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Article

Ethical suppliers list for general business needs

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Please note this content was curated for SME businesses in the UK

As a small business, choosing your suppliers is often an important task. If you don't already check to see if your suppliers are ethical , doing so could be an important component to add to your procurement practices.

Choosing ethical suppliers means selecting business partners and suppliers who prioritise and adhere to ethical principles and practices in their operations. This typically involves considering various factors such as environmental sustainability, fair labour practices, responsible sourcing, and ethical business conduct when evaluating potential suppliers.

This article shares links to ethical supplier lists as well as a few guidelines for simple ways to find ethical suppliers.

The business benefits of choosing ethical suppliers

Cost savings: choosing to use ethical suppliers could be just as beneficial for your business's bank account as it is for your conscience. Ethical sourcing could help you reduce supply chain costs by up to 16% **(1)**.

Meeting customer demands: customers are no longer willing to accept claims that products are "green", "ethical", or "organic" at face value. Having a transparent supply chain and being able to show customers that you work with ethical suppliers helps to put the proof in the pudding. And it isn't just Gen Z who cares, Gen X (those born between 1965-1980) is catching on with 67% preferring to buy from ethical companies, a figure that has grown rapidly **(2)**.

Read about some of the other potential benefits of choosing ethical suppliers in our article **Your guide to sustainable and ethical sourcing (3)**.

Where to look for ethical suppliers

With millions of supplier options to choose from, selecting the best suppliers for your business can be a daunting task even before you consider ensuring that your supplier choices are ethical companies.

The three resources below list many different options of ethical suppliers to choose from for a wide range of different business needs. While these lists by no means cover every ethical supplier, they're a great place to start.

The Green Providers Directory: this directory provides lists of eco-business service providers for a range of different categories. On their site, they provide a brief description of the business as well as links and contact information so you can learn more and get in touch with suppliers.

Ethical Consumers: provides shopping guides for over 100 different categories. The number of different categories guides are provided for mean that whether you're a solo operator or a team of a few or what industry you're in there might be something there for you.

BCorp: there are 7000+ certified B Corporations around the world covering 161 different industries, and 2000+ of these organisations are based in the UK. Chances are, there is a B Corp certified supplier option for many of the different needs you're looking to fill for your business. You can search the entire B Corp database, using a range of filters to find what you're looking for.

Not all of your existing suppliers or potential new suppliers are going to be found on an ethical suppliers list, but that doesn't mean that they aren't ethical or that you need to look for a new option. Use **'Your guide to sustainable and ethical sourcing'** to understand how you

could identify which of your existing and new suppliers also follow ethical practices.

Ethical suppliers certifications and labels

Just like the BCorp Certification, there are a whole host of certifications, labels and kitemarks that you can look for when searching for ethical suppliers. These certifications could provide a level of assurance that a supplier meets specific ethical and sustainability standards.

While the list below is not exhaustive, it shares some options you might consider when searching for ethical suppliers for a range of different categories.

- **Fair Trade Certification**: this certification ensures that products have been produced and traded in a way that benefits farmers and workers in developing countries. It focuses on fair wages, safe working conditions, and environmental sustainability **(7)**.
- **ISO 14001 (Environmental Management System)** : this international standard certifies a company's commitment to environmental management and sustainability. It signifies efforts to reduce environmental impact and improve resource efficiency **(8)**.
- **Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) Base Code:** this is a UK-based alliance that promotes workers' rights globally. Suppliers adhering to the ETI Base Code ensure fair labour practices, safe working conditions, and respect for workers' rights **(9)**.
- **RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) Certification:** this is relevant for businesses using palm oil or its derivatives, RSPO certification indicates that palm oil production adheres to sustainable and environmentally responsible practices **(10)**.
- **Carbon Trust Standard**: this certification recognises organisations in the UK that measure, manage, and reduce their carbon emissions. It demonstrates a commitment to addressing climate change and reducing carbon footprints **(11)**.
- **British Standards Institution (BSI) Standards:** BSI offers various standards related to sustainability and ethical practices, such as BS 8901 for sustainable event management and BS 8001 for circular economy principles **(12)**.
- **Fair Tax Mark**: this certification demonstrates a commitment to transparency and responsible tax practices. It assures that a company pays its fair share of taxes in the UK **(13)**.
- **SEDEX Certification:** while SEDEX is known for its supply chain platform, it also offers SEDEX certification to suppliers that meet ethical and responsible sourcing criteria **(14)**.
- **By Women Built:** this is an online platform and kitemark that supports female founded and run businesses **(15)**.

Food for thought: now that you are aware of some of the

certifications and labels that ethical suppliers hold, you might consider going beyond just using ethical suppliers and gain one of these certifications yourself.

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1 The Economic Benefits and best practices of ethical sourcing: https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/04/04/the-economic-benefits-and-best-practices-of-ethical-sourcing/?sh=69a811d7d7ca
2 Gen Z generates demand for sustainable supply chain practice: https://sustainabilitymag.com/supply-chain-sustainability/gen-z-generates-demand-for-sustainable-supply-chain-practice
3 Your guide to sustainable and ethical sourcing: Your guide to sustainable and ethical sourcing
4 The Green Providers Directory: https://www.green-providers.co.uk/eco-business-services/
5 Ethical consumers: https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/energy/shopping-guide/energy-suppliers
6 BCorp:
7 Fair Trade Certification: https://www.fairtradecertified.org/
8 ISO 14001 (Environmental Management System): https://www.iso.org/iso-14001-environmental-management.html
9 Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) Base Code: https://www.ethicaltrade.org/
10 RSPO Certification: https://rspo.org/as-an-organisation/certification/
11 Carbon Trust Standard: https://www.carbontrust.com/what-we-do/assurance-and-labelling/the-carbon-trust-standard-for-zero-waste-to-landfill
12 British Standards Institution (BSI) Standards: https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/kitemark/
13 Fair Tax Mark: https://fairtaxmark.net/
14 Sedex Certification: https://www.4cpl.com/center-of-excellence/process-excellence/management-system-iso-consulting/sedex/
15 By Women Built: https://buywomenbuilt.com/

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