

Where Should ESG Live in the Organization?



ESG is often led by the board of directors and the C-suite, and implemented throughout the organization, but it's also evolving rapidly.

Tony Silber, Editorial Director, Ragan Communications

The concept of being a sustainable business has gained urgency in recent years, and now it's frequently required by boards of directors and investors—and seen as essential in mitigating risk and an effort to bolster reputation.

It's summed up as ESG—Environmental, Social and Governance—and it will continue to increase in importance going forward.

At its core ESG seeks to align risk mitigation and reputation enhancement with business objectives and performance. Communicators have a major opportunity—and a responsibility—to tell their organization’s ESG story. But there are significant variations in where ESG should reside within the organization.

For the PR and communications firm Argyle, SVP Roanne Argyle compares it to an older concept: corporate social responsibility. “When you think about CSR as an aspect of ESG—where it lives and who manages it—we’ve seen CSR within communications or marketing,” she says. By contrast, “ESG is led by the board of directors and the c-suite, and it’s implemented throughout the organization.”

That said, Argyle notes that the whole ESG realm is evolving rapidly, and going forward, there may be some decoupling in the future. “I think we’re seeing an evolution, but it’s happening very fast,” she adds.

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