



Can you give us an overview of MetLife's philosophy and approach toward sustainability?

JW MetLife is almost 150 years old and has a long-standing commitment to social responsibility. A central part of that commitment is reducing our impact on the planet. We are US-based, but actually have operations in more than 40 countries around the world.

As a global insurance company committed to helping our customers navigate life together, it is important we're doing our part in protecting the environment for future generations. We strive to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increase operational efficiencies, and drive sustainable business practices across our operations. Our program focuses on green building strategies, supply chain management, employee engagement, energy efficiency, and sustainable investment practices.

Although you are a US-based company with mostly domestic operations, MetLife thinks about sustainability from a global perspective. How did the company arrive at that attitude?

JW As a financial services company, the majority of our environmental impact comes from our global office portfolio. MetLife has approximately 57,000 associates and we occupy about 1,100 offices around the world with about 15 million square feet of real estate.

Our program started a little over ten years ago in our corporate real estate department, which is where I sit. We owned many of our offices and wanted to create a better working environment for our employees through strategies such as improved air quality, HVAC upgrades, and amenities such as plug-in electric vehicle charging stations. That was the genesis of our sustainability journey.

Over time, we began to get our employees involved, expanded our real estate sustainability efforts internationally, and started developing a program to engage our business partners on sustainable business practices. Fast forward to today, and sustainability has become a comprehensive, company-wide strategy.

And it sounds like the culmination of those efforts was reaching carbon neutrality last year. How did you rally the entire organization behind this goal? What kind of steps were taken centrally, as well as in local and regional teams, to make it happen?

JW Building off previous success in achieving significant US energy and emissions reductions, we felt it was important to establish new environmental goals for MetLife globally. Public goals hold us accountable, allow us to be leaders in the industry, and demonstrate our commitment to environmental stewardship.

In establishing new goals, we first performed an internal "carbon audit" to identify opportunities to reduce our carbon footprint and maximize efficiencies. These included energy audits at our international offices in addition to evaluating opportunities to increase use of collaboration technology to reduce emissions related to business travel.

In 2015, we announced our goal to become carbon neutral in 2016. We paired this commitment with other science-based environmental goals including a GHG emissions reduction target, a supplier transparency goal, and a 10 percent energy reduction target by 2020.

In terms of rallying the organization, even though this program was sponsored by our executive group, we knew it was important to get our local leadership teams involved early. We have local

TO NEUTRAL AND BEYOND

An Interview with MetLife's
Josh Wiener

Interview by Tyler Lawrence

When people think "insurance company," they don't typically jump to greenhouse gas emissions or environmental sustainability. However, even a business built around intangible services such as home and life insurance still has a carbon footprint. MetLife's Assistant Vice President of Global Sustainability and Facilities Management, Josh Wiener, sat down with Ethisphere editor Tyler Lawrence to talk about sustainability, getting to carbon neutrality, and reaching skeptical employees.



considerations that don't apply to every country. An energy efficiency opportunity might be different in Japan than in Mexico, for instance. The lease structure or tax considerations, which impact both costs and payback periods, might differ. Different technologies might be available or more applicable in specific regions.

One solution was our energy management training program. We collaborated with real estate managers from more than 30 countries to identify and implement energy management best practices for their respective office portfolios. Together, we prioritized quick-payback energy efficiency projects ranging from lighting controls to automation, ventilation, and other facility upgrades that were applicable to all regions and office types. These individuals became "Energy Champions," driving sustainable behavior change in employees at the local level.

What steps have you taken to ensure that sustainability concerns, such as efficiency and environmental impact, are considered early in any new projects or ventures, rather than being tacked on at the end?

JW In order for sustainability to be a central part of any project or strategy, it is important that it's included from the onset and communicated to all stakeholders, as opposed to being added later on as an additional line-item. We integrate sustainability best practices at the beginning for all new corporate real estate projects and continuously evaluate short- and long-term energy efficiency best practices for implementation at existing office spaces. New offices are typically designed to LEED Gold standards. We also work with our business partners to decrease the environmental impact of new products and services and are always looking for collaborative opportunities through our supply chain sustainability program.

Many sustainability initiatives directly help the bottom line, saving money in the long run. However, some have fewer easily tangible benefits. How does the sustainability team communicate those benefits to more skeptical parts of the organization?

JW As a global organization, our employees need to be part of our sustainability efforts if we want to be successful. The words "sustainability" or "going green" can often be vague, so the question was, how do we make it relatable to every employee? That was one of our goals in committing to carbon neutrality.

Fortunately, our strategy not only reduces our environmental impact, but also aligns with the values of our stakeholders, connects

to our other social responsibility goals, and engages employees in our commitment to operational excellence.

One example is the multitude of collaborative technology available to us through MetLife IT—telepresence, WebEx, other platforms. Using these tools oftentimes also results in a reduction in travel. IT's goal to increase use of these platforms overlapped with the desire to reduce travel emissions.

To achieve carbon neutrality, we support third-party certified carbon mitigation projects that drive sustainable development in countries where we operate. Examples include an initiative to install solar powered cookstoves in China and a REDD+ [Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation] project that protects tropical rainforest in Colombia. Another in upstate New York, where we have a major facility, is a landfill-to-gas project that focuses on biodiversity protection. Every project we support results in numerous additional benefits, such as economic empowerment and improved health, which align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Over the last several years, environmental sustainability has become increasingly important to our stakeholders—customers, employees, investors, and other external groups. Everyone could rally behind it. For example, last year more than 8,000 employees across the company participated with Our Green Impact, an employee engagement program focused on getting associates involved in our sustainability efforts, whether it be at work, home, and or in their local communities. Our employees get sustainability. Carbon neutrality and other goals are just a strategy to communicate the commitment.

Expert Biography

Josh Wiener is MetLife's Assistant Vice President, Global Sustainability & Facilities Management, as well as the company's environmental sustainability subject matter expert. He is tasked with leading the development and implementation of MetLife's sustainability strategies, associated programs, and goals. Josh's responsibilities cover a broad range of areas including corporate real estate, supply chain management, employee engagement, carbon footprint management, and climate change reporting. Josh joined MetLife in 2010.