

# The Sustainable Hotel Handbook

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*With practical insights, tools and resources  
for you and your team*



# Communication

Your handbook to communicating your sustainability  
initiatives in a sustainable way

MAp

THE SUSTAINABLE HOTEL

#07

August 2025

***The Sustainable Hotel Handbook:  
Communication  
by MAp Boutique Consultancy.  
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*For everyone on the journey  
to making this Planet a more purposeful  
and hospitable place.*



## FOREWORD

### *Pursuing the path to sustainability – together*

**Welcome to The Sustainable Hotel – and thank you for joining us on the journey to a better future!**

We carefully and passionately crafted *The Sustainable Hotel Handbook: Communication* to guide and support boutique and independent hotels that are currently on the path to sustainability in communicating their efforts – in a strategic and sustainable manner.

As eyes turn to leaders and businesses to see how they'll respond to the challenges of our times, sharing your sustainability stories and outlining the sustainability actions you take, becomes increasingly crucial for future success. But HOW you do it and WHAT you communicate matters, which is why this handbook exists.

**When it comes to sustainability, communication must follow action.** *The Sustainable Hotel Handbook: Communication* is therefore a follow-up to *The Sustainable Hotel Handbook – Collection*, which MAPs out the way for hoteliers to develop more sustainable hotels. If you're just starting out on your sustainability journey, we recommend that before you proceed with this handbook, you work through the four handbooks that are part of *The Sustainable Hotel Handbook – Collection* to implement sustainability into your hotel in a holistic way.

In this handbook, we show you how to communicate your sustainability initiatives in a sustainable way. To help you achieve long-term success, we've filled this handbook with practical guidance, tools and resources. It is therefore an important tool for hoteliers and entrepreneurs who struggle with or want to learn more about how to effectively communicate their sustainability initiatives and the impact they have on guest experience, pricing, operations and more.

By getting your communication right, you realise even more positive benefits from your sustainability efforts and make an even greater positive impact on People and Planet.

This handbook is the product of a partnership between MAP Boutique Consultancy, a Zurich-based and B Corp-certified boutique consultancy, supporting and empowering innovative and sustainable hoteliers around the globe, and Rupp Public Relations, a sustainable communications agency based in Munich.

As partnerships are crucial for reaching our overall sustainability goals (according to Goal 17 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals), we've combined our areas of expertise to create the most valuable content and handbook for you. And by taking

the necessary steps to improve your sustainability communication by working through the content herein, you drive further positive change – within your hotel and the world beyond.

**Thank you for embarking on this journey with us! Let's build a more hospitable and purposeful Planet – together.**

#### #onwards

**Your MAP Boutique Consultancy and Rupp Public Relations teams**



#### VISIT THE SUSTAINABLE HOTEL NOW

*P.S.: We'd love to hear from you along the way! Please feel free to share your feedback, insights and comments with us at [onwards@MAP-consultancy.com](mailto:onwards@MAP-consultancy.com).*

1.

# COMMUNICATION



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*“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”*

**GEORGE BERNARD SHAW**  
(as cited in BrainyQuote, 2023a).  
Author

# 1.1.

## INTRODUCTION *to Communication*

*“Relationships cannot grow without the proper amount of communication.”*

### **UNKNOWN**

(as cited in Food for Thought, 2015).

**Communication is an integral element of any (hotel) business. After all, what good is it to be the most innovative, beautifully-designed or sustainable hotel if People don't even know about it?**

We can all agree that hotels need People, especially guests, to operate. As a crucial part of your marketing department, communication is about attracting them: communicating to the world that your hotel exists, why and for whom. Without strategic and sustainable communication, you don't attract (the right) guests, and without guests, sooner than later your hotel will cease to exist.

Yet looking at the operational reality of most boutique and independent hotels, marketing teams often feel stuck justifying budgets and fighting for a stronger voice.

Communication is dear to our hearts because we want hotels to thrive. We want hotels that do good to be heard about.

We want travellers to understand their options and opt for the most sustainable way to travel. If communication is done right – and in a sustainable manner – hotels will attract their ideal clientele, who is willing to pay for their sustainability initiatives, and customers will find their dream accommodation. Employees and partners will feel motivated to work with you. Your local community will support and uplift you. A win-win for all – your hotel and your stakeholders (and the Planet to boot!).

**Your sustainability success depends greatly on how you communicate your sustainability initiatives too,** however getting it right can be a challenge. Before we started The Sustainable Hotel journey, MAp ran a sustainability survey amongst our network, and the results identified that many hoteliers struggle with communication both from an internal (employee-facing) and external (customer-facing) viewpoint.

**Common issues – internal**

- Justifying the financial resources required for sustainable initiatives from decision-makers and key stakeholders
- Lacking the voice and decision power to get things done
- Communicating sustainability measures to employees and motivating them to take part in initiatives
- Enabling and empowering employees to communicate the sustainability activities to guests
- Conducting sustainability reporting in order to measure progress

**Common issues – external**

- Communicating sustainability in a credible and authentic way, with greenwashing identified as one of the biggest fears
- Communicating sustainability initiatives at all, termed as *greenhushing* = the deliberate

concealment of information regarding the sustainability practices applied, for fear of being labelled a greenwasher (World Economic Forum, 2022).

- Explaining why certain sustainability initiatives are in place, for fear of rejection by guests
- Identifying communication tools or cooperations to present hotels to the market as sustainable businesses

Through successful communication, hotels overcome these challenges, demonstrate credibility, and earn more trust and recognition from guests, partners, employees and their local communities. In this handbook, we'll show you how to unlock these huge benefits.

One other result of our survey showed that, when asked about sustainability, hoteliers generally associate the term with environ-

mental sustainability. Many of the challenges they face are therefore more tangible and directly related to actions such as reducing CO2 emissions, eliminating plastic or recycling. We want to take this conversation beyond environmental sustainability and touch upon social and economic sustainability topics for hotels – because sustainability needs to be holistic.

**Let's get started on understanding what sustainability communication really means, why it matters, and how you can implement it into your hotel business – while avoiding the most common traps in the process.**



**LEARN ABOUT MAP'S 4 PS OF SUSTAINABILITY**

**We at MAp have created a holistic framework for sustainability, titled the 4 Ps of Sustainability. Your sustainability initiatives, and thereby your sustainability communication, should touch on all 4 Ps to achieve sustainable hotel status and reach success. They include:**

**People – Social Sustainability:** The impact your hotel has on People, including your guests, employees, partners, local community members and the media. At the cornerstone of social sustainability is protecting human rights, addressing issues that affect your People, and uplifting and empowering them.

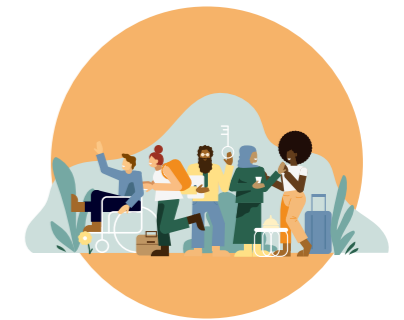
**Planet – Environmental Sustainability:** The impact your hotel has on the Planet, ensuring that you protect the world's ecosystems and conserve natural resources for the health and wellbeing of all – now and in the future.

**Profit – Economic Sustainability:** The impact your hotel has on economic growth, without negatively impacting the social and environmental aspects of the community – while driving profitability for your hotel.

**Purpose:** While it's not officially one of the pillars of sustainability, Purpose stands at the core of MAp's sustainability framework. The definition is simple: Purpose is the WHY that drives you to do what you do – and love it!

MAp has handbooks dedicated to each of the 4 Ps, featuring helpful insights, tools and resources for tackling each one. They act as a precursor to this handbook and are therefore a great starting point or additional companion for your sustainability journey.

[Take this route to learn more about the handbooks HERE.](#)





*“Communication is a skill that you can learn. It’s like riding a bicycle or typing. If you’re willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life.”*

**BRIAN TRACY**

(as cited in BrainyQuote, 2023b).  
Author

## DEFINITION

### *Communication Mapped out*

**Before we start, it’s important we have a shared understanding of communication. Let’s look at it from a macro perspective.**

“Communication is the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. The successful conveying or sharing of information, ideas and feelings.”  
(Badenoch & Clark, 2019)

The basic theory of communication explains that every communication has

- a sender,
- a recipient, and
- a message.

**The sender**

In our case the sender, more generally, is your hotel. We know that in one hotel there might technically be multiple “senders” (the hotelier, the marketing department, the PR representative, etc.), and therefore it is important that on your sustainability journey, you communicate with ONE voice and align your messages internally.

**The recipient**

A recipient is the person(s) you are communicating to and with. In hospitality, your recipients are a host of internal and external stakeholder groups, some of the most critical being guests, employees, partners, local community members and the media.

**The message**

A message is the conveyed idea, which in our case is focused on

sustainability – specifically, your sustainability journey and the sustainability initiatives you execute as part of that journey.

**Why is it so important to Mapped out these basics of communication?**

Because, as we know from our professional and personal lives, what you say is not always what is understood. Therefore, when communicating, you should ask yourself these three questions:

- Am I, the sender, speaking with ONE voice?
- Am I clear with whom I am communicating = who should get my message?
- And once I know with whom I am communicating, is my message the right one for this recipient group?

**SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION VS. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNICATION**

**In this handbook, we tackle two different, but complementary concepts of communication related to the topic of sustainability.** Let us introduce you to what those are.

**Sustainability Communication**

This is the WHAT (see page 66). Sustainability communication is the act of consciously integrating sustainability into a communication strategy by telling stakeholders about your sustainability goals and efforts. The objective of sustainability communication is to raise awareness and understanding

about sustainability and what your hotel is doing on the front, and to encourage action to support your initiatives.

**Sustainable Communication**

This is the HOW (see page 36). This means you are communicating in a socially-responsible and ecological manner, with no negative impact to society, the economy and the Planet. The objective of sustainable communication is therefore to reduce the environmental and social footprint of communication activities and to make sure that all can profit from it.

In the next sections, we will explore both of these concepts, in order to help you with, as the title of this handbook aptly puts it, “communicating your sustainability initiatives in a sustainable way.”



**SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION IS THE WHAT. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNICATION IS THE HOW.**