

OAK



OAK'S UN GLOBAL COMPACT JOURNEY

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In the last issue of *En Voyage*, our CEO Graham McCormack set out Oak's ambition to integrate ESG into the heart of our business. We've since delivered an initial wave of sustainable business and finance training to all our people and commenced work on calculating our carbon footprint. We are also developing a suite of client-facing resources to help our clients manage their own carbon emissions.

But this work isn't just tactical nor is it happening in silos. From the outset, we've understood the need to have a solid and transparent sustainability governance structure, applicable across our global business. A structure we can align our progress with and monitor our performance from. We believe the best structure for Oak is the UN Global Compact and are in the process of becoming a formal signatory to this world's largest corporate sustainability initiative.

The UN Global Compact (GC) offers a principles-based framework through which to achieve greater good. In becoming a signatory, Oak will be committing to the 10 UN GC principles and advancement of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 10 principles set out best business practice in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption. Following initial mapping, we know Oak is already operating in line with the spirit of all 10 principles but there will always be more we can do.

The 10 Principles of the UN Global Compact

Our UN GC journey is relatively simple to start. First, we send a Letter of Commitment to the UN Secretary-General, to be signed our CEO. This letter commits us to implementing the 10 principles and taking action to support the UN SDGs. It also commits us to submitting an annual Communication of Progress. Embracing transparency, the letter and the annual communication will be published on the UN GC website. In the

background, we will prioritise and implement better sustainability practice, tracking our progress against the UN GC framework.

One example of work we already prioritise is the wellbeing, diversity and inclusion of our people, which directly supports UN SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), UN SDG 5 (Gender Equality), UN SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and UN SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). This work also underpins UN GC Principles 1 – 6 on human rights and labour. Ensuring a fantastic workplace and team culture for our people is a key element of practicing the 'S' of 'ESG' while also contributing to talent attraction and retention.

We chose the UN GC framework because of its global reach. Jurisdiction-specific sustainable business schemes exist but these come with the burden of administering and tracking multiple schemes across a global business. Our UN GC signatory status will also give us access to a free, leading-edge suite of resources that will act as education, food for thought and best practice templates for our sustainability activities. It enables us to create one global KPI dashboard on which we can start tracking and monitoring our sustainability performance in line with the UN SDGs.

As governance experts, Oak recognises that solid sustainability governance will be a key foundation to our success. Alongside our UN GC signatory status, we will be implementing a formal sustainability governance structure within our organisation. Unfortunately, 'ESG Committees' are still seen by many as voluntary 'nice to haves'. But in Oak's view, sustainability is a business-critical mission to be woven into our long term corporate strategy; and we will approach it with the same formal governance as our client delivery, financial performance and wider risk management practices.