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**FROM BASELINE TO ACTION:
A PRACTICAL SUSTAINABILITY SERIES BY PATH ZERO**

Starting Where the Impact Is: How to Identify the Sustainability Levers in Your Business

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Starting Where the Impact Is: How to Identify the Sustainability Levers in Your Business

Sustainability often feels abstract because suppliers are told to be “more sustainable” without being shown *where* that actually lives inside their operations. The result is overwhelm or inaction. In reality, sustainability shows up in the same places you already manage: cost, efficiency and risk.

The key is starting where the impact is greatest – and tracking it in ways retailers can actually use.

Start With What You Pay For Every Month

Your biggest sustainability levers are usually connected to your most consistent operating expenses.

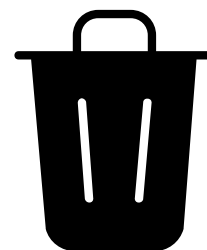
First, look at:



ENERGY AND FUEL USE
(electricity, natural gas,
propane, fleet fuel)



FREIGHT AND LOGISTICS
(shipping frequency,
distances, modes)



MATERIALS AND WASTE
(overordering, scrap,
disposal costs)

These activities drive Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 emissions (shorthand for emissions from your own operations, purchased energy and upstream activities like freight and materials) and are already documented in invoices and internal systems.

Scope 1, 2 and 3 Emissions: A Plain-English Guide for Suppliers

Retailers often ask suppliers for Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions data. Here's what that means without jargon.

Scope 1: Emissions You Control Directly

These come from fuel you burn yourself, such as:

- ➔ **Natural gas or propane used on-site**
- ➔ **Fuel used in company-owned vehicles or equipment**

If you pay for the fuel and burn it, it's usually Scope 1.



Scope 2: Emissions From Purchased Energy

These come from the energy you buy and use, most commonly:

- ➔ **Electricity**

Even though emissions happen at the power plant, they count toward your footprint because you're using the energy.



Scope 3: Emissions Up and Down Your Supply Chain

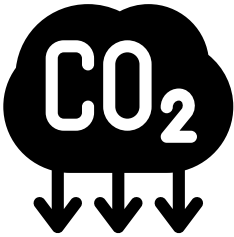
These are indirect emissions tied to your business activities, such as:

- ➔ **Freight and transportation**
- ➔ **Purchased materials**
- ➔ **Waste disposal**

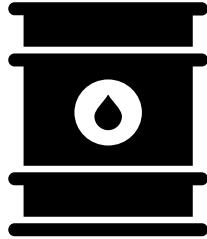
Scope 3 is where most supplier emissions live and where retailers need the most data.



Tracking them establishes a baseline across multiple formats, including:



**GHG EMISSIONS
(CO₂E)**



**ABSOLUTE QUANTITIES
(KWH, GALLONS, TONS
OF WASTE)**



**PERCENT
REDUCTIONS
OVER TIME**

Retailers expect both emissions data and the underlying activity metrics.

Follow the Inefficiencies, Not the Ideals

You don't need a sustainability vision statement to find impact. You need to ask practical questions:

- Where do we see the most rework or scrap?
- Which shipments cost more than expected?
- Where do energy or fuel costs fluctuate the most?
- What data do customers already request repeatedly?

These friction points are sustainability levers because they represent wasted inputs – time, energy, materials or money. Improvements made while data is being tracked allow suppliers to demonstrate both performance and progress.

Retailers are not only looking for numbers – they are looking for improvement year over year.

Use Tools That Translate Data Into Action

Tracking data is only useful if it can be referenced, compared and shared.



Tools such as [Shop! Path Zero Emissions](#) provide emissions information across multiple metrics and multiple formats, making it easier to:

- View Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions alongside activity data
- Report emissions in CO₂e while retaining underlying units
- Track year-over-year improvement in both absolute and percentage terms

This reduces manual effort while improving data consistency and usability.

Don't Try to Pull Every Lever at Once

The goal is not to measure everything – it's to measure what matters most.

Strong starting points usually include:

- Total annual energy use and associated CO₂e
- Freight activity and fuel consumption
- High-volume materials and total waste generated

Once baselines are established, incremental improvements can be clearly quantified and communicated.

The Bottom Line

Sustainability doesn't start with goals or claims. It starts with measurable baselines, multiple data formats and documented improvement.

Suppliers who track emissions, quantities and percent change can reduce costs, improve efficiency and demonstrate the sustainability performance retailers increasingly expect.

That's not abstract sustainability. That's operational readiness. ◀



ABOUT PATH ZERO

Shop! Association offers a suite of Path Zero sustainability programs designed to help members document, track, and improve performance—building credible, measurable results across operations and projects.

Path Zero Emissions: An easy-to-use platform for tracking Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions—capturing utilities, waste, water, and operational data in alignment with the GHG Protocol for reporting needs, including California SB 253.

Path Zero Element: Transforms architectural drawings and specifications into material quantities and embodied carbon—capturing store-specific variations across design, fixtures, and displays for scalable, repeatable reporting.

Path Zero Benchmark: Evaluates sustainability performance across 135 qualitative and quantitative data points—delivering industry benchmarking and recognized ratings supported by third-party assurance.

Path Zero Consulting: Provides hands-on support for sustainability strategy, facility and program audits, target setting, and implementation planning.

Each program can be used independently or together, depending on your organization's goals and reporting needs.

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ABOUT SHOP! ASSOCIATION

Shop!, the global trade association dedicated to enhancing retail environments and experiences, embraces a culture of inclusion where diverse voices are active in all aspects of our organization. This supports an environment in which all individuals feel respected and are treated fairly, and different viewpoints, opinions, thoughts, and ideas are encouraged and embraced. We proudly maintain the highest standards of ethics and transparency.

Our Purpose: Empowering our members to innovate at retail.

Our Mission: From ideation through implementation, Shop will engage our diverse array of members with education, insights and events that enable them to co-create innovation that evolves retail worldwide.

Our Vision: Shop's members will shape the evolution of retail.

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