



Digital Sustainability: How to Shrink Your Footprint and Enhance Business Value

How simple, sustainable shifts can create
lasting value for your business





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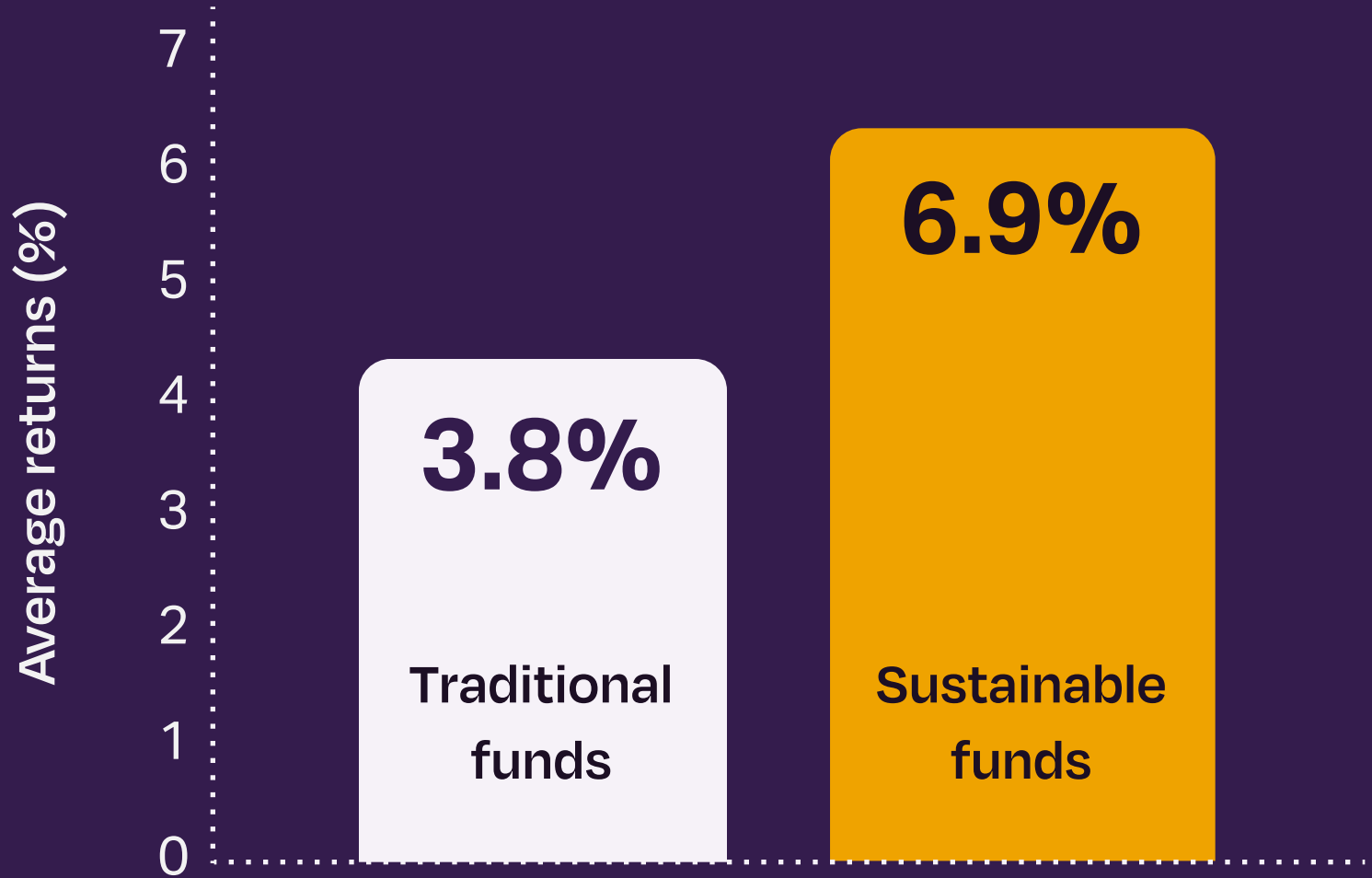
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Introduction

Digital sustainability isn't just a trend, it's a way to combine environmental responsibility with digital progress. Companies using Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles can find new ways to create value by making their digital operations more sustainable.

The digital world creates a lot of carbon emissions, but it can also help solve environmental problems. Adding sustainable practices to digital work can improve a company's image and financial results.

Recent data supports this: In 2023, sustainable funds performed better than traditional ones, with returns of **6.9%** versus **3.8%** (Morgan Stanley). The message is clear: investing in digital sustainability can boost business success and build investor trust.



What is Digital Sustainability?

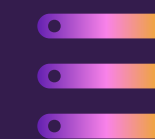
Digital sustainability involves strategies and practices aimed at minimising the environmental impact of digital operations. With the rapid digitisation of businesses, the associated carbon footprint has grown significantly, making sustainable digital practices essential.

Key Areas of Focus



Website emissions

Websites contribute to energy consumption through hosting, traffic levels, and the complexity of their designs. Simple changes such as optimising images and reducing unused code can significantly lower emissions.



Hosting infrastructure

Data centres power the digital ecosystem but are energy intensive. Opting for hosting providers powered by renewable energy sources, such as Google Cloud's carbon-neutral services, can make a meaningful impact.



Data efficiency

Companies often store vast amounts of unused or redundant data. Streamlining data storage policies and prioritising real-time analysis tools can reduce energy use while improving operational efficiency.

Digital operations now account for 2% of global carbon emissions, a number comparable to the aviation industry. Addressing this challenge through digital sustainability efforts can not only mitigate environmental harm but also contribute to operational efficiency and cost savings.

The Case for Digital Sustainability

The business case for digital sustainability goes beyond environmental responsibility. It encompasses direct financial benefits, enhanced brand reputation, and stronger investor relations.

Business Benefits

Brand reputation

Consumers and investors increasingly value sustainability. Companies aligning with these priorities build trust and loyalty. For instance, a 2022 study by Nielsen showed that **73%** of global consumers are willing to change consumption habits to reduce environmental impact.

Cost efficiency

Streamlined websites can reduce the amount of space needed on a server to host them, leading to lower hosting costs.

Customer retention

88% of customers will be more loyal to businesses that support social or environmental issues. This loyalty often translates into long-term revenue growth.

73%* of global consumers are willing to change consumption habits to reduce environmental impact.

The Case, continued

Business Value Correlation

1 Business value

Investors are rewarding companies that integrate ESG strategies into their operations. A Schroders analysis [NC1] from 2022 found that businesses excelling in environmental sustainability are valued at **25** times their earnings, compared to 17 times for less sustainable counterparts. This reflects confidence in the long-term success of environmentally conscious companies.

2 Stock & share value

Companies that publicly announce eco-friendly actions, like launching recycling programs or cutting emissions, often see their stock prices increase by an average of 0.84% over two days. Investors view these actions as beneficial for the company's reputation and long-term competitiveness.

In contrast, announcements of environmentally harmful behaviour, such as oil spills or pollution incidents, typically result in stock prices dropping by an average of 0.65% over the same period. This reflects the financial and reputational risks associated with these events.

These trends show that sustainability matters to investors. Positive environmental actions can build goodwill, while harmful behaviour increasingly carries steep financial consequences, reflecting growing public and regulatory pressure for corporate responsibility.

The Case, concluded

ROI Improvements

Companies that have robust sustainability strategies see an **18% higher** return on investment when compared to those firms who don't implement sustainable practices.

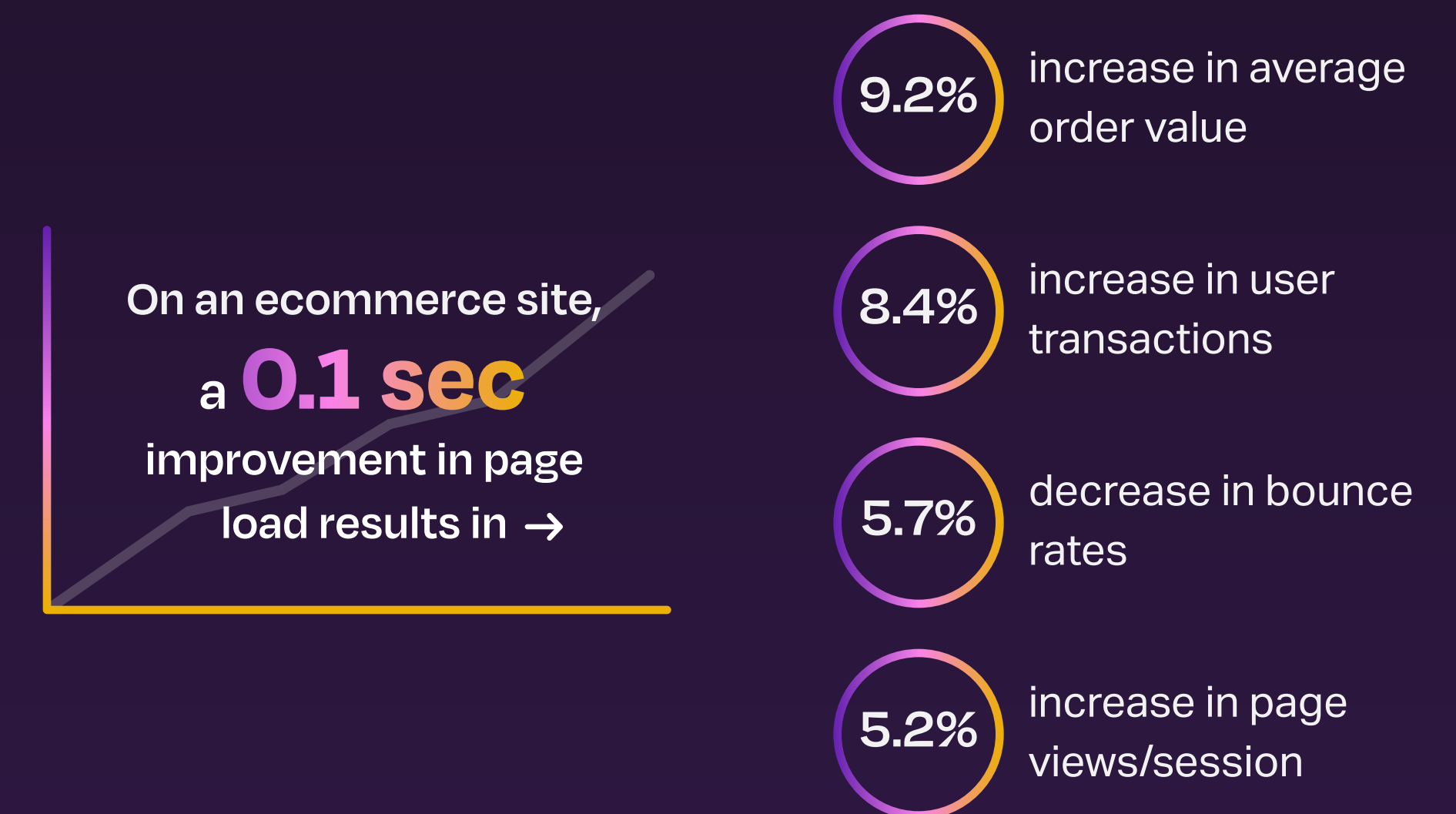
By introducing environmental initiatives within your business, you not only allow your brand to stand out and offer customers something different within the market, but with the higher ROI, your business can invest in new technology, staff or green campaigns. This allows you to widen the gap between you and your competitors and create a significant competitive advantage.

Enhanced Brand Awareness

Sustainability efforts provide excellent PR opportunities. Announcements of environmental wins, especially when backed by measurable results, can generate positive media coverage and SEO benefits through backlinks to your site.

Site Speed Improvements

Improving the sustainability of a website goes hand in hand with faster loading times, so there is additional value to businesses embracing digital sustainability.



Meanwhile, a **0.1 second** improvement on
a lead-gen website results in **5.5%**
increase in lead generation

Challenges in Introducing Digital Sustainability

Everything we've covered so far underscores the impact of digital sustainability on business performance. While the positive outcomes are well-documented, businesses must navigate several challenges to achieve meaningful progress. Addressing these obstacles not only strengthens sustainability initiatives but also unlocks long-term benefits that far outweigh the hurdles.

Initial Costs

The Challenge

Implementing digital sustainability measures often requires upfront investment. This includes costs associated with upgrading infrastructure, transitioning to renewable energy-powered hosting, and integrating energy-efficient technologies.

For smaller businesses, these expenses may seem prohibitive, potentially delaying short-term returns and creating hesitation

Why It's Worth Overcoming

While the initial investment can be high, the long-term savings in improved website performance and lead generation, energy costs, and reputational benefits, often outweigh the expense.

Companies that adopt sustainable practices early are also better positioned to meet future regulatory requirements, avoiding potential penalties or rushed adjustments. What's more, embracing digital sustainability attracts eco-conscious consumers and investors, driving loyalty and increasing market share over time.





Challenges, continued

Communication Gaps

| The Challenge

Many organisations struggle to effectively communicate the value of their digital sustainability efforts to internal and external stakeholders. Without a clear narrative and transparent reporting, these initiatives risk being perceived as superficial or failing to secure the necessary buy-in from employees, leadership, or customers.

| Why It's Worth Overcoming

Clear and effective communication fosters trust and engagement. By aligning stakeholders through transparent reporting frameworks and consistent updates, businesses not only strengthen internal collaboration but also enhance their brand's credibility in the marketplace.

A well-communicated and measurable digital sustainability strategy can inspire loyalty, differentiate the brand, and serve as a powerful tool for attracting talent and partners who prioritise sustainability.

Challenges, concluded

Resistance to Change

The Challenge

Resistance to adopting digital sustainability measures can arise from employees, leadership, or other stakeholders who are accustomed to traditional practices. This resistance often stems from a lack of understanding about the benefits or fear of disruption to established workflows.

Why It's Worth Overcoming

Addressing resistance builds a culture of adaptability and innovation. By involving stakeholders early, offering education on the benefits, and demonstrating tangible outcomes, businesses can foster a more collaborative and future-focused mindset. This cultural shift not only supports sustainability goals but also enhances overall organisational resilience.

Measurement and Accountability

The Challenge

Establishing robust metrics to track digital sustainability efforts can be challenging. Businesses may struggle to identify meaningful KPIs, leading to a lack of accountability or difficulty in demonstrating progress to stakeholders.

Why It's Worth Overcoming

Developing effective measurement systems allows organisations to showcase progress and adjust strategies as needed. Clear accountability instils confidence among stakeholders and ensures continuous improvement.

What's more, comprehensive reporting can highlight the ROI of sustainability initiatives, proving their worth to sceptical investors or leadership.

Digital Carbon Footprint Audit: The Foundation

Auditing is the first step toward effective digital sustainability. A comprehensive digital carbon footprint audit establishes a baseline, allowing businesses to set measurable goals and track progress.

Why Audit?

Understanding your current impact is crucial for developing targeted digital sustainability strategies. We've seen reductions as high as 89% for some of our clients as a result of our digital sustainability service.

Our Audit Process

1 Assess Website Size

We evaluate the volume of data being transferred and calculate the entire carbon footprint of your website.

2 Hosting

We'll check to see if your site is being hosted by a green hosting provider, as this typically reduces carbon emissions by around 9%

3 Best Practices

We'll identify and share opportunities to streamline media and code, and to reduce resource intensity where possible.



Recommendations for Reducing Digital Carbon Footprint

Adopting best practices can significantly lower the environmental impact of digital operations.

Here are some actionable steps:



Hosting and Infrastructure

- 1 Use renewable-energy-powered servers to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
- 2 Optimise data centres by adopting energy-efficient cooling systems and hardware.
- 3 Leverage virtualisation technologies to reduce physical server needs.



Content Optimisation

- 1 Compress Files: Reduce file sizes for faster loading and lower energy use.
- 2 Simplify Navigation: Streamline user journeys to minimise data transfer.



Website Design and Development

- 1 Implement lightweight coding practices to reduce resource demands.
- 2 Use streamlined UX/UI designs to enhance user experience while minimising energy consumption.
- 3 Prioritise mobile-first design to ensure efficiency across devices.

Measuring Success Post-Implementation

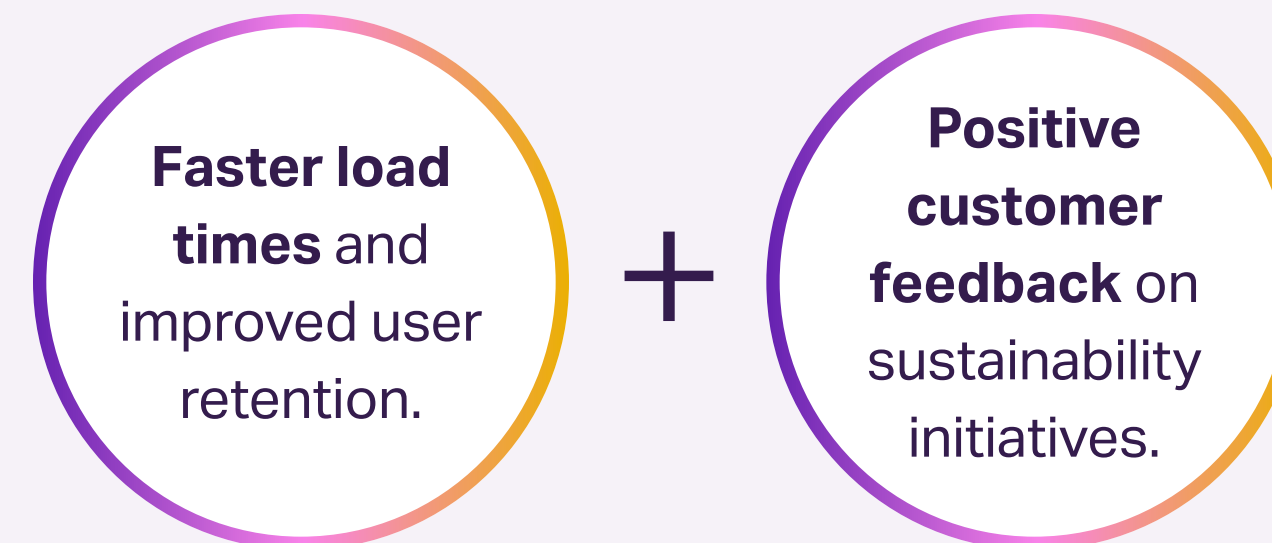
Sustainability efforts must be monitored to ensure their effectiveness. Measuring success involves comparing results against initial baselines and assessing broader business outcomes.

Follow-Up Audits

Conduct regular audits to evaluate progress. Tracking emissions reductions ensures continued improvement and identifies new opportunities for optimisation.

Business Performance Metrics

Beyond environmental metrics, sustainability efforts can improve business outcomes, including:



Is your business ready for the digital sustainability shift?

Digital sustainability is no longer just a trend, it's a strategic necessity.

Businesses that fail to optimise their digital operations risk higher costs, weaker investor confidence, and reduced competitiveness. By embracing sustainable digital practices, you can drive efficiency, enhance brand reputation, and create long-term value for both shareholders and stakeholders.

At Elixirr Digital, we specialise in helping businesses navigate this transition. Our expertise in digital sustainability ensures that you not only reduce your carbon footprint but also unlock new opportunities for growth and innovation.

The next step?

Take control of your digital impact today. Get in touch with our team for a comprehensive digital sustainability audit and start your journey toward a more efficient, responsible, and future-proof business.



Call us today on **0845 450 2086**
email **info.digital@elixirr.com**

