



# Gaining Buy-In For A Human Rights Program: A Planning Worksheet

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights state that effective human rights integration requires that “internal decision-making, budget allocations and oversight processes enable effective responses to [human rights] impacts.”

Achieving buy-in for a human rights program is a frequently cited challenge by human rights practitioners. A lack of buy-in can result in low traction, limited resources, or an ineffective program.

This step-by-step planning worksheet helps you organize your goals, consider the key points, identify stakeholders, and build the business case. It can be used for individuals starting their human rights program, as well as for those seeking to expand or advance their current program. Each company will be different, so this worksheet should be used as guidance, not a prescription, for how to successfully gain buy-in.

## Identify What You are Seeking

**1. What are you seeking buy-in for and from whom?** The UN Guiding Principles envision a management program for human rights with a governance structure, the ability to undertake due diligence, and the ability to track and report on findings. For example, do you need to convince a leader in your company to do an assessment of potential human rights impacts? Are you trying to raise awareness within your company? Describe your goal and note the decision makers you need to target.

**Goal:**

**Target audience:**

## Recognize the Value Proposition

**2. What is the rationale for your goal?** Identify the drivers and articulate the value proposition for your company. Not all of these drivers will apply to every company. This is a laundry list of common drivers that have worked at other companies when they've tried to make the case.

| Common driver  | Does this apply to your company? Record your notes | If unknown, where can you find more information? |
|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Ethical</b><br/> <i>Does your CEO/company have strong ethics/values that would support a human rights program?</i></p>   |  |  |
| Common driver  | Does this apply to your company? Record your notes | If unknown, where can you find more information? |
| <p><b>Legal</b><br/> <i>Have you identified human rights regulatory/legal risks to the business?<br/> Can you point to examples where the business incurred costs from these risks?</i></p>    |  |  |
| <p><b>Operational</b><br/> <i>Have you identified human rights risks to your company's operations?<br/> Can you point to examples where the business incurred costs from these risks?</i></p>  |  |  |
| <p><b>Reputational</b><br/> <i>Have you identified human rights risks to your company's brand?<br/> Can you point to examples where the business incurred costs from these risks?</i></p>      |  |  |
| <p><b>Political Pressure</b><br/> <i>Is your company being pressured to act on human rights issues by host or home governments?</i></p>  |  |  |
| <p><b>Investor Pressure</b><br/> <i>Can you explain and quantify investor pressure to adopt/expand a human rights program?</i></p>   |  |  |
| <p><b>Customer/User Pressure</b><br/> <i>Can you explain and quantify external customer or user pressure to adopt/expand a human rights program?</i></p>                                       |  |  |
| <p><b>Peer Company Action</b><br/> <i>Have you compared your company's human rights efforts to peer/competitor companies?</i></p>  |  |  |
| <p><b>Brand Enhancement</b><br/> <i>Have you identified opportunities to enhance the brand by engaging with stakeholders on human rights issues (i.e. socially responsible investors)?</i></p> |  |  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Other Stakeholder Pressure</b><br/> <i>Can you explain and quantify other external stakeholder pressure to adopt/expand a human rights program?</i></p>   |  |  |
| <p><b>Entering New Markets</b><br/> <i>Will a human rights program allow your company to more confidently expand into new markets?</i></p>  |  |  |
| <p><b>External trends</b><br/> <i>Will external trends necessitate a change in strategy or adoption/expansion of a human rights program? (i.e. increased transparency and accountability, demands for empowerment from a rising middle class in developing countries, increased supply chain oversight, etc.)</i></p> |  |  |
| <p><b>Opportunity to Innovate</b><br/> <i>Will a human rights program put your company at the forefront of innovation and industry forward-thinking?</i></p>  |  |  |
| <p><b>Other Opportunities</b><br/> <i>Can you explain and quantify any other opportunities that adopting/expanding a human rights program would bring?</i></p>  |  |  |

**Align Your Goal with Company Goals**

**3. How does your goal support the goals of your company strategy or corporate responsibility/ sustainability strategy?** Think of ways to articulate how the human rights program will help the current needs and interests of the company. Decision-making by leaders is driven by accountability for goals and the ability to resolve issues.

| List applicable company goals and/or challenges | Note the linkages between company goals & human rights |
|---|--|
|   |  |
|   |  |

## Find Internal and External Examples

**4. Who else has been successful? How can you emulate that success?** Identify a human rights program from another company, or an internal program on another topic (i.e. diversity or health and safety) that you can learn from.

| Example Program   |   |
|---|---|
|   |   |
| What are the drivers behind the program that have made it successful? | What can you apply to a human rights program? |
|   |   |

## Budget Considerations

**5. How much budget or how many resources will the program need?** Begin to develop the cost justification to support your value proposition, including program costs; anticipated and/or actual process savings; reductions in lawsuits; and other hard- and soft-dollar savings. Think outside the box for existing or low-cost resources that you can leverage.

| What resources do you need? | How much does it cost? | What ways could it save the company money? | If unknown, where you can find more information? |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|--|--|
|                             |                        |  |  |

## Assemble Your Team

- 6. Who internally can support you in getting buy-in for this human rights program/strategy?** Consider involving people across the business in the development of the program/strategy. Think of how others can contribute to your efforts, be strong allies, or even advocate for you and the program/strategy.

| Which colleagues could be helpful for you? | How can you enlist them as a contributor/ally/advocate? | Next steps for identifying or engaging these individuals |
|--|---|--|
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|  |   |  |

- 7. Who are the key external stakeholders? What role can they play?** Stakeholders can provide valuable input in support of the human rights program. List who should be involved and why (e.g., their role in relation to the human rights program). These can be suppliers, partners, civil society organizations, governments, customers, users, community members, etc.

| Stakeholder (SH) who can make the sales pitch | How can they be involved? | Next steps for identifying or engaging these stakeholders |
|---|---------------------------|---|
|   |                           |   |
|   |                           |   |
| SH who can provide content/substance          |                           |   |
|   |                           |   |
|   |                           |   |
| SH who can provide greater visibility         |                           |   |
|   |                           |   |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
| SH who can provide greater credibility |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Identify Decision Makers**

**8. Who decides to accept or reject your proposal?** Identify who are the key personnel that need to advance your proposal. Are they already supporters? Opponents who need persuading?

Record your notes about internal decision makers’ objections or support in the table below.

| Decision Maker | Ally or Opponent? | Reasons for Support or Opposition |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                |                   |                                   |
|                |                   |                                   |
|                |                   |                                   |
|                |                   |                                   |
|                |                   |                                   |

**Strategically Plan Your Proposition**

**9. What arguments can you use to convince the key decision makers?** Different decision makers will respond well to different arguments. Below are a few examples for how you can define and frame your human rights case. Note that depending on your company and context, one of these may negate another. However, it may also be necessary, and make for a stronger case, to use multiple complementary arguments for each internal decision maker.

Use the below types of arguments to customize how you frame your business case.

- Human story
- Moral/ethical
- Cost-savings
- Reputational risk
- External stakeholder pressure
- Internal stakeholder pressure
- Benchmarking against peer/competitor companies
- Legal argument
- Operational stability

| Internal decision maker | Best type(s) of argument to use with them | Their potential counter argument and your response |
|-------------------------|---|--|
|                         |   |  |
|                         |   |  |
|                         |   |  |
|                         |   |  |
|                         |   |  |

**Pull Together the Business Case**

10. **Finalize your business case, pulling in the details from your research.** After completing this worksheet, you should have the following elements to incorporate in your business case:

- Statement of purpose: What are you seeking buy-in for and from whom?
- Value proposition: What is the rationale for your goal?

- Goal alignment: How does your goal support the goals of your company strategy or corporate responsibility/sustainability strategy?
  
- Program examples: Who else has been successful? How can you emulate that success?
  
- Budget considerations: How much budget or how many resources will the program need?
  
- Team building: Who internally can support you in getting buy-in for this human rights program/strategy? What role can stakeholders play in supporting the program?
  
- Key decision makers: Who decides to accept or reject your proposal?
  
- Vocabulary of arguments: What arguments can you use to convince the key decision makers?