduce carbon emissions.

The SUFABU project focuses on strengthening the core competencies of family entrepreneurs who have brought a new generation into the company's management or are involved in a generational discussion on business management in the area of introducing green technologies or practices. Due to their size, SMEs, and especially family businesses, have fewer opportunities to start implementing green transformation activities. The project creates a comprehensive training system based on various training materials that are publicly available and provides them with the missing know-how. The following case studies concern family businesses that have embarked on a green transition process. The case studies have been divided into three macro-categories:

- Greening process, methods and practices
- Greening input
- Greening workplaces

Many of the companies in the case studies have adopted measures belonging to more than one macro category; the choice to include them in the workplace category is since the primary environmental sustainability measure adopted by the company falls into this category. This includes all processes related to internal organization in the company that have benefits in terms of environmental impact, for example, teleworking, the use of sustainable transport, sustainable consumption or respect for rights.

CASE STUDIES | OFFERING GREEN SERVICES



1.1 Omni Work Center

Country: Spain	**Greening processes:** Sustainable practices **Greening Input:** Reduced carbon footprint **Greening workplace:** Sustainable consumption **Greening output:** offering green services
Company size headcount: Around 10	**Company size turnover:** < €2m
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation) Sibling	**Industry:** Other Service Activities

Background

Omni Work Center began in Cadiz over five years ago when Javier and Esperanza, a couple working in the insurance business, decided to open a dedicated space for their office. The inspiration to create a coworking space came about during their special anniversary trip to the Sahara Desert. There, under the vast desert sky, they met a remote worker from New York City who shared stories about how wonderful it is to travel the world while still having an office and being a part of the local community. Inspired by this encounter, Javier and Esperanza envisioned bringing a similar concept to their hometown - a space where travellers and remote workers could come together, connect, and collaborate.

After studying coworking models in Madrid, where such spaces were common (unlike in Cádiz at the time), they decided to establish their own. From the very start, Javier and Esperanza were committed to integrating green philosophy and sustainable practices into the core of Omni Work Center. Their passion for sustainability drove them to create a workspace that not only fosters collaboration and productivity but also minimizes ecological impact. In 2019, they successfully opened a coworking space with a strong emphasis on environmental responsibility, incorporating eco-friendly design, sustainable practices, and an overall green philosophy.

Sustainability transition

Ever since the Omni Work Centre was established, the coworking space has undergone a remarkable green transformation. The coworking space was designed using sustainable and recycled materials, such as wood, to minimize its carbon footprint. Sustainable architectural strategies were employed to reduce energy consumption, such as maximizing natural light to lessen reliance on artificial lighting. Natural elements like plants and wood were incorporated to foster a connection to nature. Javier and Esperanza mention that their choice for selection of low-maintenance plants was inspired by NASA's Clean Air Study, which was originally conducted due to concerns about air quality in space habitats where astronauts lived in these small spaces for a long time. Everyone knows that plants photosynthesize, inhaling carbon dioxide to produce oxygen, but according to NASA, plants might be able to go one step further and actually absorb dangerous pollutants from the atmosphere. And so, they decided to apply the NASA Clean Air Concept at Omni Work Centre. After researching plants suitable for the Spanish climate, they selected several air-purifying varieties, such as *Chamaedorea elegans* and *Dracaena trifasciata*, for their coworking space. When entering the Omni Work Centre, these plants are the first thing you see, making them the central focus of the place.

> ***"Green is our favorite color, and you'll see it everywhere at Omni Center — in every leaf, every choice, and every corner of our coworking space. It's not just a color - it's our commitment to a sustainable future."***
>
> *Maria Esperanza Gutiérrez Rodríguez, the 1st generation*

In addition, Javier and Esperanza highlight their strong commitment to sustainable energy-saving practices. For example, they have implemented automatic power-down features for electronics, including routers, which turn off when not in use to conserve energy.

Addressing waste management is an important focus in Omni Work Centre, an example of which is to minimize single-use plastics. For instance, they prioritize recyclable paper plates and opt for tap water over bottled water, making environmentally conscious choices that significantly cut down plastic waste. Javier Junior and Runa fully support their parents' green initiatives and are eager to push these efforts even further. One of their innovative ideas was to implement the use of QR codes to further reduce paper waste. Instead of printing documents for each coworker, information is now shared digitally through these QR codes. This innovative approach not only reduces paper consumption but also promotes a more sustainable work environment.

> ***"As a new generation raised with modern technology, we see how the world is changing, with tech becoming a part of everyday life. That's why we use tools like QR codes and other digital solutions to make our coworking space even greener. For us, being sustainable means finding new ways to improve and build on what our parents started."***
>
> *Runa y Javier Barragán Gutíerrez, the 2nd generation*

Learning points and actions to consider

Both the older and younger generations at Omni Work Centre share a unified vision of fostering and maintaining the eco-friendly practices that define their coworking space. The founders, Javier and Esperanza, were the driving force behind the green concept of their family business. Their children, Javier and Runa, are equally committed to continuing their parents' efforts. For instance, they have been instrumental in implementing the use of QR codes to reduce paper waste and are constantly exploring additional ways to minimize the environmental impact of the coworking space.

To date, Omni Work Center has grown to be one of the most popular coworking spaces in Cadiz, and gaining more popularity as a green and environmentally friendly workspace.

Reflections

- How does a green transition align with our overall mission and vision for the future?
- Are we prepared to make sustainability a fundamental part of our identity and decision-making process?
- Are our clients and customers - on board with our green transition?

1.2 Hit & Dit

Country: Sweden	**Greening processes:** Green marketing/ labels **Greening input:** Renewable energy, Sustainable raw materials **Greening output:** offering green services
Company size headcount: <250	**Company size turnover:** Around 10m
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation)	**Industry:** Transportation and storage

Background

In 1998, Catrin Jalkander decided to leave her salesperson position at a dairy company and started her own company, Hit & Dit Transportation. When she started the new company, the region had only approximately five post offices that collected and delivered packages, especially for corporate clients. In that period, the internet was nascent, and corporations still relied on post mail for communication. Seeing the new opportunity and unmet demands, Catrin started driving her own car to pick up and deliver letters and packages for corporate clients in her hometown, Habo, and later expanded the services to the Jönköping region in Sweden.

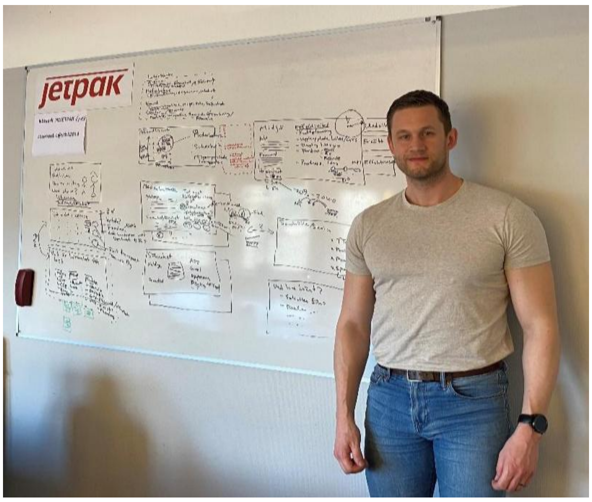
The business grew exponentially. Catrin hired the first employee and purchased the second car six months after she started the company. In 2002, she expanded the service to include cargo delivery via lorries. The business now had approximately 120 employees and a revenue of approximately 86 million SEK in 2023. Their service covers southern Sweden, including Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, and Kalmar. They have also set up another company at Östergötland located on the eastern coast of Sweden (including Linköping and Norrköping) since January 2024, where they have employed 25 new employees and purchased 70 new cars within two months.

Catrin Jalkander, founder of Hit & Dit Transportation

Catrin’s sons, Nicklas and Marcus, started helping the family business after obtaining their driving licenses at 18. During their studies, they used summer holidays to help deliver packages. After graduation, Marcus started working in the family firm as the driver and has now become the operational manager in charge of key account and route management. In comparison, Nicklas first worked at different nonfamily businesses with various positions, including production and sales management. After several years, Catrin and Marcus started inviting Nicklas to join the family firm to bring his expertise in production and sales management into the family business. In 2023, Nicklas agreed to join the family firm and is now the CEO of the company at Östergötland. After he joined the family firm, he started planning more sustainability projects based on what he learned from his previous works. As Catrin has described:

> ***“I have always had this [sustainability] in my head, but, honestly, it was Nicklas who pushed me [to do more sustainability practices.”***

After involving both sons in the top management teams of the firm, Catrin has also started delegating owner responsibilities to them, such that each of them has 20 percent of the shares in the main business. Considering that the family business is growing and expanding to other regions in Sweden, they may establish a holding company that consolidates family shares and business portfolios to better manage their investments. Through a holding company, the family will rely more on professional management to support their large and potentially risky investments, such as those in sustainability.



Nicklas Jalkander and his plan for the firm’s future sustainability practices

Sustainability transition

The family has focused their sustainability practices on improving their services, including obtaining certifications for fair transportation and updating their vehicles to more sustainable options.

Certification for fair transportation

Since 2019, Catrin has started the process of obtaining certification for fair practices in the transportation industry. This national certification indicates whether supply chain companies have achieved sustainability through different practices. For instance, inspectors visit the company annually by checking work journals to see whether drivers have worked overtime (i.e., worked more than six hours) and violated traffic regulations during their services. They also interview employees to examine whether employees receive equal treatment, such as fair wages and evaluations. In addition, inspectors examine vehicles and facilities to see whether the conditions are updated and can effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As such, the family has paid attention to their practices addressing employees' well-being and the conditions of the vehicles. For instance, all their small vehicles should not be older than five years, and their lorries should not be older than ten years. Updating their vehicles helps them ensure fuel efficiency and emission control and provides drivers with more comfortable "offices." Nicklas shared:

> ***"We are investing a lot of our money back into the company. Almost all the money ends up in cars because our employees create value. We need to show them respect by making sure that their office—the car—looks fine and nice every day."***

In turn, their employees tend to work longer at their firm than those at their competitors.

Sustainable vehicles

In addition to keeping vehicles relatively new, the family has paid attention to the types of vehicles they purchase. For instance, following the climate goals of the Swedish government in 2030, the company has started replacing some of its vehicles with ones based on hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) to reduce fossil fuel consumption in its services. They have also begun recording each fuel per vehicle so that they can provide data to show customers that their vehicles have better fuel efficiency and lower emissions than traditional vehicles. Moreover, they offer two different service options to customers—one with traditional vehicles and one with HVO—so that customers can choose a more sustainable option when partnering with them.

The family considers HVO vehicles merely to be in the transitional stage. In the future, they plan to switch to completely electric vehicles when delivering their services. They believe that it is important to take a large step forward rather than stay in the transitional stage by having hybrid vehicles.

Nicklas mentioned, “*We are late on the electrification, so we need to take the big steps straight away.*”

However, several challenges prevent the family from switching to complete electrical vehicles. First, the regulations on weights affect how much cargo can be delivered per drive. If the government does not relax the weight restriction on electric vehicles but instead imposes the same restriction on all types of vehicles, an electric vehicle can carry approximately half of the cargo as a traditional vehicle of the same size. Second, there is insufficient infrastructure, i.e., charging stations for electric vehicles, throughout the country. Without an expansive network, the family cannot ensure reliable long-distance deliveries with only electric vehicles. Finally, an electric vehicle costs 50 percent more than a traditional vehicle based on fossil fuel. If they want to replace 60 vehicles with electrical ones, it will cost approximately 54 million SEK, beyond what their financial budget allows. Because of these regulations, infrastructure, and financial challenges, the family is uncertain when they can successfully replace all their vehicles with electric ones.

Learning points and actions to consider

There are different key learnings when the family implements the aforementioned sustainability practices. First, engaging different internal stakeholders, including family members and nonfamily employees, is important in the implementation process. Incumbents may benefit from different viewpoints and creativity of younger family members, considering that incumbents may be accustomed to a specific way of thinking that may limit the innovation needed for implementation. Catrin highlighted, “*You need help from someone who is younger with a quick mind*.”

In addition to family members, nonfamily employees are valuable sources for innovative ideas. For instance, when the family decided to install charging stations for electric cars at their facility, employees provided input on where the charging stations should be so that it would be easier to charge the vehicles. Nonfamily employees provide different inputs that may help the family think outside the box. Nicklas shared, “Y*ou need more eyes, different eyes, different ways of thinking, including personnel outside the family. You need to talk to your employees first. If it is only the three or four of you in the family, you will have the same kind of thinking*.”

Finally, the family suggested earlier implementation of sustainability practices. Otherwise, if the family has started other new projects simultaneously, such as starting another new subsidiary in another location, the sustainability project runs the risk of postponement and lagging behind competitors. Nicklas thought that if he had joined the family firm earlier, they might have already converted 30 percent of the vehicles to electric vehicles.

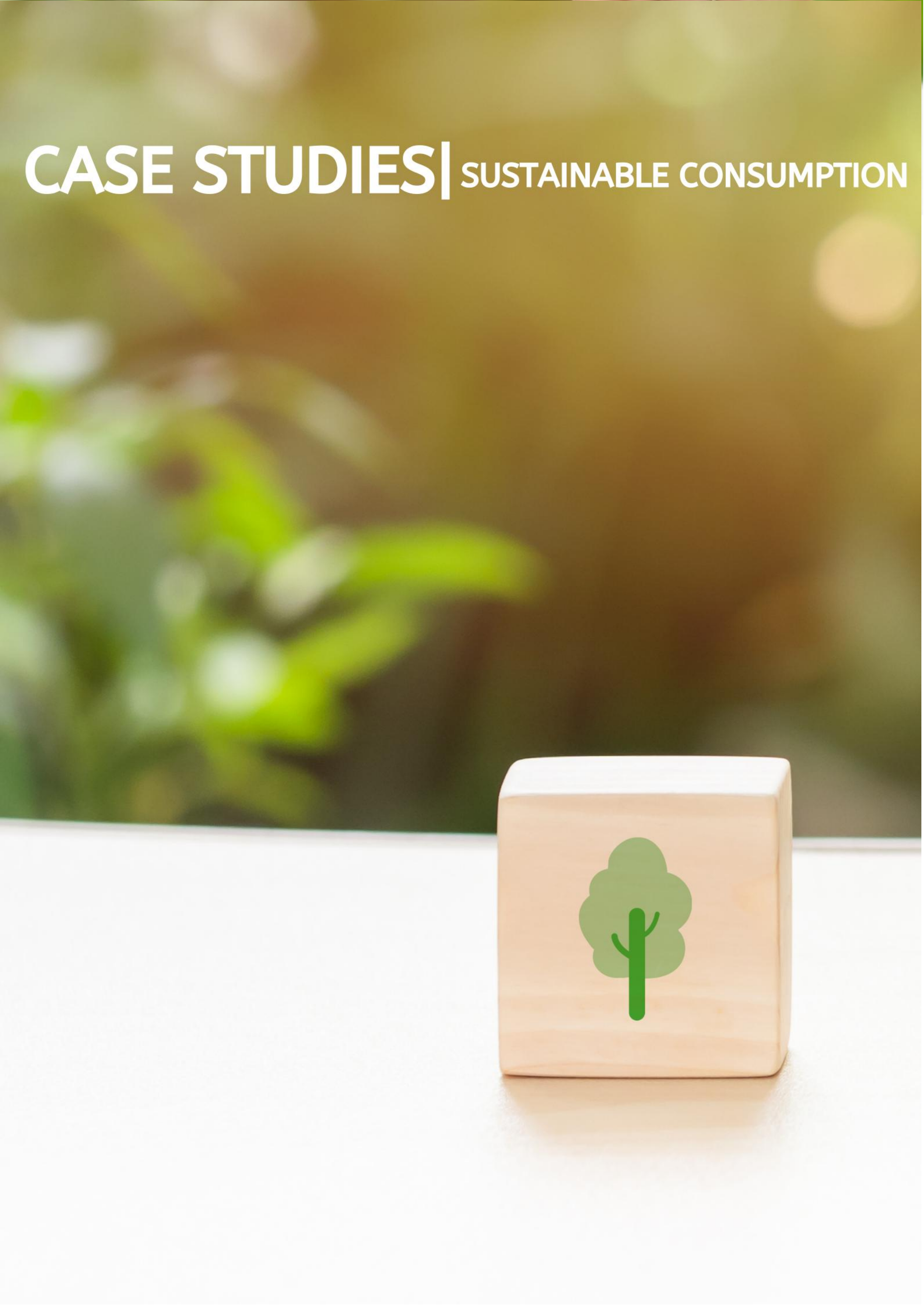
Some questions remain for the family. The first question is how the family could better allocate its limited resources and time to implement sustainability. For instance, as Nicklas is in charge of both the parent company's sustainability and the expansion of the new company, he currently prioritizes the latter. They wondered how government and industry associations could support families small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) like them to implement sustainability practices.

Another question lies in customers. As most customers are price sensitive, more than 90% of customers still prefer vehicles on fossil fuel that cost less than those using HVO. This raises the challenge of convincing customers to accept more sustainable but expensive services before family SMEs invest significantly in sustainability.

Reflections

- How could the family better allocate its limited resources and time to implementing sustainability?
- How could the government and industry associations support family SMEs?
- How could the family engage customers in the green transformation process of its business model?

CASE STUDIES| SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION



2.1 Grupo El Castillo

Country: Spain	**Greening processes:** Energy Efficiency, Resource intensity, Waste management **Greening input:** Reduced carbon footprint **Greening workplace:** Sustainable consumption (e.g. energy use, waste management, food at work) **Greening outputs:** Offering green & sustainable practices
Company size headcount: >250	**Company size turnover:** Around > €50 m
Interviewed: Incumbent (senior generation) Successor (next generation)	**Industry:** Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

Background

Grupo El Castillo is a family-owned business that was founded in 1986. Initially established in the Community of Madrid, the company quickly expanded its reach to the Valencian Community in 1991 with the ambitious Residencia Mondúber project. Over the years, Grupo El Castillo has expanded both geographically and in the diversity of its service offerings and established itself as one of the leading organizations in the social and healthcare sector in Spain.

The company also operates in the real estate sector, where it is involved in construction projects, property rentals, and tourism. Its real estate portfolio includes two hotels, a travel agency, and student accommodation including numerous rental properties for students and a university residence. Additionally, the company offers various services, including cleaning, laundry, and corporate services.

The organization also has a significant presence in the agri-food sector, as it takes part in cultivating crops such as pistachios, almonds, watermelon, pumpkin, and onions in Spain and Senegal. These products are imported domestically and exported throughout Europe.

Sustainability transition

In regard to environmental sustainability, the company has taken initial steps towards incorporating green practices and green management into its operations. These initial steps are driven by the younger generation, who are passionate about integrating eco-friendly practices into the company's operations. This new wave of leadership brings a fresh perspective looking at sustainability not just as a passing trend but as an important philosophy that should guide the entire organization.

Patricia Belmar Moreno, a member of the youngest generation in the company, is one remarkable example with a proactive approach to promoting green initiatives within the company. Being passionate about environmental sustainability, she is determined to raise awareness among her colleagues about the importance of environmental issues and resource conservation. She frequently shares insights and tips on how small changes in daily habits can significantly impact the working environment and make it more eco-friendly. She also advocates for larger initiatives, like implementing a company-wide recycling program and reducing the organization's carbon footprint.

She proposed to start with small actions, and thinks this way many things are possible:

> ***"It is possible to work without printing paper. And just like that, there are many other things we can do! We're not the first, nor will we be the last to make these changes. At the head office, we proved that it can be done; this shift has shown our employees that they can adapt to change and embrace new practices".***

Patricia shares her insights into the crucial role that company workers and particularly younger generations play in adopting sustainable practices that can lead to significant cost savings and resource efficiency.

> ***"When it comes to environmental issues, it's the younger generations who are pushing forward for change. I'm particularly passionate about this, to the point where I'm the one constantly reminding everyone - even for simple tasks like separating paper from cardboard. I'm often behind the workers, checking to make sure everything is done correctly. It's become something of a personal mission…"***

When talking about climate change and its impacts, people often have different opinions about climate change. Some may doubt its reality, but one key point remains: adopting sustainable practices has clear benefits that go beyond just climate concerns. Patricia highlights that, no matter

what someone believes about climate change, using fewer resources and saving money is always a smart choice.

> ***"You might think that climate change isn't real, and that's your opinion, which is fine. But does it hurt anyone to reduce consumption and save resources? No. Even if climate change were just a fabrication, you'd still be saving money from an economic standpoint."***

Patricia mentions that first notable changes started during the pandemic, when employees began to realise how important it is to save resources and reduce waste. This growing awareness led to the adoption of several sustainable practices within the company. As a result, the company saw a positive boost in its internal reputation and what was most encouraging is that employees recognised the positive impact, and many were happy in being part of an organisation committed to green change.

Learning points and actions to consider

Despite these new perspectives and changes, there remains resistance to the implementation of environmental practices from the older generations of the top management. Generally, there is resistance from the first and second generations of the family business towards sustainability, mainly related to the diversity of sectors, which leads to different priorities. From their perspective, at the high management level, they see it more as somewhat bothersome, unless they are forced to, adopt it or unless it doesn't provide a competitive advantage.

> ***"Sustainability is not a top priority at the moment and remains an area for improvement. But despite the different vision between the generations in our company, we are getting there"***

Patricia also points out that while older generations may still view sustainability as less important and not as a priority, younger family members are recognizing its significance for the company's future.

They understand that embracing sustainable practices is not just beneficial for the environment, - it is essential for the company's growth and overall identity.

> ***"The shift in generational attitudes towards sustainability in my company is clear. The older generation often views environmental practices as unimportant, while the second generation may accept them if required. Today, however, we recognize sustainability as essential for protecting the planet. Even if someone questions the reality of climate change, reducing consumption and conserving resources remains advantageous. It saves money and benefits everyone, regardless of one's views on climate change. This is the perspective I aim to share and advocate".***

One of the latest initiatives in green practices at the head office of Grupo el Castillo focuses on reusing materials, separating waste, and reducing consumption, all of which have been implemented effectively. Initially, these changes felt overwhelming, but it has become clear that they are indeed feasible. The office now prints only what is truly necessary.

In addition, for the past year and a half, the company has been working on implementing ISO 14001 for environmental management in the socio-healthcare sector. A key aspect of this certification is adopting waste separation practices. However, the challenge here is that it is not only about educating employees, but it also includes teaching the people (patients) we care for in these centres. For instance, in a health centre with 300 residents, many of whom are elderly and never heard or practiced waste separation, this task is particularly challenging. Patricia says:

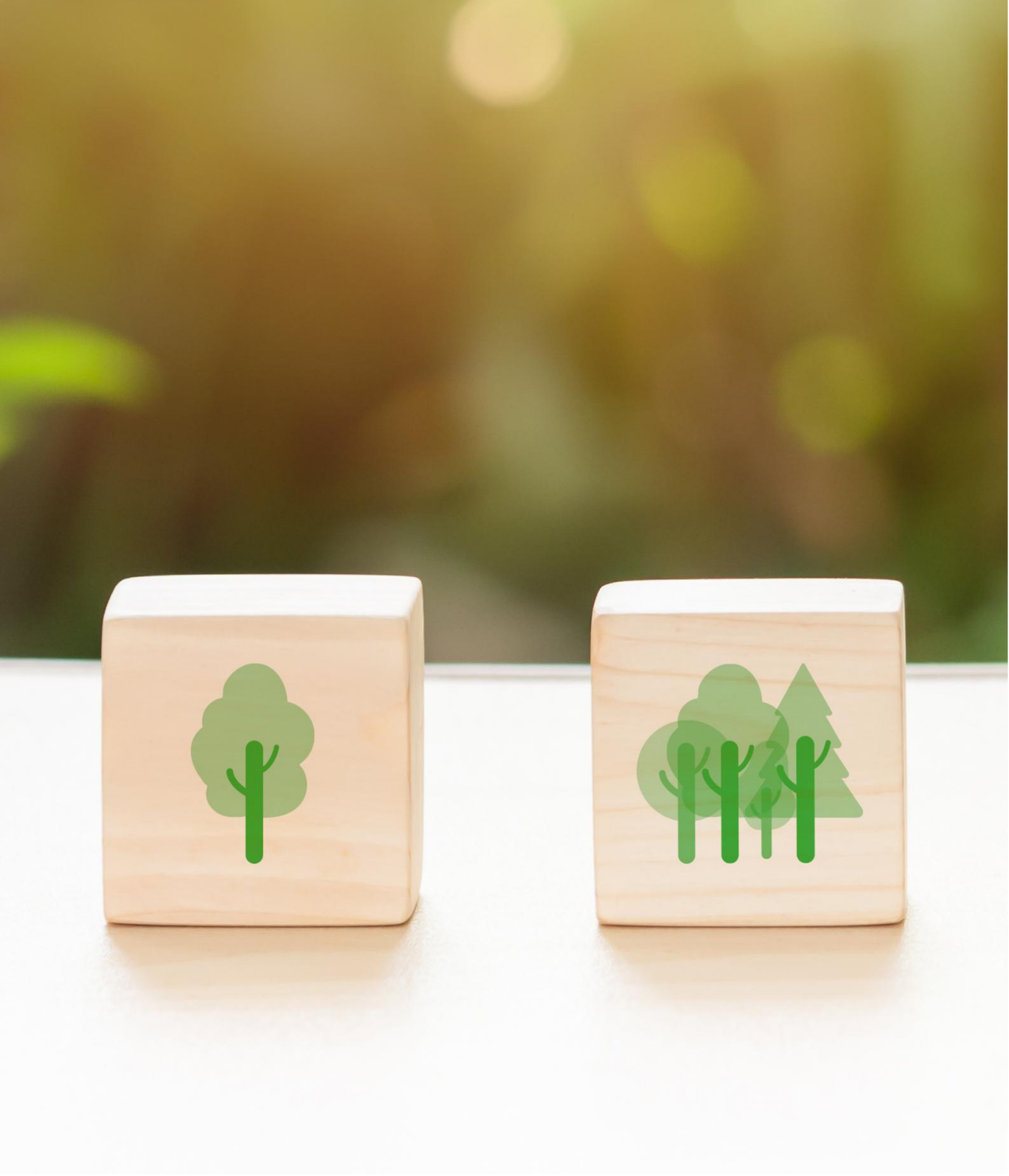
> ***"But challenges are opportunities for growth and progress. Sustainability should always be on everyone's minds."***

The next significant challenge for Grupo El Castillo is to extend these green practices to all its centres. The company operates numerous small centres, residences, and facilities for minors, which complicates the implementation of uniform sustainability practices. Efforts are currently focused on larger centres, where ISO 14001 for environmental management is currently being introduced. This includes not only training employees but also educating the individuals in the company's care, such as elderly residents who may not be familiar with waste separation. "Our journey toward sustainability is just beginning. By spreading these green practices to all our centers, we can make a positive difference for our beloved family business and the communities we care for."

Reflections

- Are we open to listening to younger generations and adopting new technologies or methods to make our green transition happening?
- How can we engage our employees and clients in our sustainability journey, creating a green culture that everyone feels a part of?
- Is our whole family on the same page adopting sustainable practices in the company? Do we all see the long-term benefits, not just the short-term effects?

LEARNING POINTS AND ACTIONS TO CONSIDER



LEARNING POINTS AND ACTIONS TO CONSIDER FROM THE CASE STUDIES

Collaboration between different generations within a family business in adopting green policies is a very interesting topic, involving the combination of business traditions with the need for innovation and sustainability. The different generations in a family business bring with them different experiences and visions: the older ones tend to value stability and tradition, while the younger ones are more inclined to embrace change, particularly in issues such as sustainability and innovation. The challenge is to find common ground that allows all generations to contribute positively and synergistically to the adoption of green policies. Here are some learning points and actions to consider in this context.

Finding consensus among members of different generations

Learning points

- Family businesses often have a long-term vision that extends beyond economic life cycles and can foster the adoption of green practices. This approach can be a strength for integrating sustainable policies, considering that environmental policies have long-term effects that align well with generational perspectives.
- Different generations in a family business may have very different mindsets regarding sustainability. For instance, older generations may focus on financial stability and the adoption of proven technologies, while newer generations may be more environmentally aware and more open to investing in technological innovation or radical change. It is crucial to learn how to manage these differences in mentality in order to avoid conflicts and find a balance.
- Younger generations can teach older generations how green policies can become a lever for innovation and growth in the long run, while more experienced generations can teach the importance of considering sustainability in a pragmatic way, without compromising the financial soundness of the company. Mutual education is a key step for effective collaboration.
- Family businesses tend to value values such as reliability, responsibility, and care for future generations. These values go very well with the objectives of green policies, which can be presented as a way to honor and protect the family legacy and ensure a solid future for the next generation.

Actions to consider:

- **Create an intergenerational forum for sustainability:** Members of different generations should meet regularly to discuss green policies and define common strategies. These meetings could be an opportunity to exchange views, listen to opinions, and find shared solutions that meet everyone's needs. An ‘intergenerational forum’ allows different experiences and competences to be valorized.
- **Adopt a shared vision and define common objectives**: It is crucial that all generations agree on goals and priorities for adopting green policies. For example, the family might decide to set a target to reduce CO2 emissions or increase energy efficiency. A shared vision is the starting point for coordinated actions.
- **Encourage the adoption of training and retraining policies**: Older generations may not be familiar with all sustainability-related innovations, such as green technologies or changing environmental regulations. Organizing specific training sessions or updates on sustainability topics (also through external consultants) can be useful to raise awareness among all generations and align them on the same issues.
- **Encourage the active participation of all generations in strategic decisions**: When it comes to deciding on green policies, it is useful for every generation to have the opportunity to express their opinion. Younger generations might prefer innovative and disruptive solutions, while older generations might be more conservative, so it is important to strike a balance between innovation and continuity.
- **Integrating sustainability into business traditions**: Green practices should not be perceived as a ‘break’ from family tradition, but rather as an evolution that respects and protects what has been built. For example, if the family business has a long agricultural tradition, transitioning to sustainable farming practices could be a way to honor tradition while maintaining competitiveness and respecting the environment.
- **Promote a culture of sustainability within the enterprise:** Younger generations should be encouraged to promote a green culture within the enterprise. This can be done through awareness-raising initiatives or sustainability pilot projects, where every generation, including the older one, can see the benefits of green policies in practice.
- **Use family governance to support green policies**: In family businesses, family governance is crucial for making shared strategic decisions. Integrating sustainability into governance practices (such as family meetings) can support the adoption of green policies globally. Creating a family sustainability committee or contact person in charge of sustainability could be a useful step.

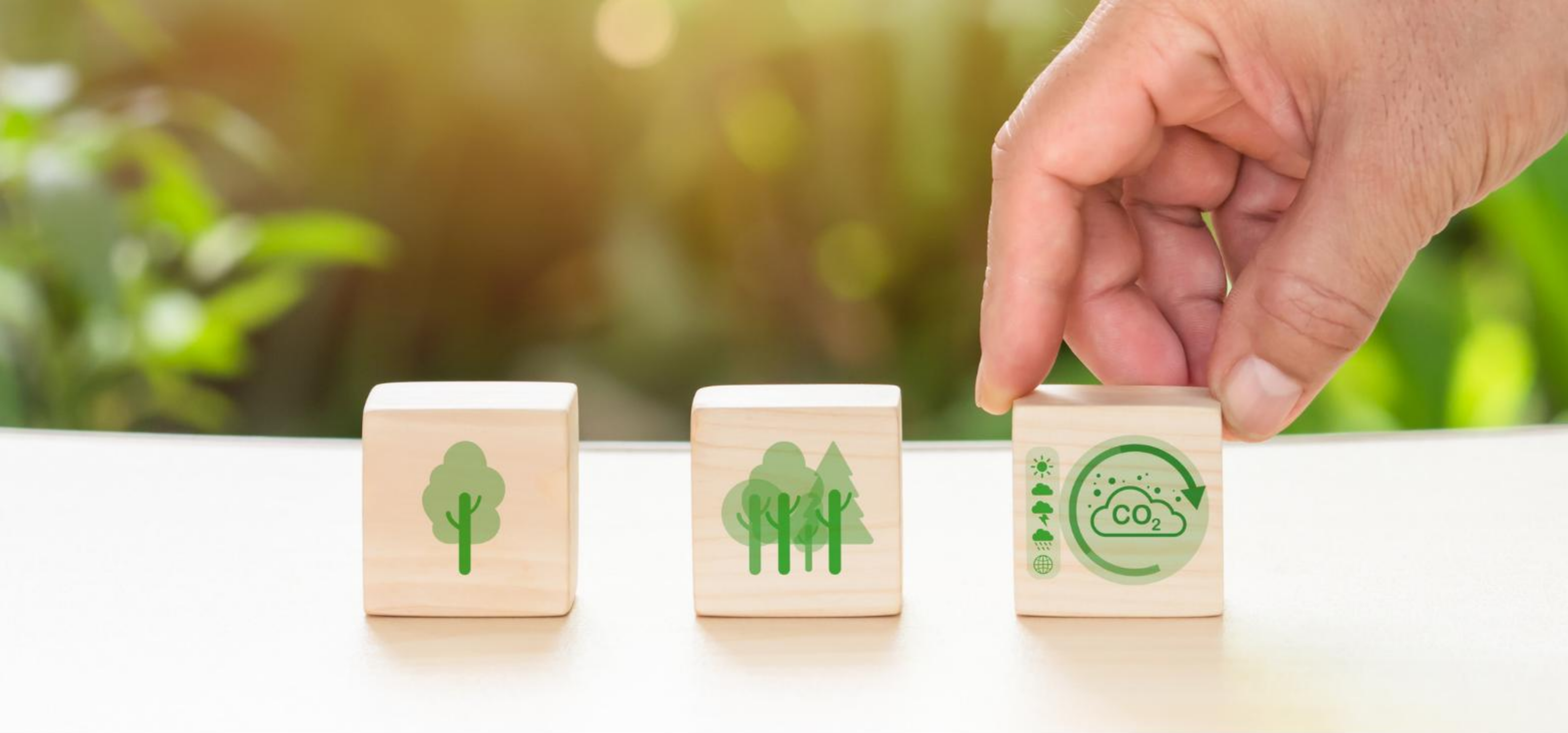
Integration of green practices into corporate culture

Learning points:

- The green transition is not just about adopting green technologies or practices; it must be integrated into the corporate culture to be successful.
- Engaging employees and fostering a sustainable mindset among team members is critical to the successful adoption of green practices.

Actions to consider:

- **Define clear corporate values**: Clearly communicate the company's vision and mission regarding environmental sustainability. Company policies should be documented and easily accessible to all
- **Promote a culture of sustainability**: Create an internal team dedicated to sustainability, involving all employees in the transition process. Organize workshops and training courses to raise awareness and motivate staff.
- **Set clear and measurable goals:** Set specific sustainability goals and measure progress regularly, so that everyone is aware of the results achieved.
- Reward sustainable behavior: Incentivize employees who contribute to improving sustainability, e.g. by rewarding those who propose innovative solutions to reduce environmental impact.
- **Success stories**: Share sustainability success stories within the company, showing how individual and collective actions have a positive impact on the environment.
- **Adopt practical environmental policies:** Review and optimize company operations to reduce the ecological footprint, such as the responsible use of resources, waste management, energy efficiency, and the adoption of green transport solutions.
- **Encourage sustainable choices:** Offer incentives for employees who use sustainable means of transport, such as cycling or public transport, or who adopt environmentally friendly solutions in the office (e.g. reduction of plastic, and use of environmentally friendly products).
- **Make sustainability an everyday value:** For example, incentivize remote working to reduce travel, promote company car-sharing or review water and energy management in offices.



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