# Sustainability
## and the Digital Backbone

Integrate sustainability into your organisation's transformation efforts, reducing environmental impact, promoting responsible technology use, and fostering societal wellbeing and trust.

**CGI Business Consulting and Advisory insights**

**CGI**

# An end-to-end digital framework to power your success

In today's complex and competitive business landscape, it is common for organisations to embed digital technologies that enable their growth strategies. For many, this involves implementing IT throughout their organisation, but few develop a holistic business case or transformation roadmap covering everything they do, or have a comprehensive strategy that aligns their IT with broader strategic goals.

At CGI, we believe that true digitalisation isn't just about adopting new technologies; it's about embracing a holistic mindset. As a leader in IT and business consulting, we help organisations unlock their full potential, driving our clients' growth through the power of "digital".

But digital transformation isn't simple. That's why we developed our value-led, technology-enabled Digital Backbone framework, which delivers best practices and lessons learned to inspire your journey.

The Digital Backbone offers the fundamental building blocks to drive your transformation success. It helps you envision secure and sustainable solutions that combat your challenges and support your ambitions. Combined, your new capabilities will create a robust, IT-enabled structure—a digital backbone—that transforms everything you do, enabling your organisation to thrive in our ever-evolving world.

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# The new imperative



Today's organisations face a dual challenge: achieving growth and competitiveness while also addressing the urgent need for sustainability. This demands innovative solutions that can drive both economic and environmental benefits.

**Sustainability is no longer a peripheral concern; it is central to the strategies of forward-thinking businesses.**

Embedding sustainable practices into digital transformation efforts is crucial for organisations aiming to thrive in this new era. This means using technology responsibly, supporting net zero initiatives, and leveraging digital solutions to foster positive social impact.

The global urgency to address climate change, coupled with regulatory pressures, has made it essential for businesses to rethink their operational strategies. Organisations are now expected to commit to ambitious sustainability targets, implement robust carbon reduction strategies, and maintain transparent reporting practices.

This proactive approach not only helps mitigate environmental risks but also enhances brand reputation, drives innovation, and improves stakeholder engagement. Being a good corporate citizen is therefore not just a regulatory requirement, but a strategic advantage that can drive business success.

Moreover, the inevitability of stricter sustainability laws and guidelines necessitates that organisations start their journey to net zero now. By acting early, businesses can not only comply with upcoming regulations but also position themselves as leaders in sustainability.

This journey is not just about overcoming environmental challenges; it is about leveraging sustainability to earn the trust of employees and customers, enhance brand reputation and loyalty, and contribute positively to our planet.

Approximately 70% of studies found a positive relationship between ESG scores and financial returns, emphasising the financial benefits of strong ESG performance for businesses.

**Source:** McKinsey & Company (2023), ESG Report: sustainable & inclusive growth.

71% of C-suite and functional leaders expect ESG to play a growing role in corporate performance, reflecting its increasing importance in driving business success and resilience.

**Source:** Thomson Reuters (2023), The 2023 State of Corporate ESG.

Analysis of over 13,000 publicly traded companies between 2013-2021 found that those with higher ESG ratings generally outperformed those with lower ratings, highlighting the positive impact of ESG on financial performance across various geographies and industries.

**Source:** Kroll (2023), ESG and Global Investor Returns.

# The role of technology

Technology plays a pivotal role in shaping a sustainable future, offering both challenges and opportunities to balance environmental impact with business growth.

On the one hand, the rapid advancement of technology has led to significant environmental impacts, particularly through resource consumption, energy use, and electronic waste. Data centres for example, require vast amounts of energy to store and process the world's data, contributing to carbon emissions.

As of 2023, 90% of the world's data was created in the previous two years, and the amount of data produced globally continues to double approximately every two years. The consequence of this being that data centres are now generating approximately the same emissions as the global airline industry.[1] In fact, data centres account for around 2% of the world's electricity consumption, and this figure is expected to grow as digital demands continue to rise.[2]

This environmental footprint is projected to increase further unless more sustainable practices, such as renewable energy adoption and energy-efficient cooling technologies, are implemented.

**Conversely, technology is a powerful enabler of sustainable practices.**

Innovations in renewable energy, energy efficient systems, and digital tools are critical to driving more sustainable outcomes across industries. For example, advanced monitoring systems allow businesses to track and reduce their energy consumption, while digital platforms enable a shift towards paperless operations, cutting down on resource use.

The growing availability of ESG (environmental, social and governance) data also empowers organisations to measure and improve their sustainability performance. Smart grids and IoT devices help manage energy more efficiently, and advances in AI and data analytics support better decision-making for sustainability initiatives.

To fully realise the positive potential of technology, it is essential to assess and quantify the value it brings in both environmental and financial terms. While measuring the carbon footprint of technologies such as data centres is important, it's equally crucial to evaluate the financial benefits of sustainability initiatives. For example, optimising energy use not only reduces emissions but also cuts operational costs.

(1) The Next Web (2024), Data centres generate the same amount of carbon emissions as global airlines.
(2) Datacenters.com (2024), Sustainable Tech: How Data Centres are Tackling Climate Change.

By understanding both the financial and environmental gains, organisations can make more informed decisions that support their business goals and their sustainability targets. Quantifying both ecological impact and economic gains allows you to bridge the gap between business objectives and environmental responsibilities, leading to more effective and scalable sustainability efforts.

Stakeholders and regulators are also invested in this mission of protecting our planet, and consequently the race is on for organisations to build a more sustainable, equitable and ethical world:

• According to a 2023 Gartner survey, 80% of business leaders stated that customers were the primary catalyst for their organisation's sustainability investments, making this the top driver for sustainability actions.[3]

• Employees are also increasingly attracted to employers that take a stand on these ESG issues.

• Investors use frameworks and standards (such as the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures) to demand that organisations develop more strategised approaches to sustainability.



Whilst most organisations are therefore performing ESG activities, few have developed a cohesive, enterprise-wide operating model or technology plan to help achieve their goals.

(3) Gartner (2023), Gartner Survey Finds 87% of Business Leaders Expect to Increase Investment in Sustainability.

# Sustainability and the Digital Backbone

Unlocking your organisation's full potential—**transformation done right**

## What is a digital backbone?

A digital backbone goes beyond simply applying IT to areas of your organisation as a support mechanism. When designed effectively, a digital backbone becomes the cornerstone of a successful modern organisation; it embeds technology throughout all operations, using the power of IT to create a robust structure that enables continuous innovation and transforms everything you do.

Increased **efficiency and productivity across** streamlined operations.

Increased **revenue** alongside more cost efficient processes.

Greater **agility and growth** with a faster time to market.

Better **regulatory compliance**, including empowering sustainability initiatives.

Improved **service and product quality** for customer, employee and stakeholder satisfaction.

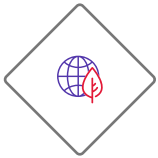Strategic **decision making** through data-driven insights.

# The Digital Backbone—our end-to-end framework to make IT the enabler of your success.

The Digital Backbone delivers twelve fundamental building blocks to inspire digital transformation and unlock your organisation's full potential. These can be implemented individually or as a whole programme, so no matter where you are on your journey, the Digital Backbone provides a comprehensive vision for your transformation strategy.

**That's why sustainability is a key component of the Digital Backbone,** embedding responsible technology use and sustainable practices into your operations. Our strategic insights will align your digital investments with sustainability goals, ensuring a commitment to positive social outcomes and reduced environmental impact, while also driving tangible business results.

Business strategy

Operating model

Data and analytics

Digital architecture

Change management and enablement

**Sustainability**

Service integration and management

Digital workplace

Enterprise service management

Cloud

DevOps

Security
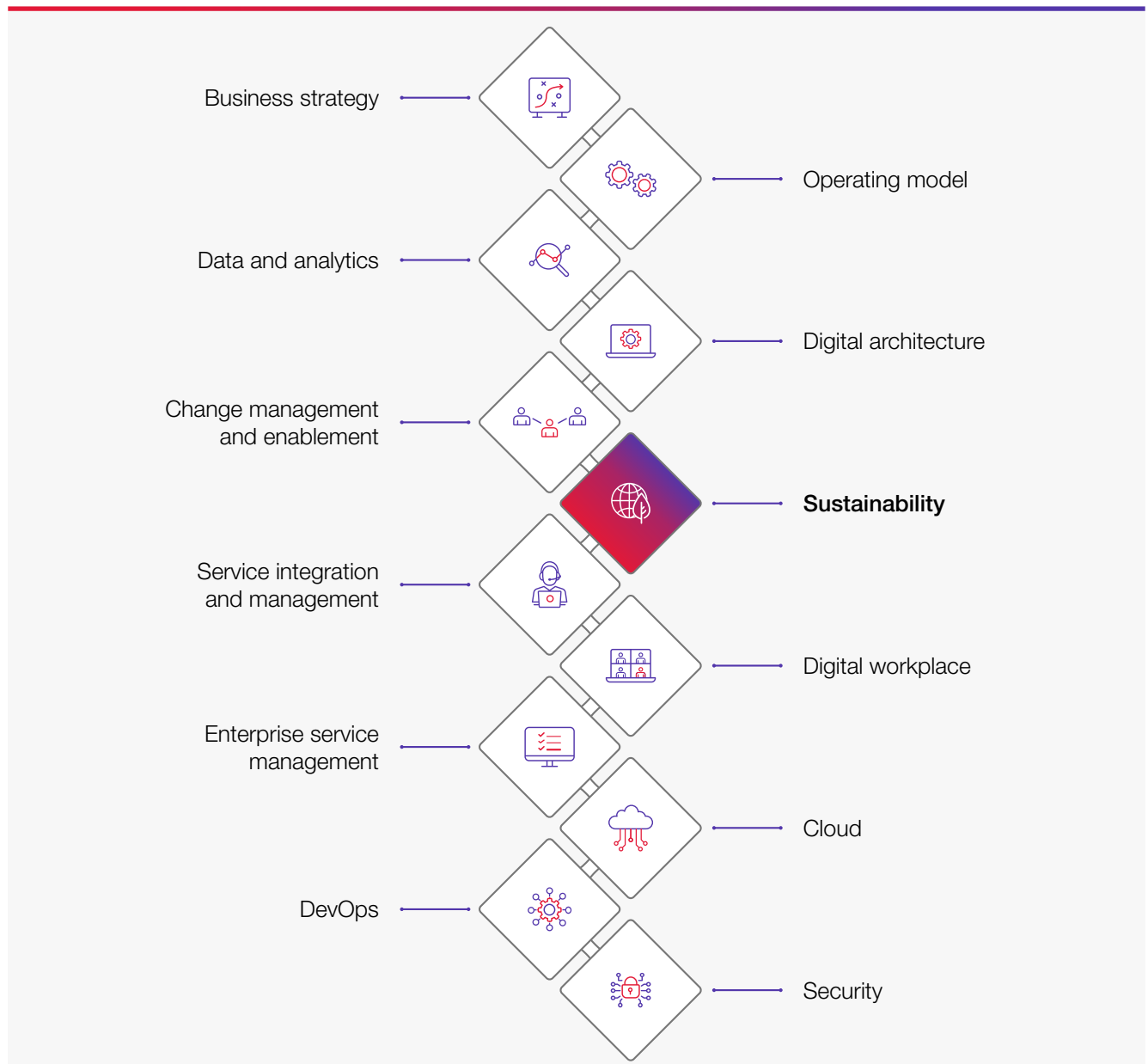
# A vision for sustainable transformation

Integrate sustainability into your organisation's transformation efforts, reducing environmental impact, promoting responsible technology use, and fostering societal wellbeing and trust.
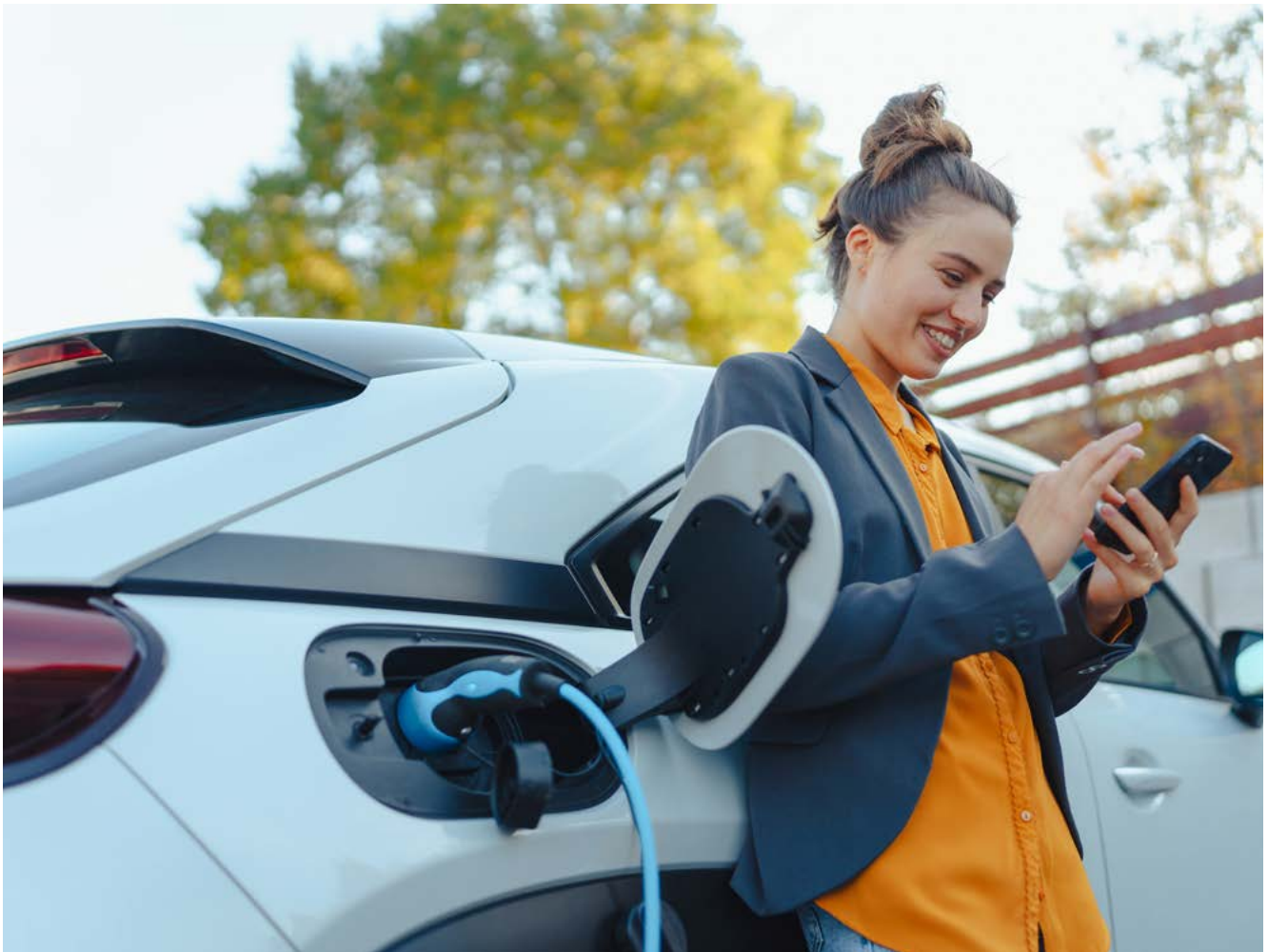
# The key steps

**1** **Assess your current state**

Start by evaluating your organisation's environmental impact, identifying areas for improvement. Use data analytics to understand your carbon footprint, energy consumption, and resource use.

Solutions like **CGI's DataTwin360** provide an in-depth view of energy consumption and emissions across IT infrastructure, helping identify inefficiencies and areas for improvement. And our work with **University Hospital Plymouth NHS Trust** illustrates how you can turn data insights into a practical, actionable sustainability roadmap.

**2** **Set clear sustainability goals**

Establish realistic, yet ambitious targets for reducing carbon emissions and improving sustainability. Align these goals with your overall business strategy to ensure they drive both environmental and business value.

**3** **Align environmental and financial gains**

Develop a business case that seamlessly integrates both economic value and environmental benefits, and develop a roadmap to achieve your sustainability and business goals.

This should include clear prioritisation of initiatives, defined timelines, and measurable performance metrics to ensure effective execution and accountability.

**4** **Adopt green technologies**

Invest in solutions that reduce environmental impact, such as energy efficient data centres, renewable energy sources, and smart grid technologies.

Leveraging IoT and AI can also optimise resource use and reduce waste, particularly across the supply chain.

**5** **Engage stakeholders**

Bring employees, customers and partners onboard. Foster a sustainability culture by providing training and encouraging sustainable practices.

Take the work we did with **The Consumer Helpline Group** as an example. We brought together teams across all levels of the organisation to create a bespoke sustainability strategy, "Our World". We baselined the organisation's existing position and quickly accelerated sustainability activities with robust policies and procedures that embedded the net zero mission into everyday business.

**6** **Monitor and report progress**

Track your progress towards sustainability goals with robust ESG data management tools. Automating the collection, management, and reporting of ESG data supports transparency and compliance, while providing valuable insights for continuous improvement.

**7** **Continuously improve**

Sustainability is an evolving journey. Regularly reassess your strategies, adapt to new challenges, and stay informed about emerging technologies and best practices.

**8** **Leverage technology for success**

Beyond compliance, use digital tools to market and communicate your sustainability achievements.

Advanced digital solutions help manage and showcase your sustainability journey, making it a core part of your business strategy.

# CGI Business Consulting and Advisory

Built over +47 years, CGI is one of the world's largest providers of high-end IT and business consulting services. We are trusted to transform organisations with innovative solutions, so developed our Business Consulting and Advisory (BC&A) team to share our knowledge and experience with you.

## Offerings to support your organisation

Wherever you are on your transformation journey—whether you're looking to develop a forward-thinking business strategy, improve the effectiveness of specific processes, or implement an innovative solution—we're here to help.

We understand that transformation isn't simple, so **our experts developed all our BC&A offerings around The Digital Backbone's twelve key propositions**, to support you with the right solutions to address your challenges, achieve your ambitions, and build your own digital backbone capability.

Whether you'd like to build a complete digital backbone that will become the cornerstone of your growth, or if there's one specific area standing in the way—perhaps that's sustainability—we have the offerings and solutions to ensure your transformation project succeeds.

BC&A places you at the heart of our offerings. We work to understand your unique challenges and opportunities—whether you require strategy development, or solutions design and implementation—and we'll guide you every step of the way.

Our teams cover a range of sectors such as higher education and healthcare, as well as specialist areas including business consulting, technical advisory, service management, and sustainability.

We remain supplier agnostic, but also have teams designated to our **strategic alliances** with the likes of Microsoft, ServiceNow, Google, Dell, NetApp (and more), enabling us to design you the right solutions, working with the right partners to deliver the best outcomes.

So whatever your specific requirements, challenges or industry, with BC&A's breadth of knowledge and experience, we'll empower you with a team that is hand-picked to enable your success.

## To find out more:

Explore the Digital Backbone and its twelve key propositions in more depth on **our webpage**. Fill in **this short form** and we'll be in touch to discuss how our sustainability offerings or our overarching Digital Backbone framework can support your specific needs.

## About CGI

**Insights you can act on**

Founded in 1976, CGI is among the largest IT and business consulting services firms in the world.

We are insights-driven and outcomes-based to help accelerate returns on your investments. Across hundreds of locations worldwide, we provide comprehensive, scalable and sustainable IT and business consulting services that are informed globally and delivered locally.

We are committed to operating responsibly and ethically, striving to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2026 in the UK, and supporting our clients' sustainability journeys. Our expertise in sustainability and climate change, combined with our extensive experience in IT and business consulting, positions us uniquely to help organisations navigate the complexities of the modern business landscape.

[cgi.com/uk](cgi.com/uk)