

1pc for the Planet's Kate Williams drives sustainable change

[1pc for the Planet](#) CEO Kate Williams explains how, by giving a tiny percentage of sales to non-profits focused on fighting climate change on the ground, businesses can make meaningful change.

Across the planet 'sustainability' is the new watchword of business as firms finally realise that not only is it time to get real about climate change, but they could actually lose customers and scarce talent by not embracing climate change.

This is espousing new business terms like ESG (environmental, social and governance) but fundamentally real change will not happen until efforts are permanently recorded on the balance sheet.

Many large businesses express this through changed behaviour, carbon offsets, mission statements, policies and practical initiatives. But for many others it is a challenge even knowing where to start.

And this is where 1pc for the Planet led by CEO Kate Williams comes in.

By contributing 1pc of their annual sales, thousands of 1pc for the Planet members around the world have raised over €218m (\$265m) to support approved environmental non-profits around the globe. Non-profits are approved based on referrals, track record and environmental focus. Thousands of non-profits worldwide are currently approved.

Change starts with yourself

Williams has [previously pointed](#) out that currently, only 3pc of total philanthropy goes to the environment and, only 5pc of that comes from businesses. She strongly believes the planet needs better support than this, and 1pc for the Planet's growing network of business members is playing a role in supporting on-the-ground outcomes.

The scale of the crisis is enormous. Recently a UN climate panel of the world's top atmospheric scientists warned that global warming is dangerously close to spiralling out of control, with deadly heat waves, hurricanes and other extreme events likely to keep getting worse.

Williams, who is speaking at the upcoming [SX21 Sustainability Summit](#) (21-23 September 2021), began her career as an outdoor educator, connecting people directly with the outdoors. "My philosophy is people will fight for, and advocate for, what they love. And if I can play a role in

connecting people to the outdoors and have them fall in love with the natural world that will be good for our planet. And I still very much believe that.”

1pc for the Planet was established by outdoor clothing giant Patagonia’s founder Yvon Chouinard in 2002 and Patagonia became the first business to commit 1pc of annual sales to the environment. Williams joined 1pc for the Planet seven years ago. “It brought together my belief that we fight for what we love and to do it at a more systems level.”

All too often statements and efforts around the environment by businesses get dismissed by cynics as “greenwashing” or as trying to be seen to do the right thing. But Williams says the work of 1pc for the Planet is more fundamental.

“1pc for the Planet is the opposite of greenwashing. The way our model works companies commit 1pc of sales go to environmental non-profits every year. They don’t give the money to us. We don’t operate as a foundation. They give directly to the non-profits. Our role is we are advisors essentially, helping companies to connect with the non-profits that are the best fit for the impact that they want to drive, the brand story they want to tell. the region that they are in and we help to create a matrix of how to implement environmental giving in a way that is really coherent.

“Our role is making these really powerful partnerships happen. And at the end of each year we certify that giving.

“We literally check the revenues, check the receipts of giving, do the math and make sure that they have given 1pc. Any company that has a 1pc for the Planet logo on a product, service or website has to prove it means something. It’s not just that we intend to support the environment, or we think it’s important to do something for the environment, it means we have supported environmental non-profits to the tune of 1pc of our sales. So it’s a pretty big deal.”

How 1pc can make a fundamental difference

Williams said that the organisation is nearing the milestone of \$300m over the course of the lifetime of 1pc for the Planet. “Last year we certified \$30m in giving and we’re on track come in ahead of that this year.

While 1pc of sales leaves businesses with 99pc of their earnings and sounds like a small amount, it does add up when it comes to making meaningful change in the world.

Asked about how it changes the businesses themselves, Williams said it’s a big commitment, but a manageable commitment.

“You can build energy around taking action. You can take a step that actually matters. It’s bringing a form of expertise and the ability to make change that you don’t have anywhere else in your

business. And companies get to access the power of nonprofits and start doing a lot more. It's one thing to be certified but once they're in the network and experience and witness the positive power of the nonprofits they are supporting, they end up doing so much more than giving their 1pc.

“And that’s through the inspiration and learnings from a peer group of companies who are at different stages of the journey.

“Lasting change doesn’t happen overnight. You can offset what can’t change immediately and then you change what you can. Non-profits play a really valuable role in enabling businesses to make those offsets and invest in real projects on the ground that are capturing carbon.”

Catch Kate Williams speaking at the upcoming [SX21 Sustainability Summit](#) on 21-23 September 2021

By [John Kennedy](#) (john.kennedy3@boi.com)

Published: 10 September 2021