

What does business activism actually mean?

Better Business Summit January 2024

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**Chris Packham,
Wildlife TV Presenter
& Naturalist**





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Over 300 business leaders are joining XR's climate protest - here's why

Ben Tolhurst, Business Declares
 22 April 2023 · 4 min read

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Companies are increasingly losing patience with the government over its plans to expand fossil fuel production, argues Business Declares' Ben Tolhurst

A coalition of over 300 business leaders are descending on London this weekend to join a mass protest against the government's plans to license new fossil fuels. This level of protest by the business community...

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Special audio feature live from The Big One climate action in London

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TO THE CEOs OF HSBC, BARCLAYS, SANTANDER, NATWEST AND LLOYDS

Your banks are in a dangerous relationship with fossil fuel companies, putting our futures in jeopardy and the planet at risk. Now is the time for that relationship to end.

That's why we're calling on your banks to stop financing fossil fuel expansion.

In 2021, the International Energy Agency – the world's most influential energy body – announced that there should be no investment in new oil, gas, or coal if we are to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, meet the Paris Climate Goals and avoid climate catastrophe. Instead, we must focus on phasing out fossil fuels, and the rapid scaling up of a clean energy transition.

Despite this, your banks – HSBC, Barclays, Santander, NatWest and Lloyds – funnelled a collective \$368 billion into the fossil fuel sector between 2016 and 2021, of which \$141bn has gone to the top 50 oil and gas expanders.

These decisions are not only contradicting our values, they're also jeopardising our futures.

That's why we are asking you to stop financing fossil fuel expansion by taking the following key steps:

1. Stop directly financing new fossil fuel expansion activity.
2. Put your existing clients on notice that they must stop their expansion plans or face financing consequences.
3. End relationships with those clients who do not stop fossil fuel expansion.

If you fail to act, then we will be campaigning for you to change, raising awareness with the public or – for those who haven't already – moving to a bank that doesn't finance fossil fuel expansion.

Do you think your reputation will remain unscathed when we can't rely on you to protect our futures?

DON'T BANK ON IT.

Richard Curtis
 Emma Thompson
 Stephen Fry
 Christiana Figueres
 Caroline Lucas, MP
 Paul Polman
 Mark Rylance
 Aisling Bea
 Brian Eno
 Bill McKibben
 Greg Wise
 Bianca Pitt

Dale Vince
 Deborah Meaden
 Dr Mya-Rose Craig
 Graham Hobson
 Juliet Davenport
 Kim Stanley Robinson
 Chris Anderson
 Lolly Adefope
 Amazon Watch
 B-Lab UK
 Business Declares

Ecotricity
 E!a's Kitchen
 Greenpeace UK
 Just Stop Oil
 New Economics Foundation
 Rainforest Action Network
 Reclaim Finance
 Save the Children UK
 ShareAction
 Sierra Club
 Triodos Bank
 XR Money Rebellion

For the full list, visit makemymoneymatter.co.uk/dear-ceos



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A new chapter of business leadership is starting on a global scale.
Now is the time to speak out, join the collective call for change and be on the right side of history.

Our 100+ members, including those below, are proud to be taking action and collaborating to tackle the climate, ecological and social emergency.



Apply to join. Contact Samantha Cooper
Samantha@businessdeclares.com



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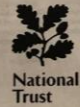
No more cop outs

The outcomes of COP27 and COP15 couldn't be more critical.

Business can only prosper on a healthy planet.

We call on business leaders to:

- Back green growth, skills and jobs
- Insist on net zero and nature-positive models, including supply chains
- Help strengthen existing regulatory protections for nature



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FINANCIAL TIMES



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Agenda

1. Context and mindset
2. Definitions of activism
3. Examples of business activism
4. Steps to business activism
5. Q&A

Part one: Context and mindset



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Context and mindset regarding the climate and nature emergency

1. *Hope and faith*: Recognition of the problem and faith in human nature to fix it so things can largely proceed as BAU
2. *Emersion and busyness*: Recognition that things are getting worse and worry that we can't fix things and manage overwhelm by advocacy of, and emersion in, ESG/Sustainability activities
3. *Post modernity viewpoint*: Recognition that modernity (in the global north) as we know it will have to change fundamentally and focus needs to be on (community level) adaptation and resilience with a focus on what we are running to, not just, running from

Which mindset best describes you/your organisation? Perhaps you are a mixture of more than one or have variations on these? Perhaps your organisation doesn't like to talk about this?

Part two: Definitions of activism



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Definitions of activism

- **Typical dictionary definition** might be something like - the use of direct and noticeable action to achieve a result usually a political or social one ([Cambridge Dictionary](#))
- **Christian Vanizette** founder of <https://makesense.org/> - an activist is someone who is launching movements or campaigns, in order to change either, a way of thinking of the general public, so it has an impact on the culture, or to change regulations and frameworks so that the policy makers listen to these demands and implement them.
- **Tessa Wernink** co-founder of the social enterprise Fairphone, and founder of [Undercover Activist](#)
 - energised social movements
 - trouble makers, rebels, innovators, change makers, rockstars
 - the enactment of influence towards a cause bigger than our own self interest
- **Gail Bradbrook co founder extinction rebellion**
 - Activism is taking action with love in service to life, stretching outside your comfort zone and taking risks. Feel into where the opportunities arise - you may be taken to the very edge of your courage, trust that you can and must go there, however much that stretches you and you will notice over time how this processes grows you up and out and creates more capacity for action

Part three: examples of business activism

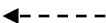
Examples of business activism – led by businesses

The rise of the employee voice/employee networks

Kite Insights survey: 80% of people ready and willing to take action on climate change in their jobs. 70% said taking action on climate change was important to their motivation and personal well being



- Microsoft and [Drew Wilkinson](#)
- UK Civil Service – [Collective for Climate Action](#)
- Cross sector groups [Climate Voice](#)
- Use of “climate games” such as [Climate Fresk](#)
- Internal organisation’s “green networks”



2023 CxO Sustainability Report, Deloitte: more than half of C-suite executives said employee activism on climate led their organisations to increase sustainability actions over the past year; 24 percent said it led to a “significant” increase.



Business realm - Changing product, operations, constitution and policies

- Product innovation for the circular economy (Fairphone)
- Social causes (Café Direct)
- Changing company constitutions (Better business Act, Faith in Nature, Patagonia)
- Adopting activist policies – (Business Declares, Wholegrain Digital)
- Getting tougher with supply chain
- Education systems (e.g. MBAs)

Political/governmental realm - Speaking out

- No new fossil fuels, nature protection, just transition to green era. The Big One & The Queue for Climate and Nature (thousands of businesses)
- Stop Ecocide Campaign – hundreds of businesses
- Food Waste – Toast Ale
- Racial justice - Ben and Jerry’s
- Police, crime, sentencing & Courts Bill – e.g. Body shop



Examples of activism – “done to” businesses

Whistleblowing

[Desiree Fixler](#) at Deutsche Bank

Pursued by public/business campaigns

[Wimbledon](#) and Barclays

Forced to withdraw from projects/clients

[24 banks](#) publicly distance themselves from EACOP

Being taken to court

[Client Earth & Shell](#)

Being “ditched”

[Students](#) boycotting Barclays Bank

The great resignation?

[Increases in people quitting their companies](#)



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Part four: steps to activism



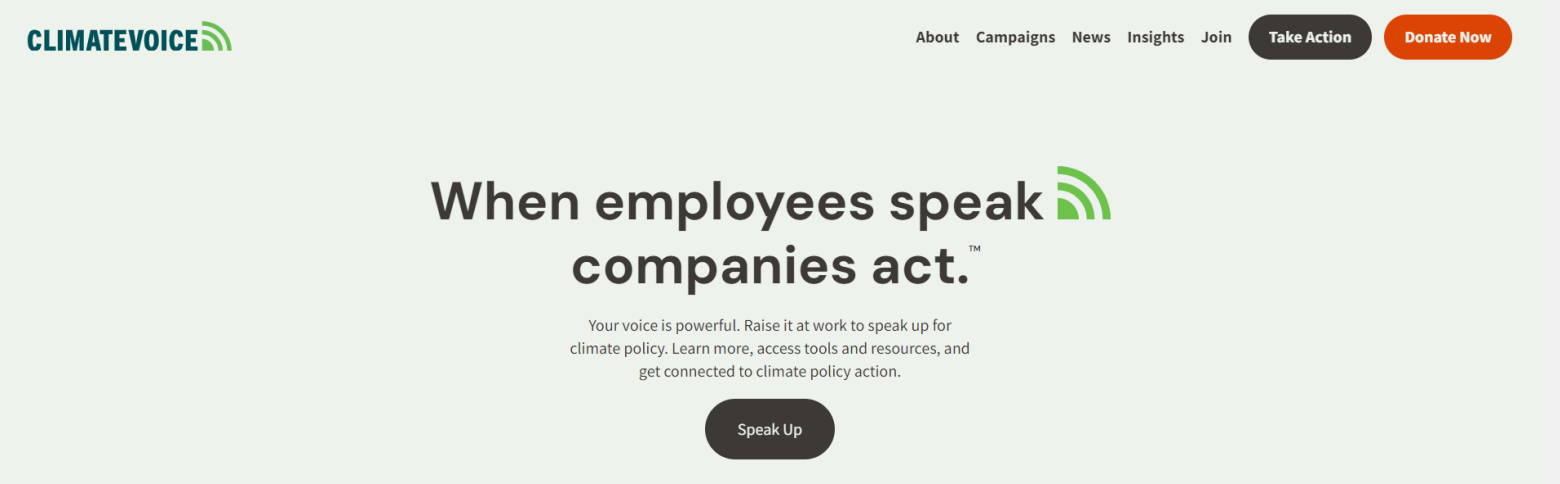
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Steps to activism

Manuel Salazar - activist (and strategist at PWC), [6 ways of taking climate action at work](#)

1. Does your employer actively increase your knowledge about the climate/nature emergency? Demand that climate change is placed at the centre of the business model and training is mandatory
2. Undertake climate assessments for every project they take on
3. Set a moral stance and have a public pledge that they won't invest in fossil fuels or industry sectors that harm the environment
4. Assess your employer's clients – step away from contracts
5. Review internal benefits – insurance, healthcare, pensions
6. Wake up and walk out for the climate

Steps to activism



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When employees speak companies act.™

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Speak Up



[Toolkit](#) for employee activism →



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INTRODUCTION 

Every employee has a voice.

While public opinion matters, one of the most direct and effective influences comes from inside the organization. Employees play a critical role. It's a common misconception to believe that they must have a specific role in the sustainability team at the company to make a difference. Employees, regardless of role, can be very influential if they use a structured (and persistent) approach.

This playbook outlines four steps to help any employee advocate for pro-climate action within their organization. Everyone's journey will look slightly different, so take these steps in the order that works best for you.

1. Get the facts
2. Find your influence
3. Engage your co-workers
4. Advocate for action

Are you ready to begin your journey?

CLIMATE ACTION AT WORK OVERVIEW

- 1 Get the Facts
- 2 Find Your Influence
- 3 Engage Your Co-Workers
- 4 Advocate for Action

EMPLOYEE CLIMATE ACTION GUIDE 9

Why care?

'Off the charts': 2023 was hottest year ever recorded globally, US scientists confirm

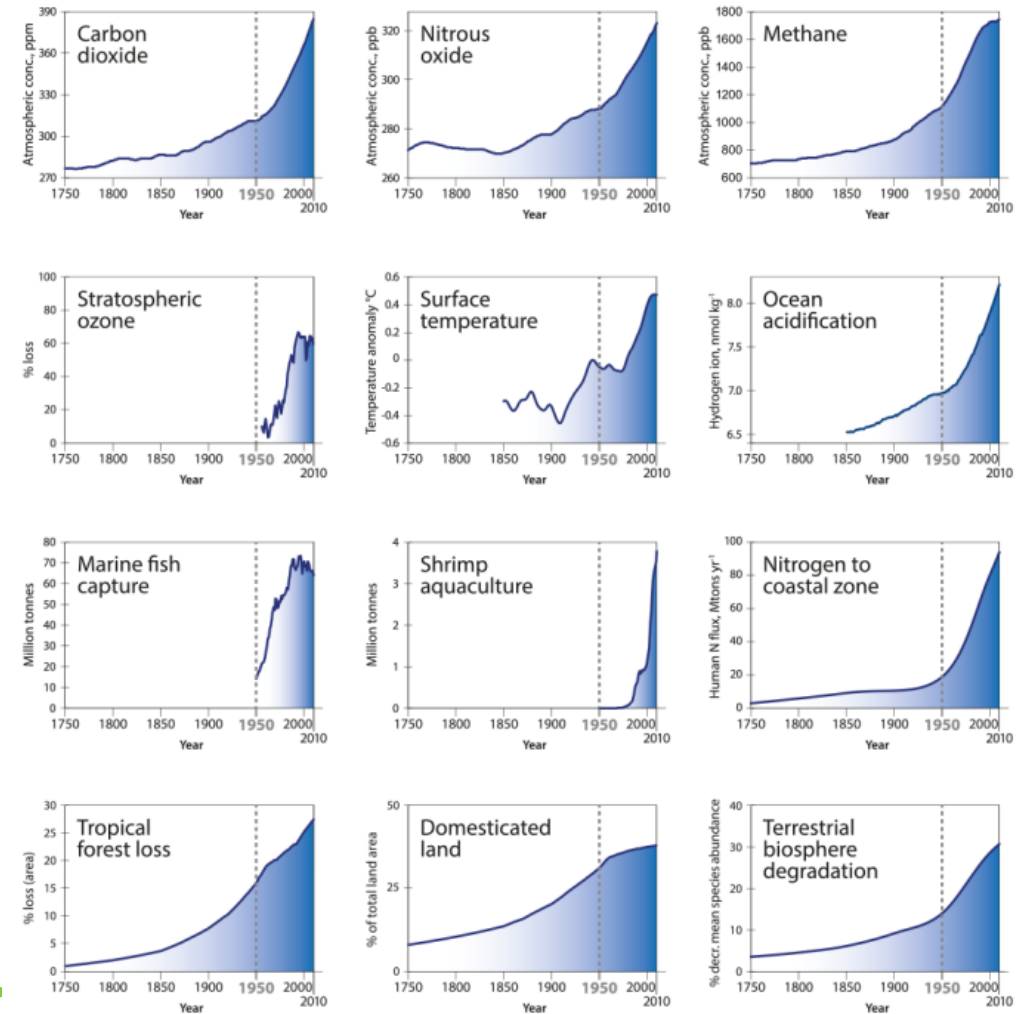
New analysis confirms 'unprecedented' record reported by European Union and United Nations scientists



A child looks at a wildfire in Chasia on the outskirts of Athens, Greece, on 22 August 2023. Photograph: Angelos Tzortzinis/AFP via Getty Images

Last year was the hottest ever reliably recorded globally by a blistering margin, US scientists have confirmed, leaving researchers struggling to account for the severity of the heat and what it portends for the unfolding climate crisis.

Earth system trends





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