Sustainability
Matters

What teams want and
how brands can win
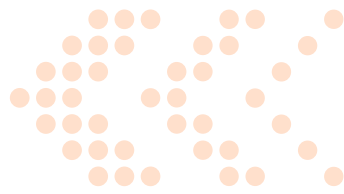
CGA
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foodprint
FROM NUTRITICS

Stephen Nolan
CEO, Nutritics

The employee case
for sustainability

This report complements consumer research to deliver an exclusive and holistic analysis of sustainability in hospitality. Environmental action is one of our industry's most important concerns, and we hope our research provides valuable intelligence on current practice and future directions.

Staff are crucial to any brand's engagement on this urgent challenge. They are the people who will ultimately deliver sustainability strategies, and they know what guests want best. They are also highly stimulated by environmental issues, and younger workers in particular are much more likely to be attracted to employers who share their concerns. As we show in this report, good sustainability practice can be a very powerful recruitment and retention tool.

Our in-depth survey of staff reveals their habits and motivations and their ideas for improvements. From training to community action to collaboration, there are many ways to get better. We all know that motivated and satisfied staff make for happy guests - so it's with our teams that change needs to begin.

We hope you enjoy reading this report and would love to hear your views.

About the survey

This report is based on an exclusive survey by Nutritics and CGA by NIQ of nearly 160 staff working in a wide variety of roles and venues in hospitality. The breakdown of respondents is as follows.

- **Age: 43%** of respondents are aged under 30; **29%** aged 31-40; **19%** aged 41-50; and 9% aged 51+.

- **Gender: 55%** identify as female; **44%** as male; and **1%** as non-binary.

- **Experience: 15%** have worked in hospitality for less than a year; **14%** for 1 to 2 years; **21%** for 2 to 3 years; **23%** for 3 to 5 years; **16%** for 5 to 10 years; and **11%** for 10+ years.

- **Workplace: 46%** work in food-led outlets; **13%** in drink-led outlets; **1%** in nightclubs; **32%** in hotels; and **8%** in event spaces or catering. **28%** work in an independent venue; **19%** for a small chain; **34%** for a medium chain; and **20%** for a large chain.

- **Hours: 12%** typically work for less than 20 hours a week; **21%** for 20 to 30 hours; **40%** for 30 to 40 hours; **23%** for 40 to 50 hours; and **4%** for more than 50 hours.

- **Roles:** Respondents work in a wide variety of roles and seniorities including: head bartender **(4%)**; kitchen porter **(4%)**; operations manager / head of operations **(7%)**; area manager **(1%)**; HR manager **(3%)**; floor manager **(5%)**; bar staff **(10%)**; bar manager **(5%)**; general manager **(11%)**; wait staff **(14%)**; busser **(1%)**; head chef **(18%)**; chef **(15%)**; and other **(2%)**.

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Executive summary

1 **Hospitality staff are very eco-aware.** More than nine in ten **(94%)** hospitality professionals say living an environmentally friendly and sustainable lifestyle is important to them. This is notably more than the **70%** of consumers who say they actively try to lead an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

2 **Sustainability is a big factor in career choices.** **94%** of staff consider a company's social and environmental responsibility when choosing a place to work. Half **(50%)** have accepted one job over another partly because the company was more sustainable.

3 **Good practice leads to better retention.** More than four in five **(84%)** professionals are more likely to stay in a hospitality job for longer if their employer has a positive environmental impact.

Key findings from our research

10

10 **Hospitality needs to improve its image.** Two thirds **(67%)** of staff think hospitality is behind other industries in sustainable practices.

9 **Communications should be clearer.** Three quarters **(79%)** of staff think their workplace tries to communicate its sustainability efforts to customers. But with only **23%** of consumers believing brands communicate carbon footprint information well, there's a lot of scope to get better.

4 **More action is needed.** Only a quarter **(27%)** think their workplace is proactive in reducing waste and energy and prioritising ethical sourcing, and **61%** think there are aspects that could be improved.

7 **Staff training, community projects and sourcing need improvement.** More than four in five staff think each of these are important aspects of sustainability - but fewer than half actually see them in practice in their workplace.

5 **Staff can show the way.** More than two thirds are recycling **(76%)**, reducing power usage **(72%)** and limiting food and drink waste **(70%)** in their workplace. They are ready and willing to help businesses on their sustainability journeys.

8 **Guests see signs of progress.** Encouragingly, **82%** of staff think that customers see their workplace as a sustainable and environmentally friendly venue.

6 **Recycling, reduction and packaging matter most.** Asked about their most important aspects of sustainability, **91%** of staff identify recycling, the reduction of food waste and packaging.

Staff attitudes
to sustainability
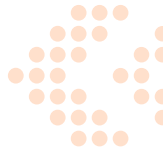
What team members think about hospitality's actions and why good practice is vital in recruitment and retention.

Sustainability really matters to people working in pubs, bars and restaurants. Well over nine in ten say that living an environmentally friendly and sustainable lifestyle is either very important **(43%)** or somewhat important **(51%)** to them. The number is consistently high across roles and workplaces, though female members of staff **(96%)** score higher than males **(91%)**, and the number is higher among those working in large and medium chains **(97%)** than in independents **(91%)**.

This makes the sector's staff even more engaged than the general public. Our separate consumer research shows **70%** of all consumers actively try to lead an environmentally friendly lifestyle now - a number that has steadily risen in recent years, despite COVID and the cost of living crisis. The gap between staff and consumers is partly explained by the heavy concentration of younger adults in hospitality, who tend to be much more environmentally aware than older people.

Staff are acting on their principles. More than two thirds say they are recycling **(76%)**, reducing power usage **(72%)** and limiting food and drink waste **(70%)** in their venue, and more than two in five **(44%)** get to work by bike, foot or public transport.

Crucially, awareness of sustainability is influencing people's career decisions. The vast majority of staff **(94%)** say they consider a company's social and environmental responsibility when choosing a place to work, and **81%** would be less likely to work there if it has a bad reputation on this issue.

This commitment runs deep for a lot of people. Four in five **(82%)** say they are likely to look at a company's environmental / sustainability plan when deciding where to work. Half **(50%)** say they have accepted one job offer over another partly because that company was more sustainable. And nearly as many **(47%)** say they have rejected a hospitality job and / or assignment because it didn't fit with their personal ethics. **84%** say it's important to them that their workplace takes steps to reduce their carbon footprint.

As well as counting for a lot at the recruitment stage, sustainability heavily influences retention (see box). It all means sustainability is a subject that no employer can afford to ignore. Good practice on the environment isn't just the right thing to do in ethical terms - it makes very sound HR sense too.

84%
say they would stay longer for employers making good environmental and societal impact

Reduce, reuse, recycle… and retain

Hospitality has always struggled on retention of staff, and from its unfair reputation as a stop-gap job rather than long-term career. This retention problem has intensified since Brexit and COVID reduced the pool of potential employees, and recent research from CGA put the current rate of churn - the proportion of staff leaving a business in the last three months - at **16%**.

Sustainability can be part of the solution to this problem. More than four in five **(84%)** hospitality professionals say they would be more likely to stay in a hospitality job for longer if their employer makes a good environmental and societal impact. The number is even higher among those working at managerial level **(92%)**, among those with more than two years' experience in the sector **(86%)**, and among those working in large or medium sized chains **(85%)**.

Other ethics matter too: **80%** of all professionals say they would stay longer if their business made efforts to create a diverse and inclusive culture. The message from all this couldn't be clearer: businesses that prove their environmental and social responsibility will find it easier to keep hold of their talent.

Sustainability credentials

The Foodprint from Nutritics and CGA research has highlighted a lack of public awareness of environmental credentials. Only **7%** of consumers have heard of B Corp status, and the numbers aren't much higher for standards like EU Organic **(9%)** and Plastic Neutral **(12%)**.
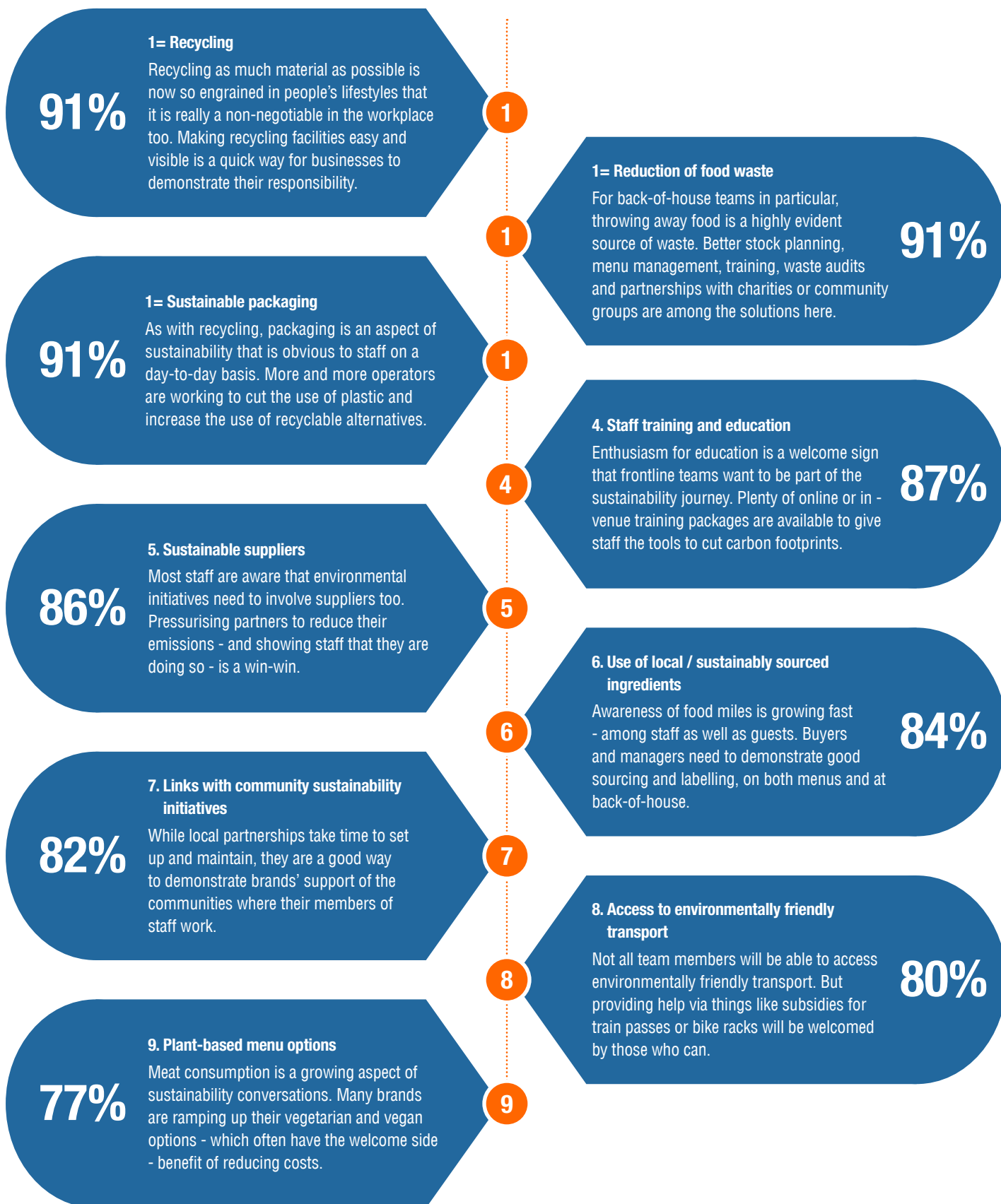
However, hospitality professionals are much more tuned in. Nearly four in five say they are aware that their employer does **(59%)** or doesn't have **(19%)** accreditations like B Corp status, leaving just **22%** who don't know. This emphasises how closely staff are researching companies' sustainability now.

What teams want

From recycling to training to sourcing: the sustainability priorities of frontline teams.

There are many ways in which brands can prove their commitment to reducing environmental impacts - but which ones matter most to staff? These are nine of the big areas to tackle, ranked by priority. (Figures refer to percentage of staff who consider the practice important.)

91%

1= Recycling

Recycling as much material as possible is now so engrained in people's lifestyles that it is really a non-negotiable in the workplace too. Making recycling facilities easy and visible is a quick way for businesses to demonstrate their responsibility.

1= Reduction of food waste

For back-of-house teams in particular, throwing away food is a highly evident source of waste. Better stock planning, menu management, training, waste audits and partnerships with charities or community groups are among the solutions here.

91%

91%

1= Sustainable packaging

As with recycling, packaging is an aspect of sustainability that is obvious to staff on a day-to-day basis. More and more operators are working to cut the use of plastic and increase the use of recyclable alternatives.

4. Staff training and education

Enthusiasm for education is a welcome sign that frontline teams want to be part of the sustainability journey. Plenty of online or in-venue training packages are available to give staff the tools to cut carbon footprints.

87%

86%

5. Sustainable suppliers

Most staff are aware that environmental initiatives need to involve suppliers too. Pressurising partners to reduce their emissions - and showing staff that they are doing so - is a win-win.

6. Use of local / sustainably sourced ingredients

Awareness of food miles is growing fast - among staff as well as guests. Buyers and managers need to demonstrate good sourcing and labelling, on both menus and at back-of-house.

84%

82%

7. Links with community sustainability initiatives

While local partnerships take time to set up and maintain, they are a good way to demonstrate brands' support of the communities where their members of staff work.

8. Access to environmentally friendly transport

Not all team members will be able to access environmentally friendly transport. But providing help via things like subsidies for train passes or bike racks will be welcomed by those who can.

80%

77%

9. Plant-based menu options

Meat consumption is a growing aspect of sustainability conversations. Many brands are ramping up their vegetarian and vegan options - which often have the welcome side - benefit of reducing costs.

The action gap

This research shows the work that remains to be done by brands to show they care about environmental issues. There is currently a gulf between what staff think is important and what actually happens in practice.
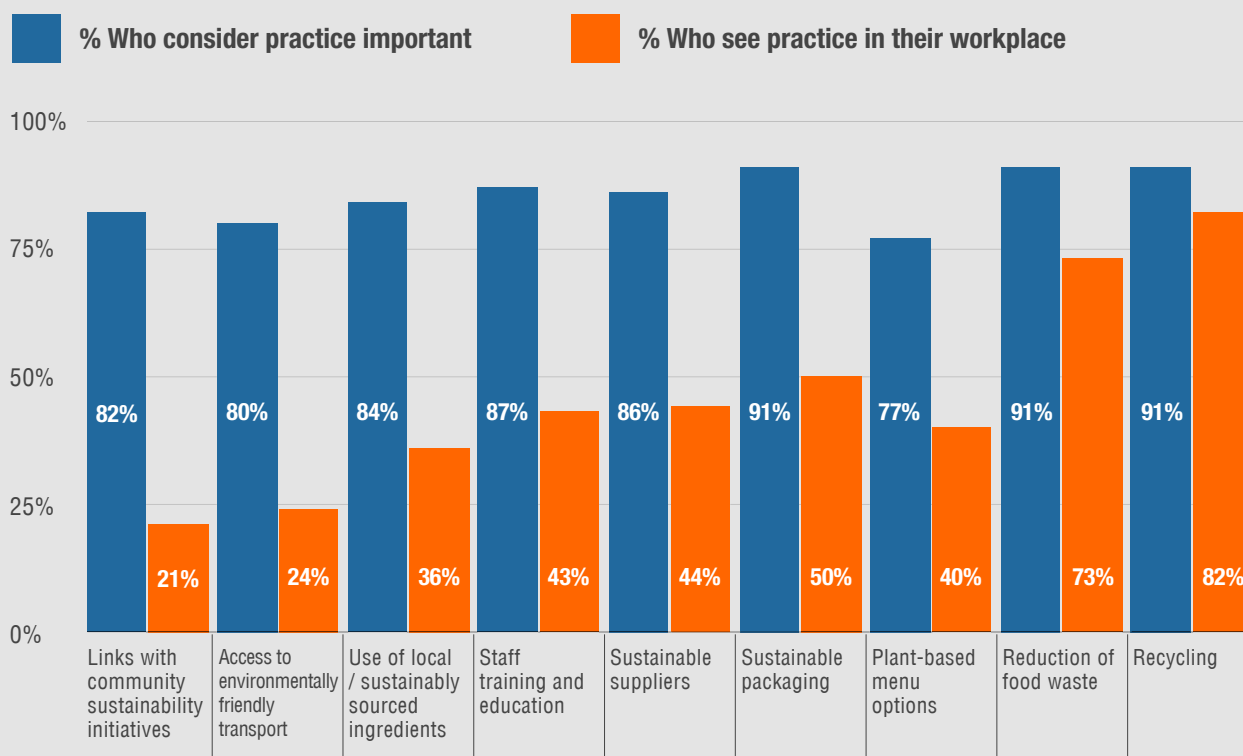
82%
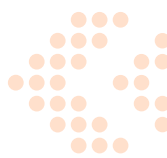consider community initiatives important

21%
see it in practice

For example, while **82%** of team members think links with community sustainability initiatives are important, only **21%** observe them at their business - a huge gap of **61** percentage points. On other issues like providing access to environmentally friendly transport, using local and sustainably sourced ingredients and staff training and education, the number of staff who see action is less than half those who think they are important.

More positively, the gap between importance and action on recycling is just **nine** percentage points, and it's relatively narrow on food waste reduction too. But these figures are conclusive proof that team members are not seeing nearly enough progress on the sustainability issues they care about.

■ **% Who consider practice important**   ■ **% Who see practice in their workplace**

Practice	% Who consider practice important	% Who see practice in their workplace
Links with community sustainability initiatives	82%	21%
Access to environmentally friendly transport	80%	24%
Use of local / sustainably sourced ingredients	84%	36%
Staff training and education	87%	43%
Sustainable suppliers	86%	44%
Sustainable packaging	91%	50%
Plant-based menu options	77%	40%
Reduction of food waste	91%	73%
Recycling	91%	82%

Staff and guest engagement

What brands can learn from their teams' interaction with guests.

Hospitality's staff can be sustainability champions for their brands, and they have vital intelligence about what guests think. Here are five views from the frontline.

1 **There's room for improvement**

Hospitality professionals' views of brands' progress on sustainability is lukewarm at best. Only a quarter **(27%)** think their workplace is proactive in reducing waste and energy and prioritising ethical sourcing, and **61%** think there are some aspects that could be improved.

2 **Hospitality needs a better image**

This half-hearted view applies to the sector as a whole, as two thirds **(67%)** of staff think hospitality is behind other industries in its sustainable and ethical practices. This points to the need for the sector to work collaboratively on sustainability.

3 **Sustainability matters to guests**

Research from the Foodprint and CGA Sustainability Matters Consumer Report shows that more than two thirds **(70%)** of people actively try to lead an environmentally friendly lifestyle - and staff see this translates into their attitudes to hospitality. More than four in five employees say sustainability and environmentalism is either extremely important **(28%)** or somewhat important **(55%)** to their venue's customer base.

4 **Consumers' brand impressions are positive**

Encouragingly, staff think that guests have a broadly positive view of pubs, bars and restaurants. More than four in five either completely agree **(37%)** or somewhat agree **(45%)** that customers see their workplace as a sustainable and environmentally friendly venue. **59%** have seen a definite positive customer response to sustainable practices, and another **40%** have seen a slightly positive one.

5 **Communications could be better**

Three quarters **(79%)** of staff think their workplace tries to communicate its sustainability efforts to customers and the wider community. But Foodprint and CGA's consumer research shows many guests feel communications are lacking. Only **23%** of consumers think brands and venues communicate carbon footprint information well, and **34%** say they aren't doing enough - so there's a lot of scope for improvement.

Staff satisfaction and aspirations

As well as attitudes to sustainability, the survey of staff by Foodprint and CGA shows what professionals think of hospitality. Positively, nearly nine in ten of them are either very satisfied **(38%)** or somewhat satisfied **(47%)** with their current job in the sector.

However, it doesn't follow that employees want to stay in their jobs. More than a quarter **(28%)** say they don't have goals to progress in the sector. Two in five **(42%)** don't intend to stay in hospitality for more than two years, and only **16%** anticipate being there in ten years' time.

Pay, recognition and job satisfaction are all very important to employees, and without those it will be difficult to keep talented people in the industry (see box). However, more and more people are motivated by the ability to make a difference to the environment and local communities - so businesses that facilitate this work can get a head start in recruitment and retention.

Aspiration	% Selecting as a top-three factor
To earn a good salary	61%
To provide guests with great hospitality experiences	37%
To be creative	33%
To become well known in the industry	29%
To own my own venue(s)	23%
To support communities / sustainable causes / charitable causes	22%
To become part of a community	21%
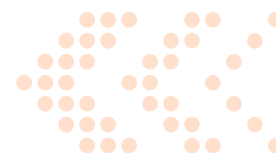
Ten steps to better
sustainability for staff

Takeaways for good practice and engagement.

01

Engage

Staff are willing helpers on the mission to make hospitality more sustainable. They're personally committed and grasp consumers' concerns. Giving them the freedom to suggest and deliver initiatives can accelerate meaningful change.

02

Use sustainability as a recruitment tool…

Potential team members - especially younger ones - are significantly more likely to work for a brand if they feel it shares their values. Including sustainability in job ads, interviews and other recruitment touchpoints can improve access to top talent.

03

…and make it a part of retention strategies too

Environmentally-conscious team members are looking for proper commitment and constant action. Embedding sustainability in team meetings, appraisals and other interactions with staff can make it easier to hold on to these engaged employees.

04

Communicate

Consumers and staff alike want better messaging on sustainability issues. Prominent labelling and telling stories about efforts to reduce carbon footprints deepens trust.

05

Train

Sustainability-related training has two big benefits for employers: it makes execution of initiatives like recycling and reusing easier, and it shows they care about people's values and professional development.

06

Focus on reducing and reusing

Recycling materials and reducing waste are two of the most important aspects of sustainability for team members. Making initiatives on these highly visible can be quick wins on staff engagement.

07

Show progress

The effects of some sustainability measures aren't always obvious to staff. It's important to measure with data, prove progress and celebrate achievements. Calculating the carbon footprint of food products is a good place to start.

08

Show the credentials

Certifications like B Corp status matter much more to staff than the public at large. They can be a great route to proving dedication to sustainability and attracting new staff.

09

Work with communities

The areas around pubs, bars and restaurants aren't just home to guests - they're where employees live too. Staff want to see more partnerships with local community initiatives and charities.

10

Collaborate

Staff know that change requires collective as well as individual action. They want to see joined-up thinking throughout the supply chain, plus cross-sector action to improve hospitality's reputation.

What your teams are saying… about rejecting jobs

As part of the research, individuals were given the opportunity to write in their own comments about their experiences.

When asked about why they had rejected a job or assignment, attitudes to recycling and food waste – or to be precise, a lack of the former and too much of the latter – stood out.
Here are some examples:

"The company were not environmentally friendly and didn't care about taking steps to become more so."

"They were not environmentally friendly, too much plastic."

"Staff always had huge amounts of wastage in normal bins, always leaving lights on and being anti recycling."

"They were happy with lots of food waste, I was not."

"They didn't care about waste and would throw £200 worth of food away at night."

"They would purposefully throw food away instead of donating it to those in need, even when asked about it."

"It wasn't sustainable and didn't help people."

"I felt that the company wasn't sustainable enough, so I went with another brand."

What your teams are saying… about communication

Those interviewed were asked to offer examples of good communication about sustainability in individual companies, with social media and talking to customers being major components.
Here are some of the replies:

"Recycling bins everywhere have the signs about helping the environment, and through our overall cleanliness."

"We do this on our main website and Facebook page where we describe the ingredients we use and our waste reduction initiatives."

"We support many sustainability programmes in our local area."

"On its menu, till receipts and website."

"We are in a rural location and support local farmers."
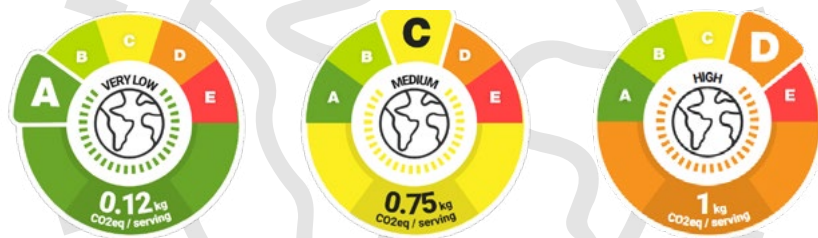
"Label sustainable ingredients on menu."

"We do this on social media by posting information on our page to teach and let customers know how to be even more sustainable."

foodprint
FROM NUTRITICS

Helping food businesses on their journey to net carbon zero

Foodprint from Nutritics is a pioneering, fully automated environmental impact scoring solution for the hospitality sector, supporting strategic climate action and allowing for easy communication of achievements to consumers.

It enables food businesses to streamline food data, including nutrition and allergen labelling, with factors such as cost and environmental impact within a single system. Improving supply chain transparency, communicating effectively to consumers, and achieving future non-financial disclosure requirements, Foodprint aims to support the industry against challenges such as inflation, disrupted supply chains and climate change through data insights and informed strategy.

Foodprint offers tangible rewards to both the back and front end of food businesses. At the back-of-house, Foodprint allows businesses to gain clarity and control over the environmental footprint of their supply chains. It empowers users to understand the environmental impact of purchasing and to substantiate an organisation's sustainability goals and corporate values.

At the front-of-house, Foodprint's carbon and water display allows food businesses to add an environmental footprint score to packaging, dishes, screens and promotional materials. The automated outputs and transparency provided by Foodprint enable businesses to strengthen trust in their brand and to bring their customers on their sustainability journey.

Scientifically proven, accurate and easy to use, Foodprint is putting hospitality on a path to more economically and environmentally sustainable decision making.

For more information visit **www.nutritics.com**