



BT and Huawei

Knowledge-sharing opportunity invigorates Huawei's sustainability ambitions

Products from Huawei, now the world's largest telecoms equipment manufacturer, help more than a third of the planet's population communicate.

And like BT, the company is also big on sustainability. Huawei is committed to enabling the future information society and building a 'Better Connected World.' So, back in 2012 when Huawei was invited to become a member of the BT Better Future Supplier Forum (BFSF), it jumped at the chance.

Since then, the forum's innovative and collaborative learning environment has inspired Huawei to set up its own sustainability taskforce, stimulate the uptake of circular economy values across its business processes, and become the first supplier to attain a BT Better Future Supplier Forum Gold Status Award.



The BT Better Future Supplier Forum has helped Huawei accelerate its focus on sustainability

Huawei products and solutions already serve more than a third of the global population. They're at work in more than 170 countries, in the hands of organisations – BT among them – that build and run national and international carrier networks to provide a broad array of business and consumer communications services.

Huawei is also a familiar name to consumers these days. For example, it's now the world's third biggest smartphone manufacturer and it's moving at pace into new areas like smart watches and wearable devices.

Always customer-centric in its approach, Huawei has long recognised that sustainability is a purchasing decision priority.

It's therefore at the heart of everything Huawei designs, manufactures and sells – and a key focus across every one of its business operations worldwide.



The power of collaboration

Gabrielle Ginér, head of sustainable business policy, BT, says: “The Better Future Supplier Forum is a great example of how collaboration and knowledge-sharing can deliver results. It works because it encourages innovation in our own operations and those of our partners and suppliers. And it delivers benefits to customers as well by resulting in more innovative products.”

Step-by-step towards sustainable success

Like BT, Huawei was keen to strengthen not only the sustainability of its own organisation, but also of its complete supply chain. The step-by-step structured BFSF approach starts with the application of best practice analysis tools and techniques. These helped Huawei identify both strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Joining forces in the BT Better Future Supplier Forum

BT has set itself a 3:1 ambition to help customers save three times the end-to-end carbon impact of BT's business by 2020.

Meeting this ambition means that BT needs to work with a more sustainable supply chain – especially given that suppliers contribute around 60 per cent of the firm's end-to-end carbon impact.

That's why BT set up the Better Future Supplier Forum. It's an effective way to share best practice with suppliers helping them to lower emissions, spend less on energy and reduce waste.

Through the forum, BT trains and encourage businesses to make sustainability a part of everything they do. It then assesses them and gives them a rating from bronze to gold.

The first step in this process was to benchmark the company against ten key sustainability measures, ranging from eco-friendly product design and environmental management, to greenhouse gas emissions strategies, and corporate social responsibility policy.

Based on this assessment, Huawei decided to create its own sustainability action team to work side-by-side with BT people. Together they identified areas where changes could make the biggest impact in cutting carbon emissions. One of these was to harness the power of Huawei Research and Development resources and focus them towards sustainable product development projects, specifically for BT.

The company has also followed the BT lead by spreading the word to its own suppliers, putting sustainability high on the agenda of its annual supplier conference, attended by around 360 senior employees from over 170 companies.

Global recognition

In recognition of Huawei's sustainability advances, both in its own operations and its wider supply chain, BT presented the company with one of the first-ever BFSF Silver Status Awards in 2012.

But the silver award only served to increase Huawei's appetite for improvement as deputy MD of Huawei in the UK and Ireland, Jerry Thompson, explains:

"We could see how the forum was working for us. We were certainly benefiting a great deal from its open, collaborative and innovative environment but specifically, it gave us the means to measure how effective our methods were. We could benchmark performance and create plans for improvement."

Continues Jerry Thompson: "Things like water and power efficiency – we were already pretty good at, but we are still able to make improvements and the circular economy was different because it was relatively new to us."

War on waste

"What we learned through the forum resulted in our capabilities rocketing. It gave us confidence and know-how. Now, circular economy modelling, including waste elimination, extended lifespans and the potential for re-use, is embedded throughout our product design and production processes."

Circular economy thinking was central to the development of Huawei's NGA2 (next generation access) equipment built to support BT's ultrafast broadband trials in the UK.

Says Jerry Thompson: "With NGA2 the mindset of how our people focused on BT changed. Everybody involved started to ask the question 'how can we do this differently; how can we reduce the overall carbon footprint?' So they started to plan how they could cut waste and carbon across the whole process. From manufacturing – more energy efficiency in designing the cabinets – to logistics and distribution – reducing truck-rolls, to in-life energy consumption of the products themselves."

Lower environmental impact

BT's Generic Standard 19 (GS19) highlights techniques to help products have the lowest impact on the environment. That's at every stage of the product life-cycle including design, manufacture, delivery and disposal.

Suppliers who join the forum benefit from world-class training, consulting and support to make their businesses more sustainable, and an uplift in brand recognition and perception as customers can easily see their commitment to sustainability.

The forum works too. In 2014 it won the Guardian Sustainable Business supply chain award for supply chain innovation and initiatives that have a respect for human, economic and environmental rights across a business or product's supply chain.



“The BT supplier forum has been a game changer for us. It’s given us the tools and know-how to make enormous strides towards fully embedding sustainability across our business.”

Jerry Thompson
Deputy managing director,
Huawei UK & Ireland

New wave of devotees

The net effect of Huawei’s circular economy modelling, including the application to the NGA2 project, has been to fuel the creation a new wave of sustainability practitioners across Huawei.

“It’s heartening to see that not only are our solutions teams relishing the challenge of having to think about designing products and processes in different way, they have been joined by a growing army of sustainability devotees from all parts of the business,” says Jerry Thompson. “And the icing on the cake? Well, that’s the gold award of course.”

At the end of 2015 Huawei became the first supplier to achieve the Better Future Supplier Forum Gold Status Award for its sustainability achievements.

“The BT Better Future Supplier Forum adds huge value to our drive for sustainability. It enables us to think differently, it inspires our people to do an even better job and it’s given us a framework for improvement.”

Jerry Thompson, deputy managing director, Huawei UK & Ireland



Offices worldwide

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