

# THE OPERATIONS TEAM'S GUIDE TO BECOMING A B CORP

## Mini Guide

Certified



Corporation

# Introduction

We get asked on a daily basis what made us decide to become the UK's first law firm B Corp. Was it something to use in marketing that would win us more work? Were we asked to do it by one of our clients? In fact it was neither of these things. The simple answer from us is that it was a natural step for the type of organisation that we are. The ideals that B Corporation certification covers are a part of why we do business.

Throughout our history, we've focused on positive social impact as much as we have on being a successful law firm and for that reason we knew that certifying as a B Corp was something we wanted to do. So in 2015 we became the first UK law firm to do so. We are now six years (and three certifications!) into this journey and we've picked up a few handy tips along the way. This mini guide aims to pass on a few of those nuggets.

# #1 Waste management and recycling

Being a B Corp means being mindful of the impact you have on the environment. Waste management and recycling are crucial to this. In many cases waste production is unavoidable – whether that be waste paper, food, coffee grounds or glass – but it's what B Corp businesses do with that waste that makes the difference. Follow the waste management hierarchy to determine the best thing to do with your waste – can you reduce, reuse, repair, recycle, recover or finally dispose of the item?

We suggest you:

- Switch to a zero-waste-to-landfill waste management company.
- Measure the waste you produce so you can create targets to reduce it (and you'll need the measurements for carbon footprint calculations).
- Produce good signage on where to place waste in your workplace to prevent cross-contamination.
- Look into websites like **TerraCycle** to keep up to date with fun ways to recycle.



## #2 Cleaning

You should look at the type of products you use for your office cleaning. Of our core items we found that 70% contained single-use plastics – something we aimed to change (and achieved). By switching to more eco-friendly and single-use plastic-free products, you will make a conscious choice to support the environment. Using products which are safe, biodegradable, non-toxic and made with sustainable packaging allows you to combat the harm being done to the environment in a small but effective way.

You might want to consider:

- Switching to sustainable products that reduce single-use plastics and scope 3 carbon emissions (e.g. bamboo-based toilet rolls).
- Changing disposable cleaning sponges to washable sponges and cloths made from recycled plastic and walnut shell which use less energy and emit fewer greenhouse gases in production.
- Switching your pre-mixed antibacterial spray bottles to antibacterial drops and a recycled bottle for life, thereby eliminating single-use plastic.

## #3 Carbon footprint monitoring

It's really important you measure your annual carbon footprint to understand the impact of your business on the environment. This involves collecting data split across three scopes:

**Scope 1: direct emissions** from owned or controlled sources (e.g. company cars).

**Scope 2: indirect emissions** from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating and cooling.

**Scope 3: all other indirect emissions** that an organisation doesn't own or directly control such as staff commuting and supply chains.

By measuring your carbon footprint, you can set targets to reduce your carbon emissions as much as possible. If necessary, you can then offset the remaining emissions to become net zero.

Where to begin:

- Measure your carbon footprint for the year.
- Set targets to reduce emissions.
- Balance your carbon footprint by purchasing offsets.
- Look into signing up to the Net Zero 2030 B Corp movement.



## #4 Utilities

Another area where you can make a real impact on the environment is with your utilities. Make sure you are purchasing green renewable energy. If you're a tenant, speak to your landlord to let them know how important it is for you to use renewable energy. Can you invest in energy saving solutions to reduce energy use such as LED lighting, installing solar panels on the roof or power down timers on equipment when it's not being used? Can you install reduced-flow water saving taps or toilets or recycling rain water systems? Again, this is another area where measuring and monitoring the usage is important to help you set targets on reductions, and to highlight any areas that are using more energy or water than they should.

Top tips:

- Measuring and monitoring your utility usage is very important!
- Install 30 minute sub meters to give you detailed reporting and really pin down problem areas or times.
- Invest in LED lighting and other utility usage saving methods, not only will you save on energy but also cost (helpful in getting Boards and FDs on side!).

## #5 Procurement

Becoming a B Corp means responsible purchasing – your money makes a real difference! Wherever possible, it's great to procure from organisations that share your values and engage in socially responsible practices. Ask other B Corps if you'd like introductions – we're a friendly community. In addition to finding responsible suppliers, it's important to regularly build good relationships with suppliers and ensure you're both maximising that relationship. Keep records and don't be afraid to ask questions and ask for evidence.

You might want to consider:

- Introducing a supplier questionnaire to ask key questions of your suppliers.
- Setting some guidelines for suppliers to highlight areas of particular importance to you around socially responsible practices.
- Utilising the “**We are B Corps**” directory to source B Corp suppliers.
- Holding regular review meetings and auditing your suppliers.



## #6 Record keeping

It's a good idea to review the B Impact Assessment (BIA) and see what sorts of records you need to keep to help your organisation go through the (re)certification process. It's a comprehensive assessment and good record keeping will help later on when you need to provide evidence or numbers.

We'd suggest you:

- Understand what's required in the BIA around the areas relevant to your role.
- Start monitoring and measuring as soon as possible.
- Have a good filing system!

As the first UK law firm to certify as a B Corp, we are ideally placed to guide you through your certification.

**Get in touch today:**

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Making a profit is core to all businesses but our goal is to combine this with a real social purpose. Our values are important to us, they shape our decisions and our working life.

Since opening in 1970, we've focused on positive social impact as much as we have on being a successful law firm and we were the first UK law firm to achieve B Corp certification.

Today, our clients are diverse – from corporate household names, to public bodies, to start-ups. We're also the firm of choice for thousands of charities and social enterprises. We continue to lead the market we helped to shape.

As a purpose and values driven firm we show commitment to our clients, our people, the environment and society. We see it as our purpose to create a positive impact. The impact we have on our people, our communities and our planet does more than inform our work – it gets us up in the morning.

Bates Wells challenges what is possible in legal expertise delivery.

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