# Isabella Phoenix

**Global Head of Channel Sustainability (Amplify Impact), at HP Inc**

An avid gatherer of hidden talent and fresh ideas, Isabella Phoenix, Global Head of Channel Sustainability at technology company, HP Inc., shares with dss+ why success in sustainability is about finding gold, spotting butterflies and green armies.

Q.

**You have been with HP for 25 years; where did your passion for sustainability begin, and how do you keep it fresh and relevant?**

From a young age I was more concerned with my societal environment, what was happening to the homeless or marginalized communities, than wearing pretty dresses and makeup. So, when my career took me in the direction of the commercial world, I challenged myself to always devote a percentage of my time to worthwhile causes. Over the years I helped set up refugee centres in Geneva, worked with children with special needs, been deeply involved with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) programmes and I serve on several NGO advisory boards. For me this has been a good balance with my global positions in omnichannel/retail, e-business, and marketing for HP.  Senior executives within HP have long known my business competences and my societal values so when the Global Head of Channel Sustainability role came up last year, it felt like a natural progression for all of us. It's a role that really allows me to show how doing the right thing can also be a great business enabler and that staying true to your passion and challenging yourself gets you to where you want to be eventually.

Q.

**Since you started your role in sustainability, what business disciplines have been most helpful and what do you see as the next step?**

The founders of HP, Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard, were already talking about stakeholder management and their societal and environmental responsibilities back in 1939 when they set up the company. So, sustainability is nothing new for HP's leadership; it's in their DNA. This has led to the company to achieve significant sustainability wins, including having the number one supplies cartridge recycling programme, keeping more than 4.6bn plastic bottles out of landfills and being the only technology company to be Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) triple-A rated. So, I have tapped into leadership support, partner insights and operational excellence to reach some challenging sustainability targets. While I'm conscious that not every company has such resources or has reached this level of maturity, I believe it's less about the stage you are at but that you are constantly moving forward. Whether you are trying to engage leadership, buy-in from the workforce, or launch new environmental programmes, each step forward is a sustainability win. While there is always work to maintain and improve our current sustainability successes, the current challenge is to successfully launch and manage, HP Amplify Impact, HP's global channel sustainability programme which encourages and supports over 10,000 HP business partners in 43 countries to drive positive change and maximise business sustainability opportunities.

Q.

**What's your advice for starting a new sustainability programme, and what would you say are the key considerations?**

With new programmes, I believe there's often the temptation to start afresh and overlook the often hidden but brilliant existing programmes and the amazing people who work incredibly hard on initiatives already in play. When I started working on Amplify Impact, HP already had best-in-practice sustainability assets such as recycling capabilities, training programmes and talented people to run them. So why not share these assets with our partners? I call it 'finding gold.' I then took that gold and moulded it to suit our partners' needs with the help of some great people around me. We invented a term to describe this called 'channelisation of corporate sustainability assets.' I also challenged our assumptions by consulting expertise within HP and going outside to find the brightest minds and latest thinking on sustainability. This included talking to activists, environmentalists, lawyers, and technology companies to validate our approach. A key consideration was that Amplify Impact had to have real influence, it had to be relevant and, importantly, it had to be easy for partners to understand and use.

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Q.

**We often talk about technology playing a pivotal role in sustainability but less about the approach. What was your strategy on technology?**

I believe it's about being clear about what you want technology to do and then leaving no stone unturned to find the right system and people. Due to the number of partners we work with, our carbon footprint platform had to be scalable. It was also essential to have a platform where partners could easily input data and track progress to inform and create robust targets and action plans. We eventually spotted what I call a butterfly; a difficult to find company doing amazing things. In this case it was an unannounced start-up company called Sweep, set up by young visionaries in their field. We went into partnership with them to pilot the Sweep platform with five Amplify Impact partners in five countries. The pilot's success saw us roll out the programme worldwide in December 2021.

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When we launched Amplify Impact, our initial expectations were that 10% of partners would sign the Amplify Impact pledge. However, targets have been exceeded and we have over 20% and counting so far. After partners sign the Amplify Impact pledge, they do a self-assessment and receive a highly detailed set of recommendations to kick-start their sustainability journey. They also access an online platform where they find a well-developed set of sustainability initiatives and training programmes that they can tap into. For HP, it was not just about getting pledges but more about the impact of working with our partners and the ability to chart their progress and support them. Through the platform, we can see the progress on our Planet, People and Community partner initiatives. This data helps us identify where support is needed or changes to the programme are required. This would not be possible without technology, but equally without the right technology for our partners and us.

Q.

**You've talked about some interesting concepts to improve sustainability; what would be your top recommendations to help others turbo-boost their sustainability ambitions?**

Securing strategic support, resources and sponsorship from senior executives is a great enabler as it can have a significant impact on the success of sustainability plans. At the same time, it's important to listen to what partners want so that sustainability plans are aligned. As well as a dedicated sustainability team, Amplify Impact has a brilliant, brave' green army' who are the people across our organisation that believe in the power of sustainability, encourage others, and help to launch and drive Amplify Impact initiatives. Also, don't overlook the quiet voices; they often have fantastic ideas that deserve to be heard. Then there's 'inside outside' thinking - don't reinvent the wheel but explore strengths within the company. Following that, take time to go outside the organisation for fresh inspiration and to challenge your ideas to ensure their foundations are solid. Having a thoroughly researched and road-tested initiative with evidence that it can improve sustainability performance is a vital route to engage leadership and attract funding. Finally, stay true to your values. You don't have to be a sustainability expert or have a role in the charitable sector to make a difference. As my own journey shows, you can improve lives and help communities in any business sector by committing to your own goals and reaching out to like-minded influencers inside and outside your organisation. We all have it within us to make things happen.

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