

Exercise: Integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Career Pathways

Throughout this module, we provided you foundational knowledge, practical examples and tools that you can apply to understand the importance and relevance of SDGs for your career, and this case study can assist you broaden your understanding and apply knowledge from module 1 into practical solution through problem-based solving. For that purpose, resolve the case below.

Case scenario

Jordan is a recent graduate in Environmental Engineering and has just started a new role as a sustainability consultant at a mid-sized consultancy firm. The firm advises clients on sustainable practices but has not yet fully aligned its operations or consultancy services with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Jordan is enthusiastic about contributing to the firm's mission and sees a significant opportunity to integrate the SDGs into both the company's internal practices and the services provided to clients. However, Jordan faces several challenges:

- 1. Convincing senior management of the importance of aligning with SDGs:** The firm is primarily focused on profitability and short-term gains, so Jordan must make a case that demonstrates the long-term benefits of SDG alignment, including enhanced reputation, risk mitigation, and new market opportunities.
- 2. Identifying relevant SDGs that align with both the firm's services and the clients' needs:** Beyond environmental sustainability, Jordan must consider social and economic dimensions, such as reducing inequalities (SDG 10), promoting decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and supporting gender equality (SDG 5) within both the firm and its clients' operations.
- 3. Addressing intersectional challenges:** Some clients are facing complex issues that cut across multiple SDGs, such as:
 - Environmental Challenges:** Some clients in the manufacturing sector are struggling with pollution and waste management, impacting both SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).
 - Social Challenges:** Other clients are looking to improve their community engagement and social responsibility, which could align with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).
 - Economic Challenges:** Several clients are also concerned about maintaining economic growth while transitioning to more sustainable practices, which involves SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).
- 4. Developing a holistic strategy:** Jordan needs to create a strategy that incorporates these various SDG-related challenges into the firm's operations and client consultations without disrupting current business practices.

Jordan must navigate these challenges while advancing their career in sustainability, balancing the need for immediate results with the long-term vision of sustainable development.

Instructions:

1. **Analyse the case study:** Carefully read the scenario and identify the key challenges Jordan faces.
2. **Answer the assignment questions:** Use critical, holistic, and interdisciplinary thinking to address the provided questions, while focusing on SDG relevance, integration strategies, and the connection to career growth.
3. **Create a personalised action plan:** Download in supplementary materials provided canvas template, and use it to develop your action plan. Tailor your responses based on your field of study or professional interests.
4. **Reflect on your work:** Consider how the insights gained from this exercise can be applied to your career, and how aligning with SDGs can enhance your professional trajectory.

Assignment Questions:

1. **Critical Thinking:** Identify and discuss the specific SDGs that are most relevant to Jordan's role as a sustainability consultant. Justify your choices based on the firm's focus areas, the industry it operates in, and the broader social, economic, and environmental challenges.
2. **Holistic Approach:** How can Jordan propose a strategy that aligns the consultancy firm's services with the chosen SDGs? Consider the firm's current business model, client base, and the potential impact on the firm, its clients, and the broader community.
3. **Interdisciplinary Thinking:** Suggest how Jordan could incorporate knowledge from different disciplines (e.g., economics, social sciences, environmental science) to create a compelling case for SDG integration in the firm's operations and services.
4. **Career-SDG Connection:** Reflect on how aligning with the SDGs could impact Jordan's career development. What skills and competencies might Jordan develop through this process, and how could this alignment enhance future career opportunities?

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