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Sustainability-driven Innovation

# MATRIX MATURITY LEVELS

VERSION 0.1



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# Introduction to Sustainability-driven Innovation

In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, businesses are increasingly recognizing the inherent interconnectedness between innovation and sustainability. Both domains demand the ability to navigate high-risk environments, manage complexity, and thrive amidst uncertainty. While innovation drives the creation of new products, services, and business models, sustainability ensures that these advancements are ethically sound, environmentally responsible, and socially beneficial.

Sustainability-driven innovation refers to the proactive and iterative integration of environmental, social, and economic sustainability principles into the process of managing innovation and developing of novel solutions. By developing capabilities for both sustainability and innovation management, organizations can better adapt to consumer demands, technological advancements, and evolving regulations.

Unlike traditional business approaches, sustainability-driven innovation transcends conventional boundaries and silos, fostering a culture of growth based on continuous learning, adaptation, and responsible stewardship.

By integrating innovation and sustainability into their core strategies, organizations can uncover new opportunities for growth, differentiation, and long-term resilience. This approach equips businesses to address complex societal and environmental challenges while driving shareholder and stakeholder value. Embracing this dual approach enables businesses to not only mitigate risks but also capitalize on innovation and ensure their relevance and success for the future.

Focusing on sustainability-driven innovation and unlocking new business opportunities empowers companies to actively pursue positive change.



# Sustainability-driven Innovation

## The Matrix

The Sustainability-driven Innovation Matrix is a strategic framework created by Fernanda Torre and Henryk Stawicki at Next Agents. It is designed to help organizations assess their maturity in both sustainability and innovation. It serves as a tool for businesses to evaluate where they currently stand, determine their ambitions, and map a path forward to integrate sustainability and innovation into their core strategies.

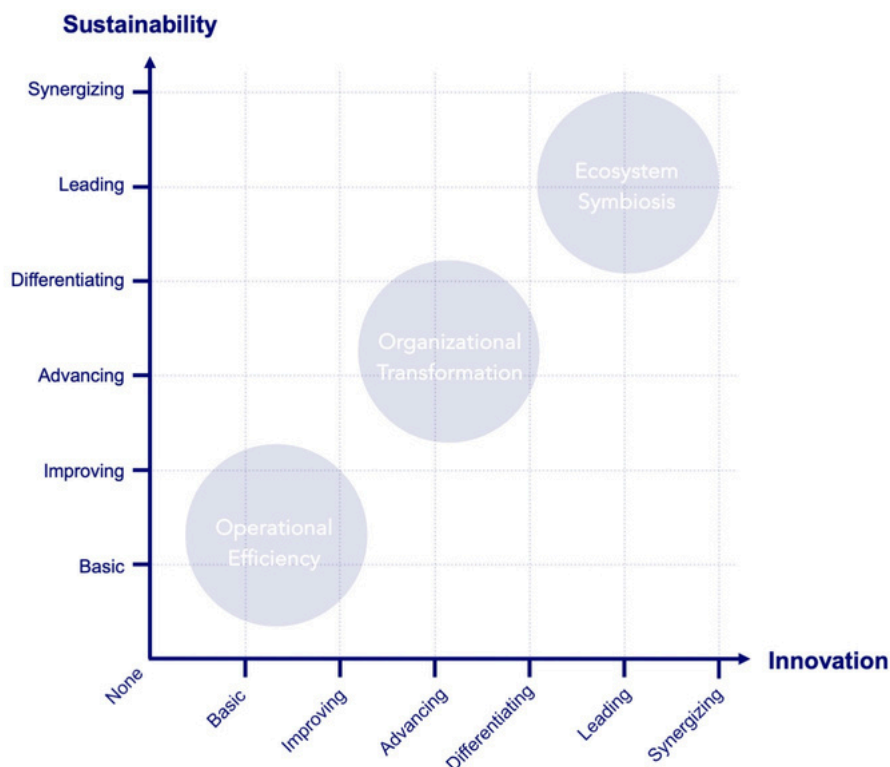
The Sustainability-driven Innovation Matrix is divided into three key areas that correspond to different stages of maturity across both the sustainability and innovation axes. These areas are based on a systematic review of sustainability and innovation practices, authored by Dr. Richard Adams, Dr. Sally Jeanrenaud, Dr. John Bessant, at all.

The three key areas are:

**1. Operational Efficiency:** “*Doing the Same Things Better*” (Levels 1–3 on both axes)

**2. Organizational Transformation:** “*Doing Good by Doing New Things*” (Levels 4–5 on both axes)

**3. Ecosystem Symbiosis:** “*Creating Positive Impact Together with Others*” (Levels 6–7 on both axes)



# Sustainability-driven Innovation

## Maturity Levels


The matrix is structured with two axes: the vertical axis represents sustainability, while the horizontal axis represents innovation. Each axis is divided into seven levels, ranging from None to Synergizing. The sustainability axis captures the extent to which environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles are embedded into the organization's operations. It reflects the organization's ability to minimize negative impacts while maximizing positive contributions to society and the environment.

The innovation axis measures the organization's capability to develop and implement new ideas, technologies, and business models. It represents the organization's ability to navigate uncertainty and drive progress through creativity and adaptation.

Maturity Levels	Sustainability	Innovation
<b>None</b>	No sustainability efforts or awareness; operations are purely profit-driven without environmental or social considerations.	The organization operates in traditional ways with no effort to innovate.
<b>Basic</b>	Awareness of sustainability issues exists; some basic measures (like compliance with regulations) are in place but not fully integrated.	Some incremental innovations, typically driven by necessity (cost reductions, small improvements).
<b>Improving</b>	Incremental steps are taken to reduce environmental impacts and improve social responsibility, but it's not a core driver.	The organization starts investing in more structured innovation processes to enhance existing products, services, or processes.
<b>Advancing</b>	Sustainability is embedded in processes and strategies, with measurable goals being actively pursued.	Innovation is part of the culture, with a focus on new business models, technologies, or markets.
<b>Differentiating</b>	Sustainability is a strategic differentiator, driving significant competitive advantage and innovative offerings.	Innovation is core to the company's identity, consistently delivering cutting-edge solutions that differentiate from competitors.
<b>Leading</b>	The organization is at the forefront of sustainability, actively shaping industry standards and influencing others.	The organization is seen as a global leader in innovation, setting new trends and leading transformative projects.
<b>Synergizing</b>	Full integration where sustainability is inseparable from innovation, fostering industry-wide or global-scale impact through collaborations and shared value.	Innovation is interconnected with sustainability, delivering breakthrough solutions that create a larger positive impact on the environment and society.

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Fernanda Torre is a leading expert in the field of sustainability-driven innovation, currently CEO of Next Agents, a consulting firm with a mission to generate value for people and the planet, today and tomorrow.

Fernanda is a co-founder of Boards Impact Forum (BIF), the Nordic Chapter of the Climate Governance Initiative from the World Economic Forum. Today she is the Operations Director at BIF where she engages and trains board directors across the Nordics and internationally to accelerate climate actions and foster sustainable business practices.

Fernanda is affiliated to the House of Innovation at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) at the House of Innovation, and part of the faculty at the Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship (SSES), where she is the co-director of the "Trendspotting and Future Thinking" program, and leads the global entrepreneurship education program SSES Learning Lab Roundtables.

A co-author of the book "AI Leadership for Boards – The Future of Corporate Governance," Fernanda's research seeks to empower corporate boards in the governance of sustainability and responsible AI. The latest research paper was published in 2024 on the concept of board dynamic capabilities.


At Next Agents she is an active member of Cradlenet and Nordic Circular Hotspot, as well as part of the Swedish Climate Startup Map. Next Agents is furthermore, the affiliated for the Nordics for Rapid Learning Cycles (RLC) and Agile project management framework that supports businesses accelerating the development and deployment of cleantech and sustainable innovations.

Fernanda has MBA from Stockholm School of Economics (President's list for outstanding academic achievement), an MFA in Experience Design from Konstfack, and a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design from Porto University. She served as a board member of Innovationsledarna, and is since 2018 a Swedish Expert in the technical committee for the development of the 56000 ISO standard on Innovation Management.

Fernanda Torre stands out as a leader whose career is a testament to the power of bridging design, innovation, and strategic management to create a sustainable and equitable future.


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