

Secure the budget for your sustainability data platform



SWEEP

GUIDE



In this guide, you'll learn how to:

- ✓ Build a business case for a sustainability data platform, tailored to key stakeholders.
- ✓ Quantify costs and ROI, with clear breakdowns of investment and ongoing expenses.
- ✓ Use the Verdantix VVD methodology to highlight financial and strategic benefits.
- ✓ Address stakeholders' concerns and secure buy-in across your organization.

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The leading sustainability data management platform.

sweep.net

01 Introduction

Many sustainability leaders struggle to quantify the return on investment (ROI) of sustainability data management platforms, making it difficult to secure executive buy-in and budget approval. That's why we're here to help.

As highlighted in Sweep and Capgemini Invent's report, *Sustainability in Action: Harnessing the Power of Data to Unlock Sustainable Business Transformation*, sustainability is now a core concern for businesses. Companies are increasingly aware of its potential to drive competitive advantage and corporate responsibility. Yet, despite recognizing the importance of data in driving regulatory compliance, tracking emissions, and optimizing operations, many organizations face significant challenges in managing sustainability data effectively.

From grappling with fragmented data sources to navigating complex reporting requirements, the hurdles can seem overwhelming. This guide will help Sustainability leaders build a compelling business case for investing in a sustainability data management platform by demonstrating its strategic, operational, and financial benefits.

02 Prove

why you need an expert data management platform to run your ESG program

Data matters more than ever

Sustainability is no longer optional—it's essential. Businesses today are navigating an era of heightened expectations from stakeholders, stringent regulations like the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), and the need to transform for a low-carbon economy. Efficient data management lies at the heart of this transformation.

Sweep's Sustainability in Action report highlights the key roles data plays in sustainability efforts, including:

- Driving compliance with regulatory standards, cited by 62% of businesses.
- Supporting emissions tracking (61%) and operational optimization (60%).
- Enabling strategic initiatives like net-zero planning and supplier emissions tracking.

However, managing sustainability data isn't without its challenges. Nearly half of sustainability managers (47%) report frustration with data complexity, and 53% feel their data is not comprehensive enough to inform strategic decisions. For many, the sheer volume of data sources—44% manage ten or more—adds further strain.

47%

of sustainability managers report frustration with data complexity

53%

of sustainability managers feel their data is not comprehensive enough to inform strategic decisions

Risks of inadequate data management

Failing to address these challenges carries significant risks:

- **Compliance penalties:** Falling short of regulations like the CSRD can result in fines of up to 10 million euros or 5% of annual revenue, along with reputational damage.
- **Operational inefficiency:** Inconsistent or incomplete data hampers decision-making and slows progress toward sustainability goals.
- **Lost opportunities:** Poor data management may prevent businesses from demonstrating climate action to investors, partners, or consumers, potentially losing contracts or market share.

Benefits of adopting a platform

A dedicated sustainability data management platform is designed to solve these challenges and unlock new opportunities:

- **Streamlined data processes:** Centralize and simplify data collection, integration, and reporting.
- **Enhanced decision-making:** Access accurate, real-time data to inform sustainability strategies.
- **Regulatory compliance:** Automate reporting to meet evolving standards efficiently and accurately.

By investing in the right platform, businesses can transform sustainability data from a burden into a strategic asset. Leaders who embrace data-driven sustainability initiatives position their companies to thrive in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

03 Identifying key stakeholders

Who needs to be involved?

A successful business case for a sustainability data management platform relies on the involvement and alignment of key stakeholders across the organization. Each department plays a crucial role in championing sustainability initiatives, providing unique perspectives, and addressing specific concerns. Internal stakeholders include:

- **Finance:** To evaluate ROI, budget impact, and long-term cost savings.
- **IT:** To assess technical requirements, integration, and data security.
- **Procurement:** To manage vendor relationships and negotiate contracts.
- **Operations:** To ensure alignment with day-to-day processes and carbon reduction goals.
- **Legal:** To confirm compliance with evolving regulations and reporting standards.
- **Board members:** To secure strategic buy-in and oversight.

Engaging these stakeholders early and tailoring your pitch to their priorities will strengthen your business case.

Tailor your pitch to different audiences

What to include to prove your point

When presenting your business case to different stakeholders, focus on their specific priorities and concerns. Here's a breakdown of key points to include:

CEOs

- Link the platform to the company's strategic objectives, emphasizing its potential to:
 - Enhance competitive advantage and investor appeal.
 - Ensure regulatory compliance, avoiding penalties like those under CSRD.
- Improve brand reputation and attract top talent.
- Use evidence, such as McKinsey's finding that companies with high ESG scores reduce capital costs by 10%, to highlight financial and strategic benefits.

Procurement

- Highlight the role of the platform in managing supplier emissions and Scope 3 tracking.
- Emphasize its ability to consolidate data from supply chains, which addresses the complexity 44% of sustainability managers face in managing ten or more data streams (Sustainability in Action report).
- Explain how the platform supports supplier compliance and aligns procurement decisions with company climate goals.

IT

- Focus on technical capabilities, such as:
 - Seamless integration with existing systems.
 - Robust data security measures.
 - Scalability to accommodate future needs.
- Showcase how the platform simplifies data collection and processing from multiple sources, addressing current pain points in technology adoption for sustainability efforts.

-10%

Reduced capital costs for companies with high ESG scores

44%

of sustainability managers face complexity in managing ten or more data streams

Finance

- Provide a clear ROI analysis, including:
 - Long-term savings from energy efficiencies and operational improvements.
 - Mitigation of compliance-related costs and penalties.
 - Emphasize that high ESG performance attracts investment, citing data from PwC and McKinsey.
- Present case studies or projections demonstrating measurable financial benefits.

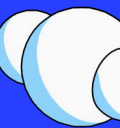
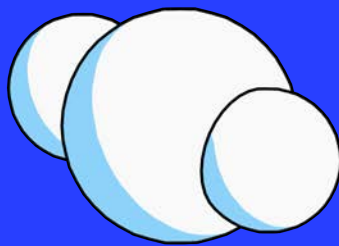
Legal and operations

- Stress the platform's role in:
 - Automating compliance reporting to meet regulations like the CSRD.
 - Minimizing risks associated with non-compliance, such as reputational damage and market exclusion.
- Explain how it provides operations teams with actionable insights.

“With Sweep, we can model various reduction initiatives and decide which measures to give priority to. This means we can build a solid, evidence-based roadmap to achieving our climate targets, and fine-tune this along the way based on real-time changes in data.”

Res Witschi

Delegate for Sustainable Digitalization, Swisscom



03 Building the business case

Create your budget, to then prove the ROI

When building the financial case for a sustainability data management platform, it's essential to provide a clear breakdown of both the initial and ongoing costs:

- **Initial investment:** This includes software licensing fees, implementation costs, and training for your team to effectively use the platform. These expenses are typically front-loaded as part of the deployment phase.
- **Ongoing costs:** Recurring costs such as subscription fees, maintenance, and support ensure the platform continues to deliver value over time. These costs also encompass any updates or additional modules to meet evolving sustainability needs.

By laying out these costs transparently, stakeholders can assess the platform's financial implications in relation to its benefits.

Highlighting the ROI: Understanding the Verdantix VVD methodology

What to include to prove your point

One of the most compelling ways to demonstrate the value of sustainability software is by showcasing its return on investment (ROI). Verdantix's Verified Value Delivery (VVD) methodology offers a structured approach to quantifying this.

The VVD framework evaluates the financial and strategic benefits of using sustainability software while considering associated risks. Key elements of the methodology include:

- **Financial analysis:** ROI, net present value (NPV), and break-even points are calculated based on typical use cases.
- **Strategic benefits:** Insights are categorized by how different organizational roles, such as CFOs and CSOs, can benefit.
- **Risk assessment:** Potential risks are identified and mitigation strategies proposed, ensuring organizations have a complete view of their investment.

This structured approach enables decision-makers to understand not only the direct financial impacts but also the broader strategic advantages of adopting sustainability software.

The VVD assessment of Sweep

To put this into context, Verdantix applied the VVD methodology to evaluate Sweep's platform, focusing on its carbon management, CSRD reporting, and supply chain management capabilities. Using a model customer profile—a manufacturing company with 8,000 employees, €2.5 billion in annual revenue, and complex emissions—the study highlighted these outcomes:

- **Financial benefits:** Sweep delivered a 238% ROI over three years, with a €1.23 million total benefit and a €864K NPV. Organizations saw a 9-month break-even point, demonstrating rapid value realization.
- **Primary savings:** Time savings were a major contributor, as automated processes significantly reduced the labor required for sustainability tasks, freeing up time to focus on higher-value, strategic planning. Cost reductions were also achieved through lower consultant fees and streamlined audit processes, which are especially crucial under the CSRD.
- **Strategic benefits:** Beyond financial returns, the study identified advantages like improved decision-making, investment-grade sustainability data, and enhanced flexibility in responding to regulatory or operational changes. These benefits were particularly impactful for CFOs, CSOs, and Investor Relations teams.

238%

Return on Investment
Over 3 years

9 months

Break-even Point

€864K

Net Present Value
(NPV) Over 3 years

€1.23M

Total Benefits
Over 3 years

04 Addressing Potential Objections

When proposing a sustainability data management platform, addressing common objections thoughtfully can strengthen your business case.

Here's how to respond:

"It's too expensive"

- **Frame it as a long-term investment:** Emphasize that sustainability platforms deliver significant financial returns, giving the example of the Verdantix study above. Highlight savings on consultant fees, reduced audit costs, and the avoidance of compliance penalties, which can reach €10 million or 5% of annual revenue under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).
- **Compare costs to risks and missed opportunities:** Stress the risks of inaction, including reputational harm, operational inefficiencies, and missed opportunities to secure contracts or investment due to insufficient ESG and climate reporting.

"Our current tools work fine"

- **Explain the limitations:** While spreadsheets or basic software may suffice initially, they struggle with scalability, accuracy, and integration as data complexity grows. For example, 44% of businesses manage data from ten or more sources, creating inefficiencies and errors (Sweep and Capgemini Invent, Sustainability in Action report).
- **Illustrate advanced features:** Dedicated platforms offer capabilities like automated compliance reporting, real-time data analysis, and supplier emissions tracking. These advanced features go beyond what manual processes or outdated tools can provide,

"Implementation will be too complex"

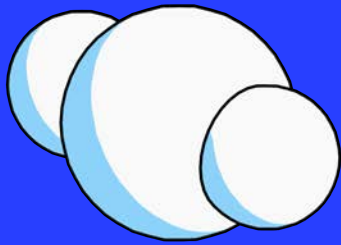
- **Outline a phased rollout:** Suggest beginning with critical modules —such as emissions tracking or regulatory reporting—and expanding over time. A phased approach reduces complexity and allows teams to adapt gradually.
- **Showcase integration and support:** Highlight that modern platforms are designed for seamless integration with existing systems, backed by robust implementation support and training. These measures ensure smooth adoption and help teams overcome initial hurdles.

"The benefits are too hard to measure"

- **Leverage proven methodologies:** Refer to frameworks like the Verdantix Verified Value Delivery (VVD) methodology, which assesses both financial and strategic benefits of sustainability software. Such analyses provide clarity on ROI, net present value (NPV), and break-even points, enabling data-driven decision-making.
- **Highlight strategic advantages:** Beyond financial ROI, sustainability software provides investment-grade data, better decision-making tools, and enhanced compliance capabilities. These benefits are particularly valuable in the context of tightening regulations and increasing stakeholder scrutiny (Sustainability in Action report).

By addressing these objections with evidence and actionable solutions, you can effectively align stakeholders and build a stronger case for investing in sustainability software.

“We calculated our first carbon footprint with Sweep, and it was a success. We have identified the different emissions hot spots within each category of product or service. This means we can identify areas to improve upon in the next few years”



Angélique Vacher

Sustainable Development Manager, Caudalie



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