

# How Emerald Publishing Has Embedded the Sustainable Development Goals Publisher Compact Into Its Business Strategy

## Tony Roche and Jen McCall

Emerald Publishing has been committed to supporting meaningful, real world impact—what we call our Real Impact journey—for several years and is dedicated to equality in its broadest sense. Since 2018, we have made several conscious moves to challenge the status quo in the sector, and to think differently about our content program. To date, we have launched the Real Impact Manifesto,<sup>1</sup> become a signatory of DORA,<sup>2</sup> launched Emerald Open Research<sup>3</sup> to advance open publishing solutions, and in 2019, launched our Emerald Insight<sup>4</sup> platform which gives the potential for content types to be reimaged through multiple consumer lenses.

Our motivation for making these changes, contributing to shifting research culture, and driving impact is continuously dictated by the world around us, and if anything, heightened by the pandemic we are all living through. Despite the many aims expressed by the United Nations and international governments in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Publisher Compact,<sup>5</sup> as a community, we are not making rapid enough progress. It is the duty of research institutes, publishers, and funders to come together to collectively meet these challenges as they pertain to the research ecosystem, and with far greater urgency.

Ultimately, we all have a responsibility to help solve global challenges, and signing the SDG Publisher Compact in early 2021 was the natural step in Emerald's journey to support real impact. The Compact is designed to inspire

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action among publishers and accelerate progress to achieve the SDGs by 2030.\*

As a founding signatory of the Compact, we aspire to develop sustainable practices and act as champions of the SDGs during the Decade of Action<sup>6</sup> (2020–2030), publishing content that will help inform, develop, and inspire action (Table).

We recognize that our commitment to the Compact needs to be reflected in practices across Emerald as a whole. We have therefore structured our approach to embed the Compact across 6 key pillars of the organization: our products and services, our people, our supply chain, our communities, our governance, and our environment.

## SDG Publishers Compact Initiatives

Since signing the Compact, we have launched several initiatives within these pillars including creating a cross-functional

\*The SDGs were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people can enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

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team, identifying foundational key performance indicators and publishing these on our website, committing to reporting progress each quarter to Emerald’s Board, embedding the Compact within our group-wide responsible business strategy, and introducing a new ethical procurement policy.

Underpinning all of this, we are becoming a facilitator of research, rather than solely publishing research outputs themselves. Our strategy builds on our ongoing commitment to promote “real world” impact through the research we publish and the services we offer. As part of this, we are concentrating our commissioning activities on mission-based research to support the United Nations SDGs, calling for research that can help solve real world issues.

**Table.** Signatories to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Publishers Compact commit to 10 action points.

- Commit to the SDGs publicly
- Promote and acquire SDG content
- Annually report on progress towards achieving SDGs
- Nominate a person who will promote SDG progress
- Raise awareness and promote the SDGs among staff
- Raise awareness and promote the SDGs among suppliers
- Become an advocate to customers and stakeholders
- Collaborate across cities, countries and continents
- Dedicate budget and other resources towards accelerating progress
- Taking action on at least one SDG goal

By moving beyond the restrictions of traditional subject disciplinary silos, we focus on commissioning interdisciplinary, mission-led research aligned to our core goals that inspire positive change at a time when it is needed most.

To identify our core areas of focus, we conducted in depth analysis of funding, research, and our own content strengths across more than 50 years. From these insights we chose 4 goals<sup>7</sup> that correspond to overlapping SDGs: healthier lives, responsible management, quality education for all, and a fairer society.

At an organizational level, we recently made some changes to reflect our renewed focus, including the appointment of 4 new publishing development managers to gain a deeper understanding of the scholars, funding, and fields within our chosen goals.

### Next Steps

Throughout 2021, we will pose questions related to our goals, and commission and curate research content that demonstrates progress in attempting to answer these questions. This will allow us to dig deeper into real-world issues relating to our four goals, such as the impact of COVID on women, digital inclusion and the digital divide, food poverty and waste, the future of learning, and mental health and loneliness.

Our aim is to curate our content across our goals and specific mission-led themes, making content more discoverable to wider audiences, while helping researchers to access more relevant scholarship related to their research.

These are just some of the steps we have taken to embed the Compact into our strategy but as the world around us continues to change rapidly, we will remain agile and adapt as best as we can to play our part in solving significant global challenges.

To find out more, visit: [Our goals | Emerald Publishing<sup>7</sup>](#)

### References and Links

1. <https://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/sites/default/files/2020-02/impact-manifesto.pdf>
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