



## How the Marks and Spencer procurement team used BS 8903 to embed sustainable procurement

### Challenge

The Marks and Spencer (M&S) procurement team is responsible for the purchase of all non-merchandise goods and services that M&S needs to function. This amounts to approximately £2bn of annual spend. M&S has been at the forefront of sustainability since the development of its CSR programme, Plan A. M&S launched Plan A in 2007 with the goal of becoming the world's most sustainable major retailer. When BS 8903 was published in 2010, the M&S procurement team recognized that the standard could help with the development of sustainable procurement within M&S.

### Solution

BS 8903 helps organizations to better understand what sustainable procurement is and what benefits it brings. They can also use the standard to embed sustainable procurement best practice into their operation.

According to BS 8903, sustainable procurement means, 'only purchasing goods that are needed, and buying items or services whose production, use and disposal both minimize negative impacts and encourage positive

outcomes for the environment, economy and society'. Sustainable procurement is good procurement and should not be viewed as an abstract, idealistic goal, but as a practical and achievable objective for all organizations.

Sustainable procurement can bring a positive impact in a specific area, for example, by reducing carbon emissions. It can also mitigate risk, for example, by exposing practices that could damage an organization's reputation. Sustainable procurement might even open up new markets.

The M&S procurement team adopted the BS 8903 framework to integrate sustainability objectives into its activity. Tim Brennan, M&S Head of Logistics and International Procurement, explains: "By designing and implementing a process which is based on the principles of BS 8903, we aimed to ensure that the successes of Plan A would be built on and leveraged effectively."

M&S used BS 8903 to develop a concrete definition of sustainable procurement and a clear vision so that sustainable procurement could be embedded throughout the business. It also committed to achieving BS 8903's

four main aims of sustainable procurement: to minimize the demand for resources; minimize negative impacts; respect ethical standards; and promote diversity and equality.

M&S wanted to make sure its procurement staff understood the role they needed to play in implementing sustainable procurement practices, so two training modules were developed and delivered to all 18 NMPT staff. Suppliers are crucial too, of course, which is why M&S will only buy from suppliers that meet its sustainability criteria.

### Outcome

Brennan adds: "BS 8903 is comprehensive, easy to interpret and simple to apply in a complex business environment. We found it relatively straightforward to adapt it to meet our business requirements and challenges."

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