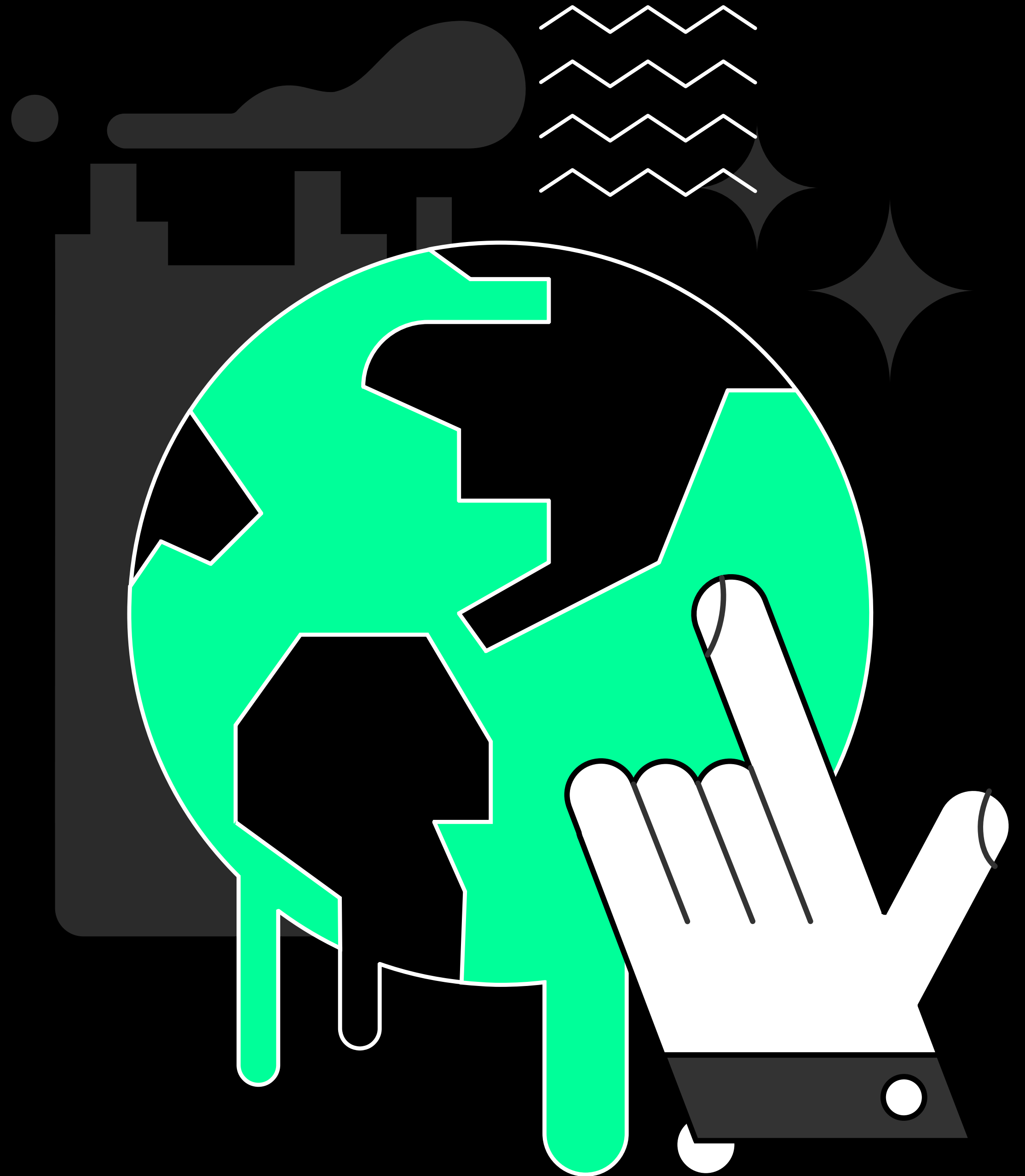


Company Emissions



Welcome

In the fight for climate, the corporate sector plays a critical role, while at the same time bearing a heavy chunk of responsibility. Ultimately, it's a matter of survival for businesses: climate change and extreme weather events have a direct impact on 70% of all [economic sectors worldwide](#). Good business and climate action is now one and the same thing.

For a while now, most companies tackled their emissions by simply measuring them, then buying carbon offsets in order to declare themselves “carbon neutral”. That's not enough anymore; not for the climate, not for shareholders and employees, and definitely not for consumers.

In this playbook, we take an in-depth look at how any company can contribute to the global goal of achieving net zero emissions and

building a safe climate future. We describe the steps employees can take to put this goal at the centre of their company's strategies.

We know that each company's climate journey is different, just like every individual is. We'll help you meet your company where they are, and take the next step towards **bold and equitable** climate action.

Of course, a company's wider influence runs deeper. Every business model either enables or constrains climate progress, through the clients it serves, the products it makes and the capital it directs. While this playbook doesn't dive into those serviced, financed and enabled emissions, it sets the groundwork: getting your own house in order is the baseline for the bigger, systemic work to come.



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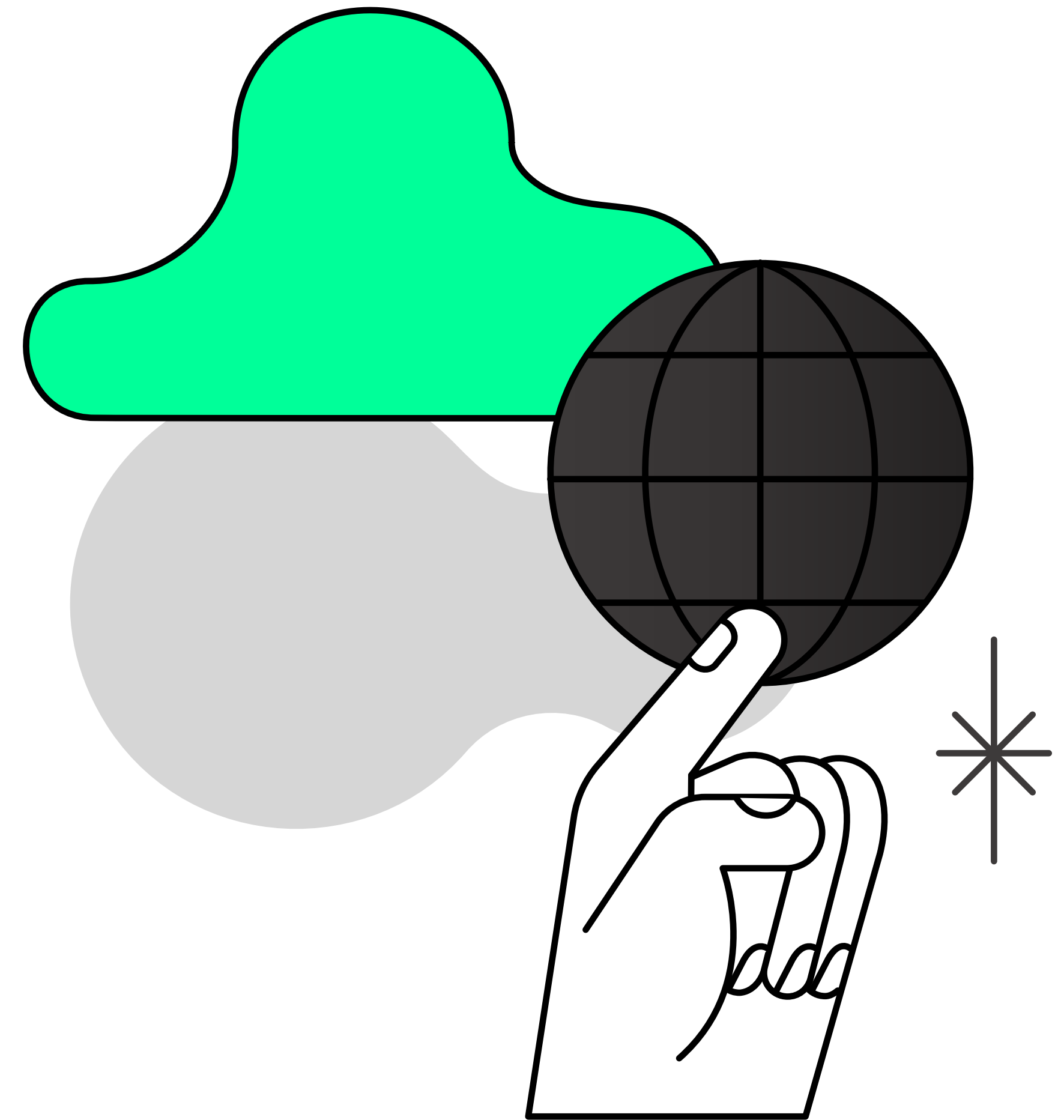
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Get smart



“The cumulative scientific evidence is unequivocal: Climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health. Any further delay in concerted anticipatory global action on adaptation and mitigation will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all.”

Setting the scene

This quote is from the 2022 [IPCC report](#), which represents the latest and most sophisticated analysis of climate change. The message is pretty clear: no more debate, no more equivocation, we need to act now.

It's a lot to take in, we know. And it can feel overwhelming at the best of times. But you're here because you've made the decision to step up to the plate. You're here because you're committed to using the influence you have to make a positive impact. That's amazing, and we're glad to have you with us.

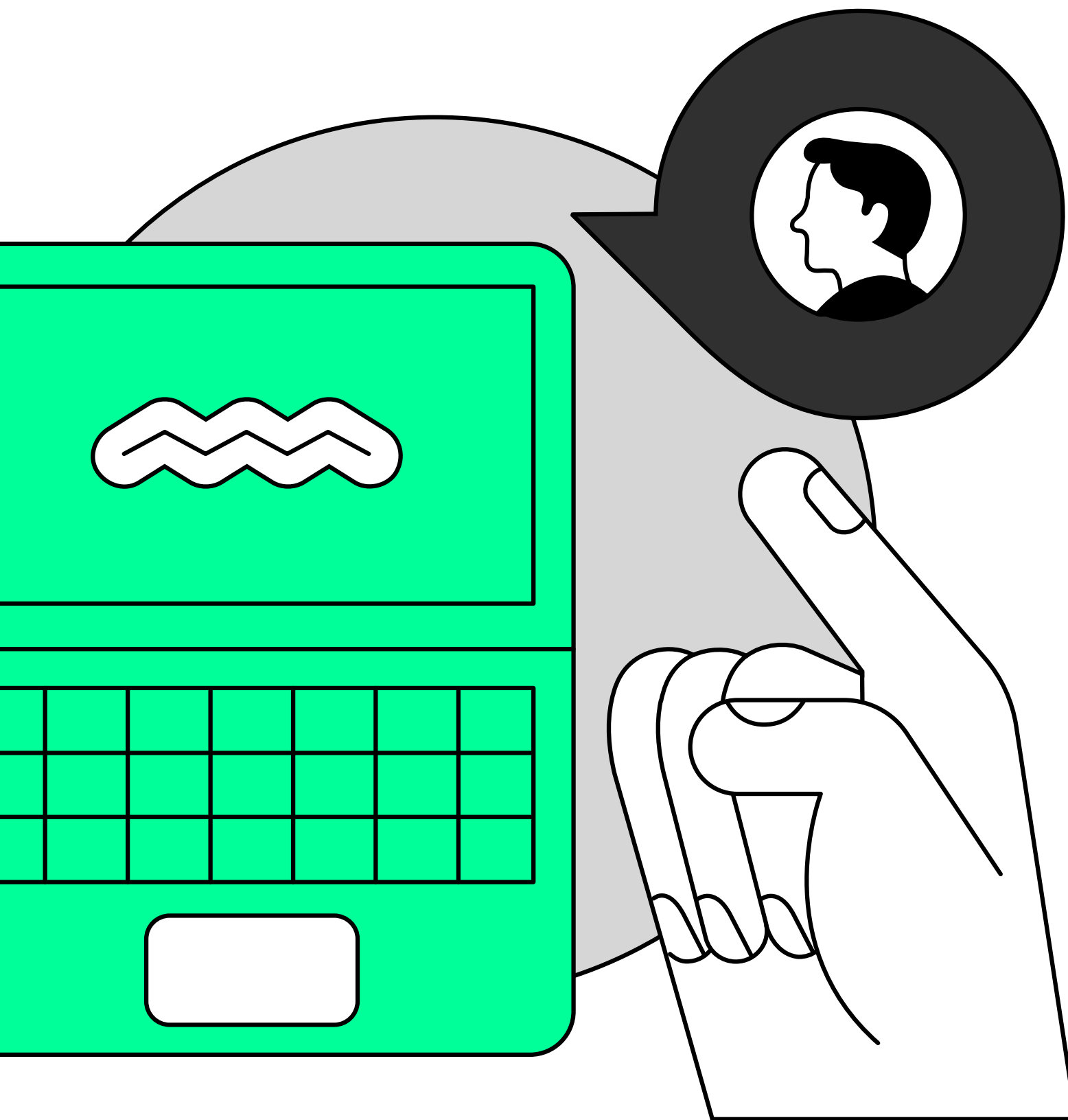
Science tells us that halving our global emissions by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050 is basically our best shot at securing a

liveable future. In other words, if we don't get this right, nothing else really matters.

So what can we do about it? Well, there are two main levers we can pull when it comes to emissions:

- 1. Reduction:** Emit less CO₂e into the atmosphere in the first place
- 2. Increase Carbon Sinks:** Develop carbon removal and sequestration projects

A meaningful corporate climate plan tackles both these levers. Let's see how this needs to play out and let's do this!



Why choose this goal as an employee?

Typically, company emission reduction goals sit within sustainability teams, but if we're realistically going to hit these targets, we need everyone in the organisation working together. Every employee can and should leverage their unique skills to advocate for stronger emission reduction efforts.

Is this the right goal?

Every company needs to cut carbon. For some companies, the bulk of the impact lies with how they engage with their customers - who they choose to work with, and the type of work they do for them. Think about the biggest opportunity for your company, and what simple actions can bring about meaningful change.

Things you need to know right off the bat:

- **Anyone can do this.** The people who make change are the ones who try. You already have more expertise and power to build your case than you know. The most important thing is to get started.

- **Community is key.** You're not alone in this. People working for companies of all sizes and sectors are concerned about the climate crisis. They're looking for ways to take action. This means there are probably others in your workplace who also support the establishment of an ambitious climate commitment. You'll be more successful when you get together with a few colleagues and have a team of voices working together.
- **This is a journey.** Reducing emissions is not a one-off initiative. It's a dynamic process that will mobilise the entire company and has transformative potential. The trick is to take it one step at a time.

What is a climate plan?

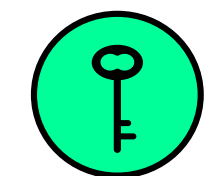
First we need to understand what makes a credible and robust climate plan. A **corporate climate plan** generally has three steps: **Measure, Reduce, Contribute**. We're going to run through each of them below.

Measure

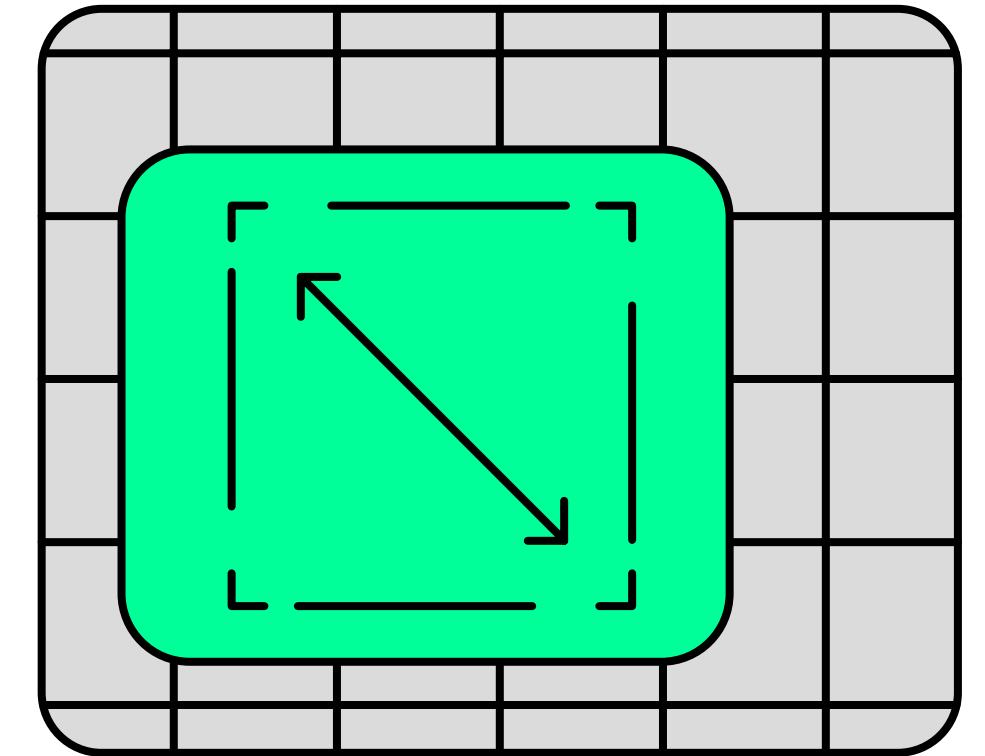
A [2025 BCG study](#) found that over 80% of companies report economic benefits from decarbonisation, with some capturing a return on investment that exceeds 10% of revenue.

Unfortunately, this is not translating into a growth in target setting. In 2025, only 7% of companies reported emissions comprehensively across Scopes 1, 2, and 3 - down from 9% in 2024 and 10% in 2023. Similarly, the number of companies setting targets to reduce emissions across all scopes decreased three percentage points year-over-year since the high of 19% in 2023.

But as the saying goes: what measured gets managed, so this step is still a crucial part of the process.



[SOLUTIONS GUIDE: CARBON MEASUREMENT](#)



What are emissions scopes?

Emission scopes define the boundaries for the calculation of the carbon footprint. In other words, they represent exactly what's being counted.

The Greenhouse Gas Protocol defines three different scopes, or categories, of emissions:

Scope 1 Direct emissions from things that are owned by your company, like emissions from burning fuel to drive company-owned vehicles, or natural gas used to heat your office.

Scope 2 Indirect emissions from consumption of purchased electricity, heating, cooling and steam, such as electricity used to power your warehouse.

Scope 3 Basically everything else. Scope 3 divides the value chain into “upstream” (production and transportation of products and services) and “downstream” (the use and disposal of products by customers)

Reduce

For a while now, most companies tackled their emissions by simply measuring them, then buying carbon offsets in order to declare themselves “carbon neutral”. That’s not really enough anymore; not for the climate, not for shareholders, and definitely not for consumers. Companies now are expected to lift their game and implement high-impact reduction initiatives in order to align themselves with a low-carbon future.

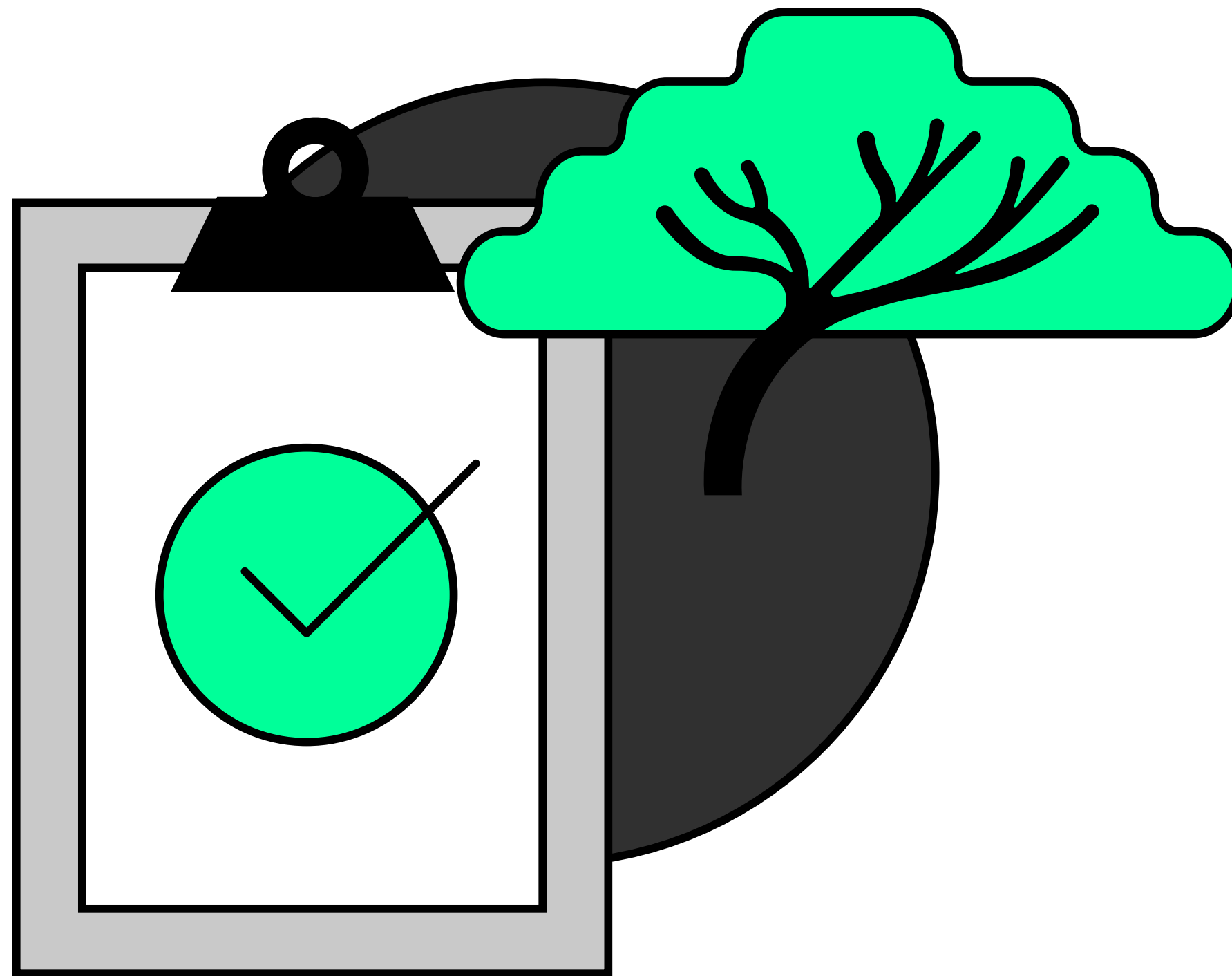
Here’s a few examples of things that can have a significant impact on your operational and value chain emissions:

- **Switching to 100% renewable energy:** We have a playbook all about this goal. You can download it [here](#).
- **Decarbonising the supply chain:** Scope 3 emissions often represent the bulk of a company’s emissions, which makes decarbonising your supply chain a huge opportunity. Companies should prioritise suppliers that are making the largest efforts in this area. They can also encourage their vendors to take action by making climate disclosures mandatory.
- **Reducing business travel:** Two years of a global pandemic have shown that it’s possible to run a business without physical meetings. Consider which business travel is truly essential, and try to limit flying to meetings whenever possible. Encourage employees to consider alternatives to flying.

Contribute

This is the last piece of the puzzle, and should only be considered for emissions that truly cannot be reduced today.

Companies can fund projects that either reduce emissions or remove carbon from the atmosphere. This ties back to our second lever: increasing carbon sinks and sequestration projects.



So what about Net Zero?

Since the Climate Strikes in 2019, there have been a plethora of pledges by companies and countries to address climate change. Despite this, global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. According to the UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2024, the full total across all sources reached around 57.1 Gt CO₂-eq in 2023, up about 1.3% from 2022, with increases seen in almost every sector.

The problem is exactly what you might expect: lots of noise and very little action.

The reality is that most organisations' commitments are not adequately addressing the challenge. Here are the three most common pitfalls when it comes to corporate net zero claims:

1. **Setting a vague, distant target** ("Net Zero by 2050" is currently the most popular one) with no near-term accountability. The convenient thing about setting a target far in the future is that it can be the next CEO's problem. We need immediate reductions and interim targets.
2. **Relying on problematic carbon offsets to achieve targets.** Though carbon offsets are an important part of the puzzle in reaching global net zero, they should only be used as a last resort, for truly unavoidable emissions.
3. **Having a strong commitment but no plan to achieve the target.** Without proper climate literacy training, few leaders really understand what it takes for a business to achieve its decarbonisation goals. (That's where this playbook comes in.)

Further reading

[Why the world needs better climate pledges](#) - Jonathan Foley from Project Drawdown



What is Net Zero?

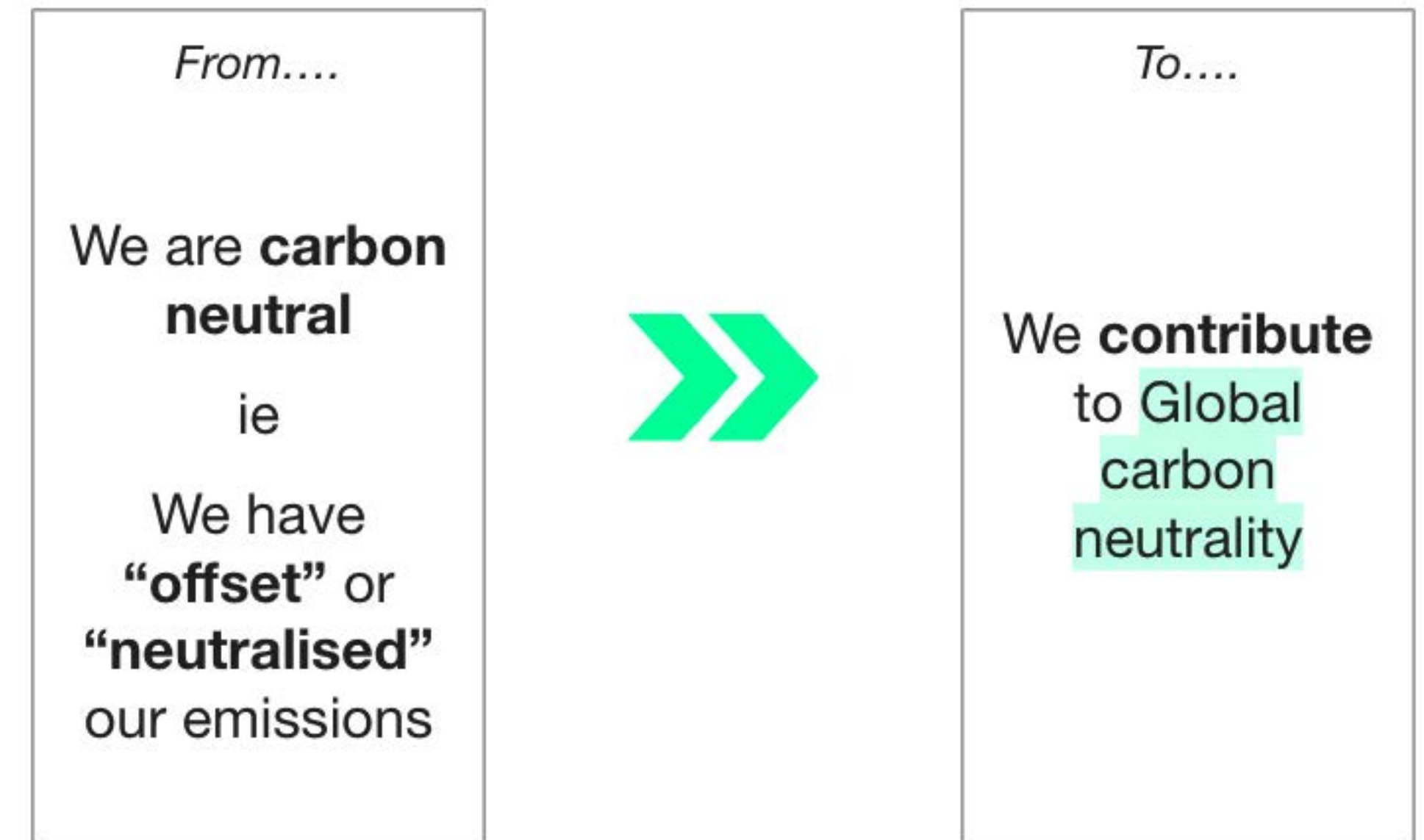
Net Zero, or carbon neutrality, is defined by science as a balance between anthropogenic (i.e. human-made) CO2 emissions and anthropogenic CO2 removals. In its scientific definition, it really only applies at the global level. Net Zero has been extended to countries, in the context of the Paris Agreement, but when it comes to corporations, the concept loses some of its substance.

Can a company be Net Zero?

Net Zero has been extended to companies to mean a balance between the greenhouse gas emissions a company produces versus those taken out of the atmosphere through carbon sinks. Most of the time, 'net zero' and 'carbon neutral' are used interchangeably.

In theory, net zero implies that carbon emissions have been reduced to their absolute minimum, with offsetting only used as a last resort. But practically speaking, this is hard to do, because there's no formal way of measuring what "absolute minimum" actually means.

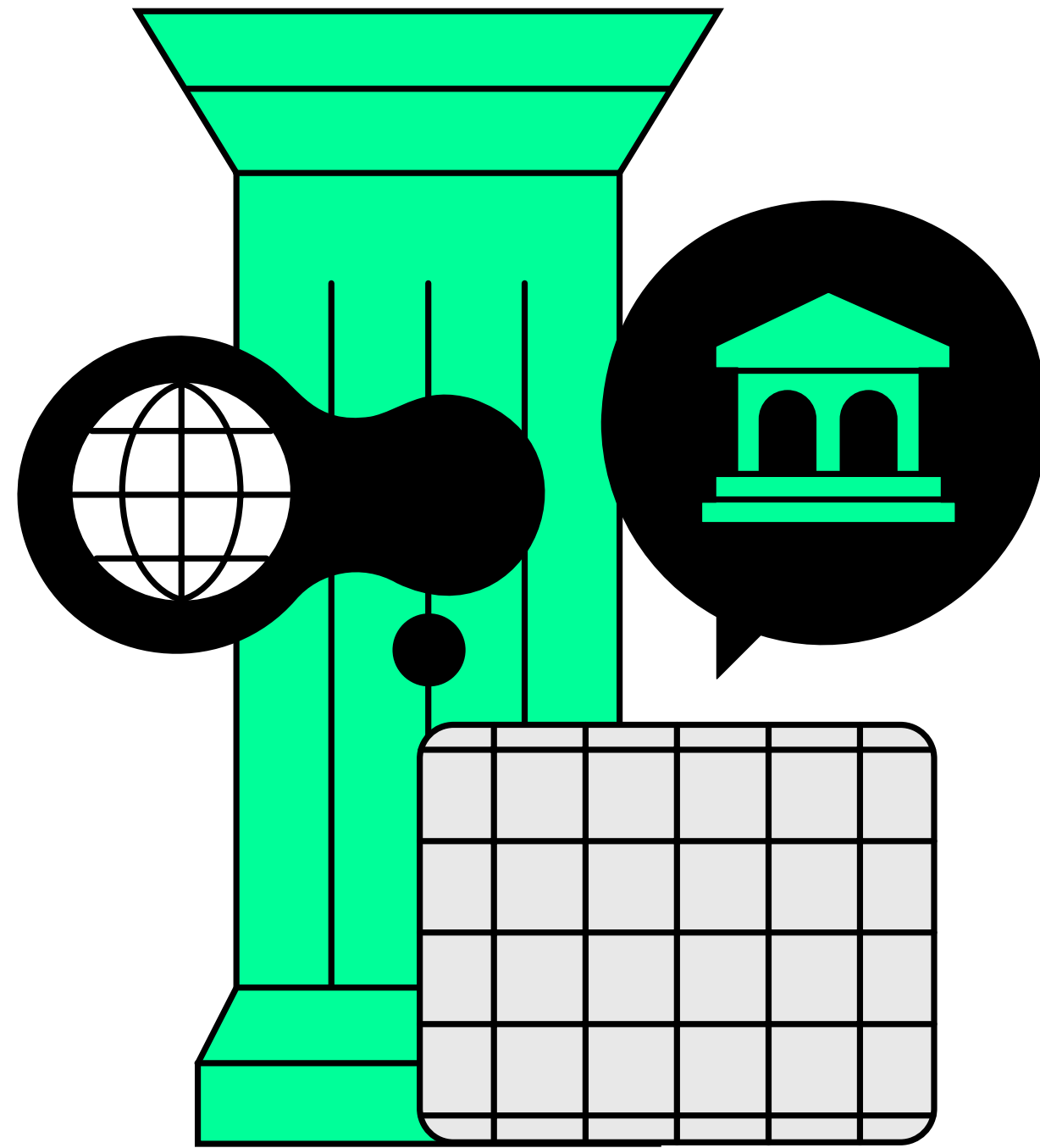
As a result, an increasing number of climate organisations are calling for a shift in paradigm, pushing the corporate sector to rethink its approach to carbon neutrality. It looks like this:



Further reading

[Net Zero Standard](#) by the Science-Based Target Initiative





What are the benefits for companies?

Having a strong climate plan doesn't come at the expense of profits or growth. In fact, it's one of the smartest strategic moves a business can make. There are clear, measurable benefits (both short and long term) to reducing emissions and aligning your company's operations with a low-carbon future.

Recruit and retain talent

Employees increasingly want to work for organisations that take their values seriously. Companies that demonstrate genuine environmental and social commitment have an advantage when it comes to attracting and retaining talent. [A Deloitte study](#) found that around a quarter of people say they've considered switching jobs to work for a more sustainable company, or one with a smaller environmental impact. A similar proportion say they'll weigh a potential employer's stance on sustainability before accepting a role.

Cut costs and drive efficiency

Taking action on emissions often leads to practical improvements: less waste, lower energy bills, smarter procurement. Reducing travel, improving supply-chain efficiency, and switching to renewables all save money over time. What begins as a sustainability initiative often ends up making the business leaner and more resilient.

Boost innovation and competitiveness

When teams are tasked with finding lower-carbon ways to operate, they often uncover new products, services, or markets. By embedding sustainability into your business model, you can open up space for innovation and long-term growth.

Strengthen reputation and trust

Customers, investors, and partners are increasingly looking for climate credibility. Companies that act with transparency and integrity build stronger brands and attract loyal supporters. A solid emissions strategy demonstrates accountability and future-readiness in a way that marketing alone can't.

Future-proof your business

The global economy is shifting fast toward low-carbon standards. Regulations are evolving too, with governments and financial systems increasingly expecting transparent climate plans and credible emissions data. The earlier your organisation acts, the easier it'll be to adapt to new expectations, investor demands, and supply-chain requirements.

Climate Justice

Addressing the climate crisis is about more than just emissions. It's about making a just transition and addressing the structural inequalities that created the crisis in the first place.

Climate justice is about recognising a simple truth: that climate change disproportionately affects communities who contribute little to the problem. These communities also disproportionately live with the key drivers of climate change, including the mining and burning of fossil fuels, air, land and water degradation, and industrialisation. As is often the case with climate disasters, the people causing the problems are rarely the ones picking up the tab.

As companies take action to reduce their carbon footprints, they also need to put climate justice at the centre of their plans and make sure they address the potential impacts of their actions on marginalised communities.

So how will this look? Well, let's start with the type of offsets purchased by companies. [Nature-based solutions](#) and [emission reduction](#) projects often require the use of land that belongs to Indigenous people, who in many cases have not given their consent.

A more effective strategy might be to invest in strengthening the land rights of Indigenous people, who tend to be the most effective guardians of ecosystems, and the carbon they contain.



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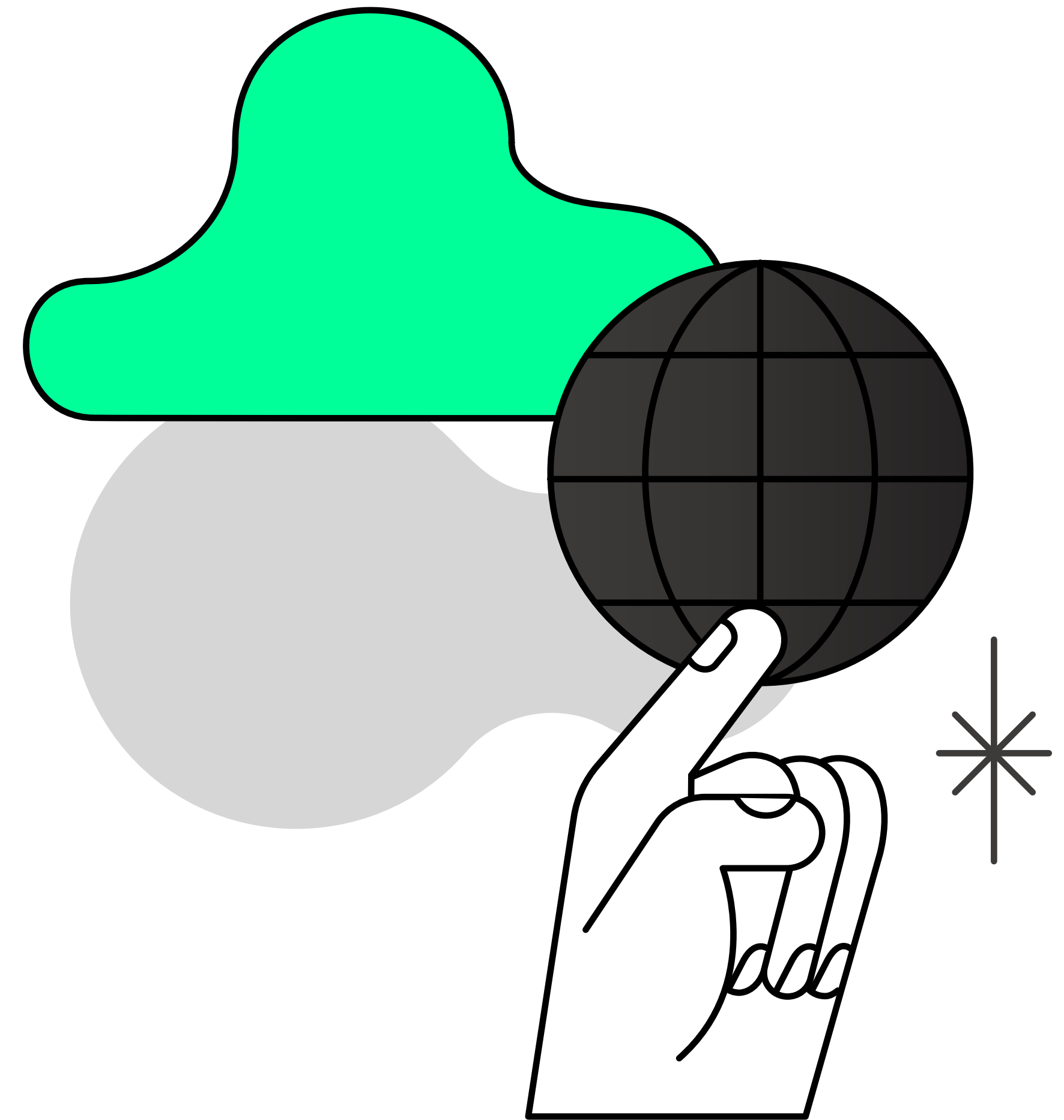
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02 Get help

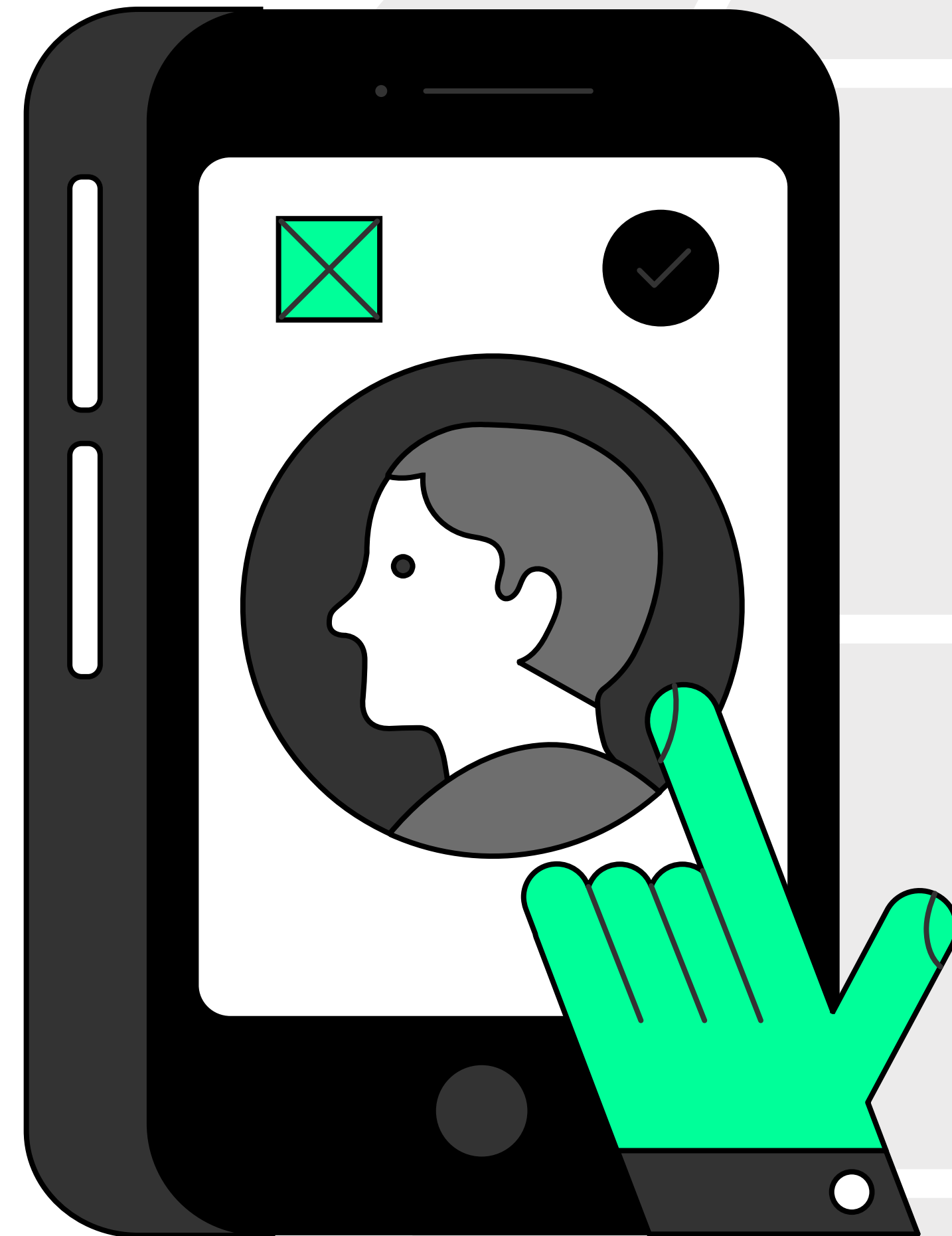


Build your team

Why build a team?

Building a small team of two or three people to work together means you can:

1. **Collaborate.** A few people will be able to lean on each other for support and divvy up the tasks of research and customising your proposal as you get ready for a meeting with decision-makers.
2. **Show power.** When you meet with leadership to make your case for a meaningful climate plan, having a team with you will show that this is a broader issue for employees.
3. **Have fun!** Many people become friends with members of their working group, and rely on it as a source of support and social connection. Climate anxiety is a real thing, and having a community can definitely help.



Find your first supporters:

Talk to the three easiest people first.

Your closest co-worker, your teammates, your manager (if you have the right relationship). The goal of talking with them is to find out what they think about advocating for climate stability, and to get a sense of their interest in working with you. Ask questions, listen to concerns, and try to find some common ground.

Reach out beyond the people you know.

If you're at a big company, do some research. Is there already a sustainability group that meets? Is there a bulletin board or Slack channel where you can post a note and have people contact you? Maybe a group that meets at lunch-time where you could make a quick announcement?

Hold an informal meeting.

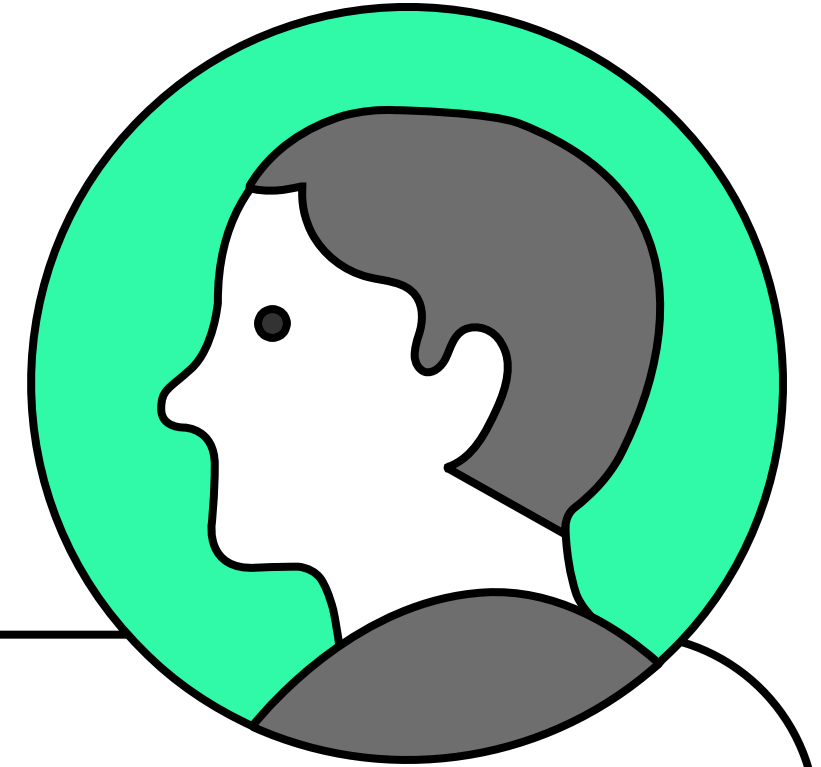
Invite people to gather together for a brief (or virtual) coffee break, and ask them to share their hopes for a strong net zero plan. Ask them to join you in working towards your goal. Invite them to create a working group with you and don't leave the first meeting without a set time in the calendar to meet again, perhaps in one week.

Create a working group.

Get your group to define your set of demands (see below) and meet with leadership (or other decision-makers). Set a regular time to catch up – maybe every week or two – and divide the work into specific roles. If someone wants to be part of the group but can't take on much of the work, include them in the process by hearing their thoughts or including them in the meeting with decision-makers.

When forming your working group, think about representation. How representative of the demographics of your workforce is your group? Are you listening to all voices and taking their views to leadership?

A lot of working groups are underrepresented by people of colour, Indigenous people, or non-binary folks. And yet the climate crisis tends to disproportionately impact exactly these communities! Those most impacted by the problem must have a seat at the table.



Experts and mentors

We'll help connect you with others that can help at critical points along the way such as:

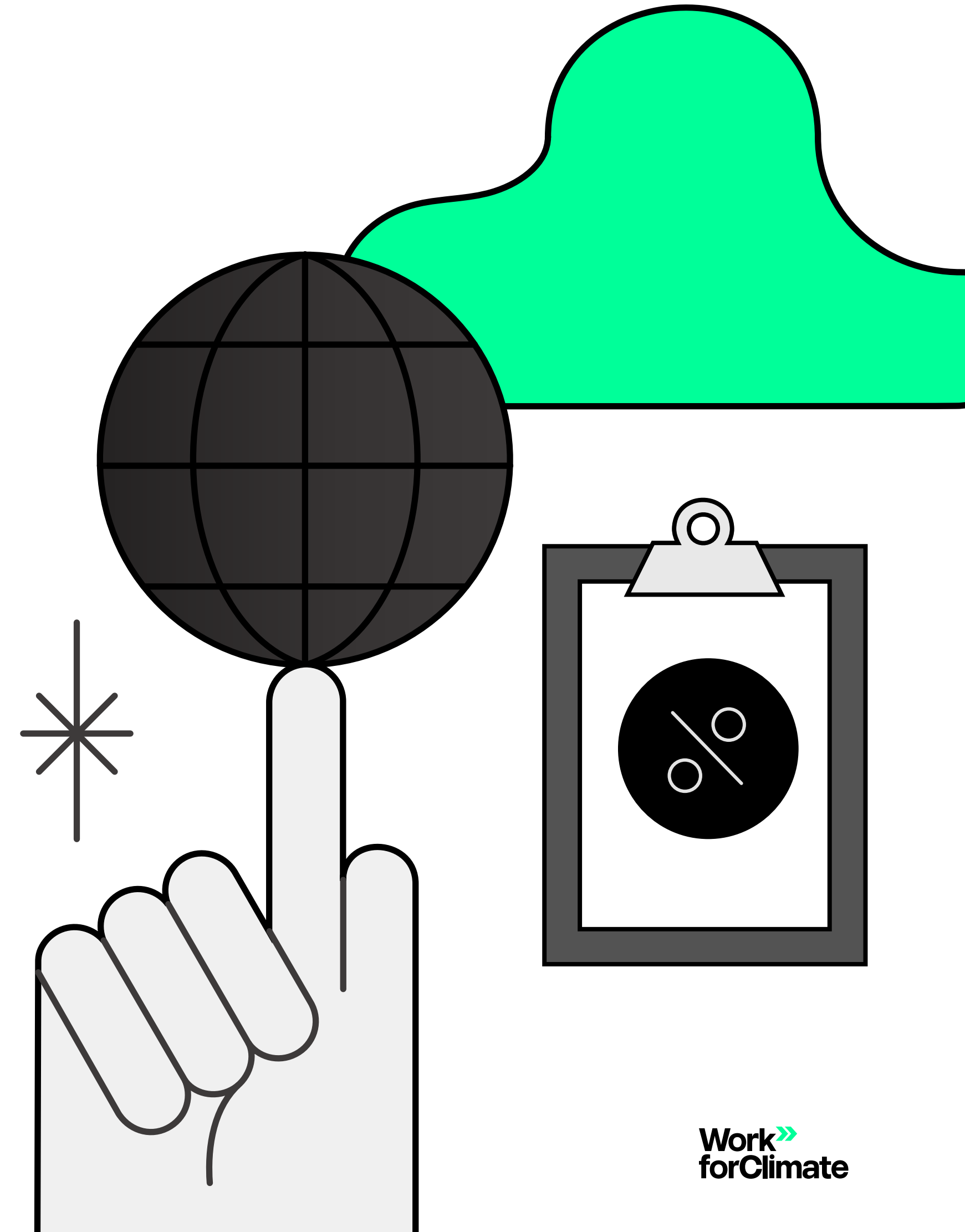
Corporate sustainability professionals: learn from people who have already completed this work at their companies and are experts in the field.

Consultants: For companies with a complex operations, hiring consultants is a good idea.

If you would like to be connected with climate strategy experts or sustainability mentors, please get in touch by email at info@workforclimate.org

03

Build a plan



Understand your company's climate goals

Having a thorough understanding of your company's current policies and goals on climate, as well as the broader context (e.g. what your competitors are doing, what policies the company supports) will set you up for success. So start researching!

Does your company have explicit sustainability goals? Are there existing net zero commitments or emission reductions mandates? Our [Emissions Pulse Check](#) can help you assess your company's current emissions and spot opportunities for improvement.



[TEMPLATE: EMISSIONS PULSE CHECK](#)

Also check out our Case Studies with analysis of corporate commitments.

Define your “ask(s)”

You need to define what you're actually asking your company to do. This is your 'ask'.

Asks for the Emissions goal tend to fall under one of four categories:



1.

Measure impact & start reducing

This is the bare minimum. If your company isn't yet calculating their corporate carbon footprint, your initial goal should be to start this process and establish an emission reduction plan. Just remember, reporting itself is not an end goal, it's just the first step. Action is all that matters.

2.

Commit to robust targets

Perhaps your company is already measuring their impact, but it feels more like a box-ticking exercise, and there's no explicit commitment to reducing emissions. In this case, your goal should be to get the company to make a public commitment to net zero, with a near-term emission reduction component (e.g. five years, ten years and so on).

3.

Raise the bar on the commitment

If your company has already made a commitment, your 'ask' may be making it more ambitious. This could take several forms:

Expand the scope of the commitment (to include supply chain emissions, for example)

Bringing the target forward or having an interim target

Asking for stronger reductions, instead of relying on offsets

Asking for a 'science-based approach' (i.e. having the commitment validated by [SBTi](#))

4.

Align business strategy with commitment

"The rapid acceleration of corporate climate pledges, combined with the fragmentation of approaches means that it is more difficult than ever to distinguish between real climate leadership and unsubstantiated greenwashing."

This quote comes from a report by [The New Climate Institute](#), published in February 2022, that analysed the climate pledges of 25 of the world's largest companies. It found that an overwhelming majority of corporate climate commitments lacked transparency and integrity, and fell well short of the ambition required to align with the internationally agreed goals of the Paris Agreement.

In other words, most companies talk a good game, but very little work is actually being done.

Companies tend to underestimate how significant efforts need to be in order to stick to the Paris agreement goals. In this case, your ask might be to make sure there's a clear plan in place to achieve your goals, and to increase overall stakeholder engagement towards climate objectives.

Powermap - who's the decision maker?

Who decides sustainability and climate goals at your company? You need to figure this out if you're going to push for change. Power Mapping is a process to determine who has the power to create change. If there is a Head of Sustainability / Chief Sustainability Officer at your company, they are probably your key decision maker. But there may be a few more people to get on-board - the Chief Financial Officer, for example.

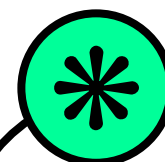
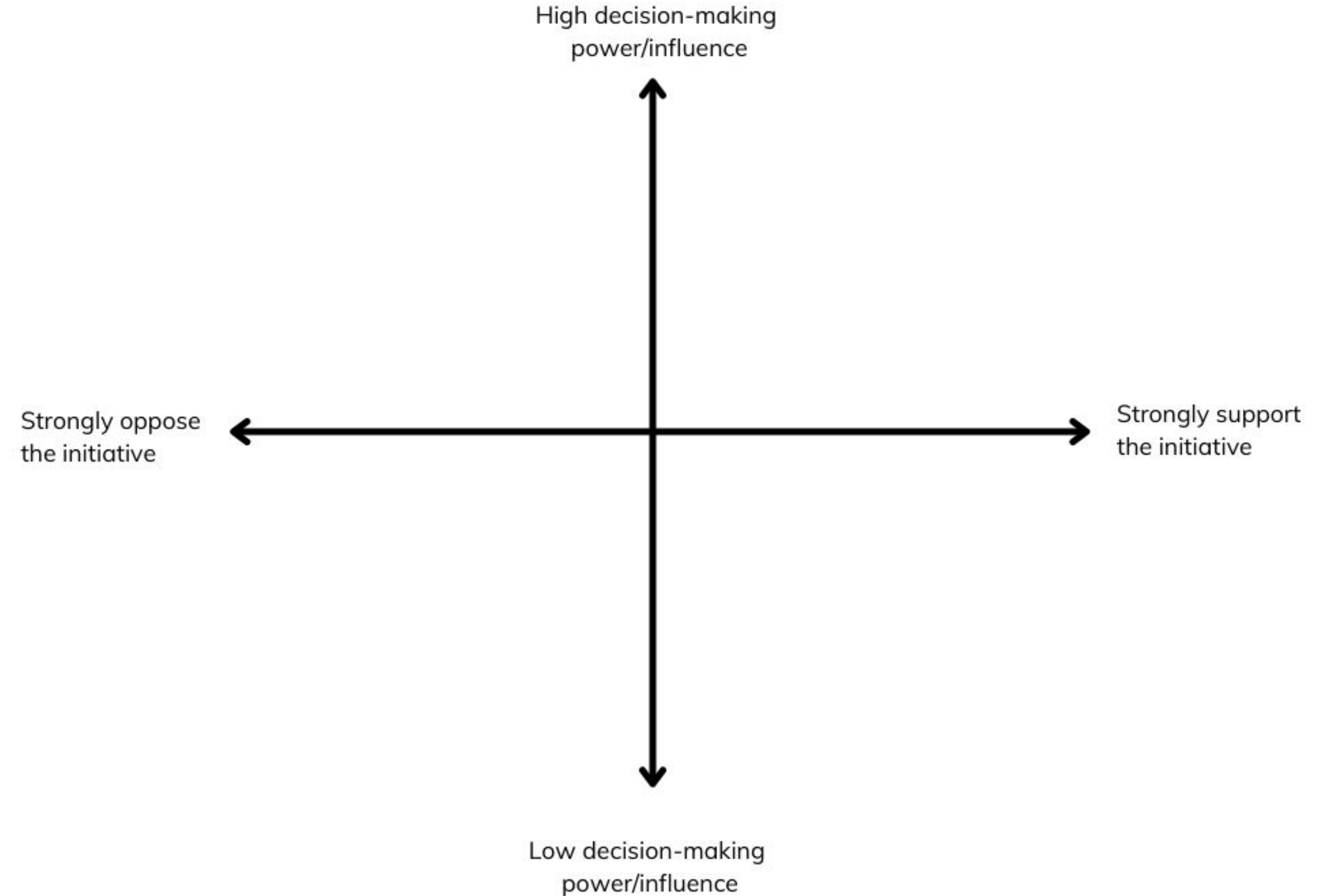
For every ask, start with these Powermap questions:

- Who has the power to make this change?
- Who do they listen to?
- What do they care about?
- What are they most proud of at your company?

Once you have a list of key decision makers, you can map them against an axis of:

- (a) Influence over the decision
- (b) Level of support for the goal

It is helpful to map the key influencers within the organisation, and where they sit on the axis relative to the decision makers; getting their support will help you build your case and create the environment for change to occur.



[You can use our power toolkit to build your own power map in your workplace](#)

Next, draw your pathway to success. It might look like this:

Decision Maker	Cares About	Listens to
Chief Sustainability Officer	Alignment with overall company climate commitments	CEO, employees
Chief Finance Officer	Return on investment from sustainability activities, alignment with overall company strategy and goals.	CEO, employees
Chief Executive Officer	Alignment with overall company strategy and goals, alignment with overall company climate commitments.	Department Heads, Employees

Most likely you will also need to engage with other stakeholders at the company; people who aren’t the decision makers, but will be impacted by decisions made, and whose buy-in you’re going to need. This might be:

Team or role	Purpose	Type
Procurement	Knowing about energy use details, operating footprint etc. Managing supplier contracts.	Essential
Communication, PR, Marketing	Promote company climate goals to consumers. Build awareness. Attract business.	Supporting

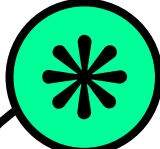
Influencing change

As you build your plan and carry it out, you will need to motivate, inspire, and influence people throughout your organisation. In most cases, making this change will require extra work for people, and you may encounter resistance.

Think about:

- Why might someone want to work on this? What’s in it for them? Has anyone been outspoken about climate at your company that you might enlist?
- How is climate change already affecting the company, or how will it in the future? Has your company taken a position on climate? How can you connect achieving this goal with the company’s broader mission and values? Can you write it into the blueprint and connect it back to the origin story and goals?
- Who is going to resist this change and why? Can you understand their objections and fears early so you can mitigate them?

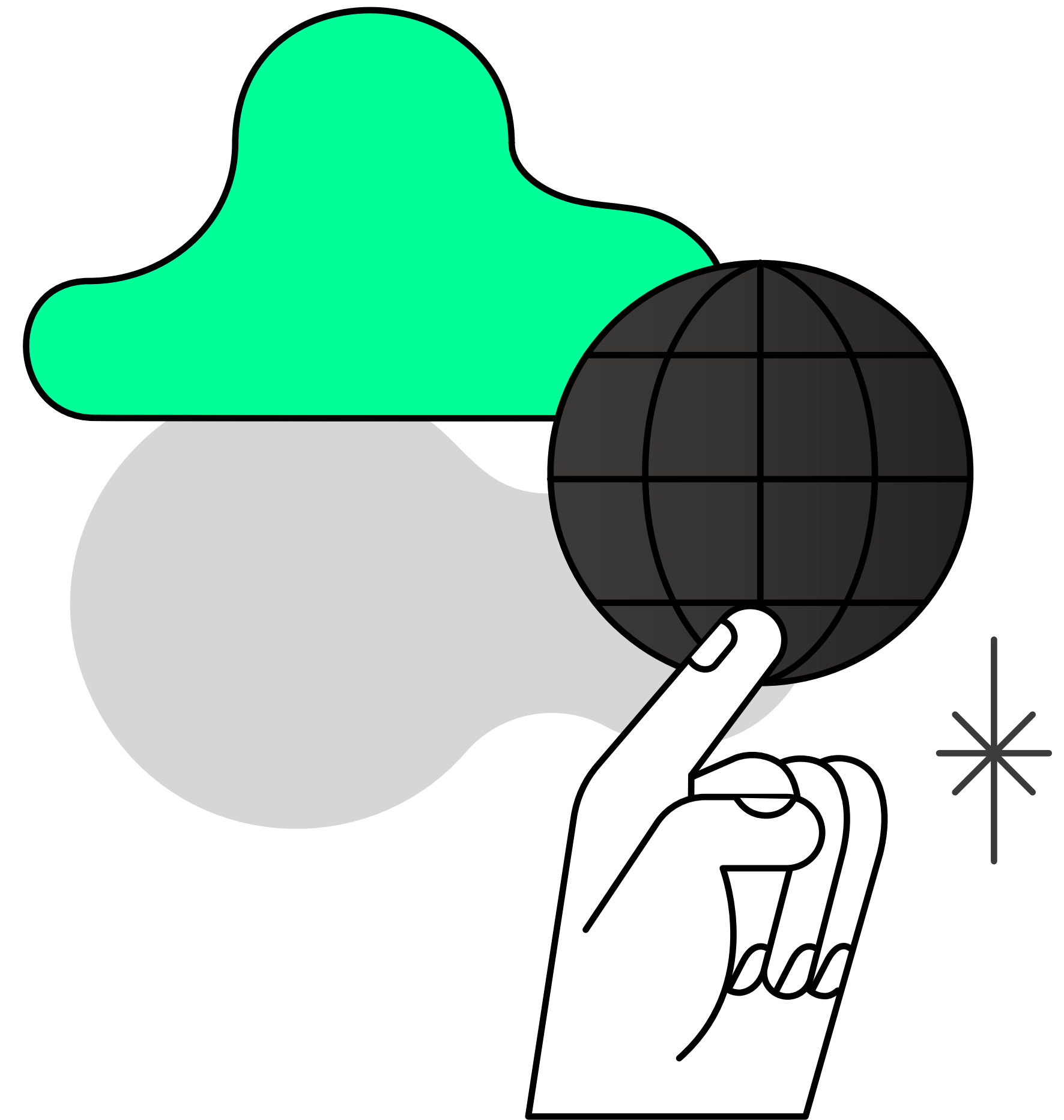
You’ll need to flex this muscle most during approval steps, but you’ll want to be working on it all along the way.

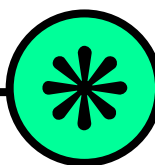
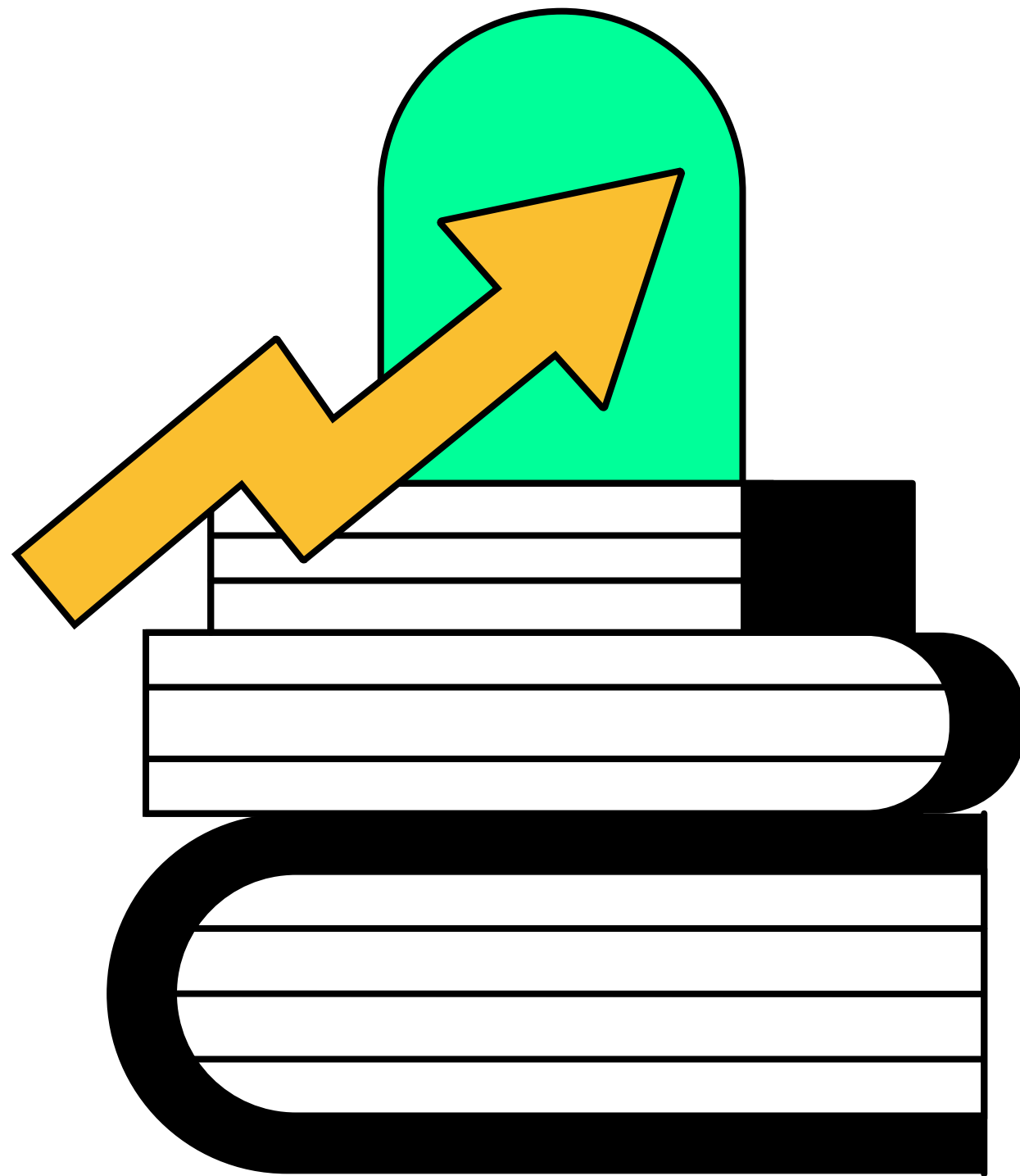


Want to go deeper into internal influence, power mapping, or strategy and tactics to unlock climate action? Check out our [Climate Leadership at Work Playbook](#) for tools on building momentum and making the case inside your company.

04

Execute the plan





Want some further guidance on different tactics you can use - and how to escalate them successfully? Check out our [advanced climate leaders guide to changing your company from the inside out](#)

Building collective power

Once you've formed your working group, identified the decision makers and thought about your set of demands, you need to figure out how to make your case. In a lot of ways, this is the most important step of all!

First up, you need to understand that this kind of change probably won't happen overnight. And that's okay. The trick is to get the ball moving, then maintain pressure and momentum.

Depending on what your company's current climate record is, achieving your goals may need to happen in stages, and you may need to focus initially on organising and building collective employee power within your company.

Here are some potential tactics you can use to spur company-wide discussion before making a formal ask to leadership:

An employee survey. One of our early WorkforClimate cohort participants, David McGlade, was successful in [switching his entire company to 100% renewable energy](#) by initially running a staff survey, and discovering that 85% of employees at his workplace supported the change.

A sign-on letter. An open sign-on letter is a very effective tactic to build collective power. It gives you a compelling story to take to management. Here are some examples of successful sign-on letters:

- The [open letter](#) from Amazon Employees for Climate Justice.
- The [letter to the CEO](#) from employees at Immediate Media, a UK media company.
- The [open letter](#) from McKinsey employees urging the company to stop supporting the planet's biggest polluters.

The response to these first tests will help you assess the likely success of your formal ask.

For inspiration on how to build collective power in your organisation, check out this guide from Maren Costa of [Amazon Employees for Climate Justice](#)

Meet with your company decision maker(s)

Request a meeting to discuss your ask(s) with the Chief Sustainability Officer, or another key decision-maker you've identified. Whether or not you've met with them already, tell them the topic of the meeting ahead of time.

Follow-up + Persist!

It is rare to achieve change after the first or second meeting. Know that deciding on and incorporating a new climate plan may take a few months, depending on the size of your company.

This is an exciting time and opportunity for you to work together with your company's leadership to implement meaningful change, align with your company's values, and to ensure a more sustainable future for us all.

Persistent follow-up and support are often very important to ensuring that your work comes to fruition. Here are a few tips for strong follow-up:

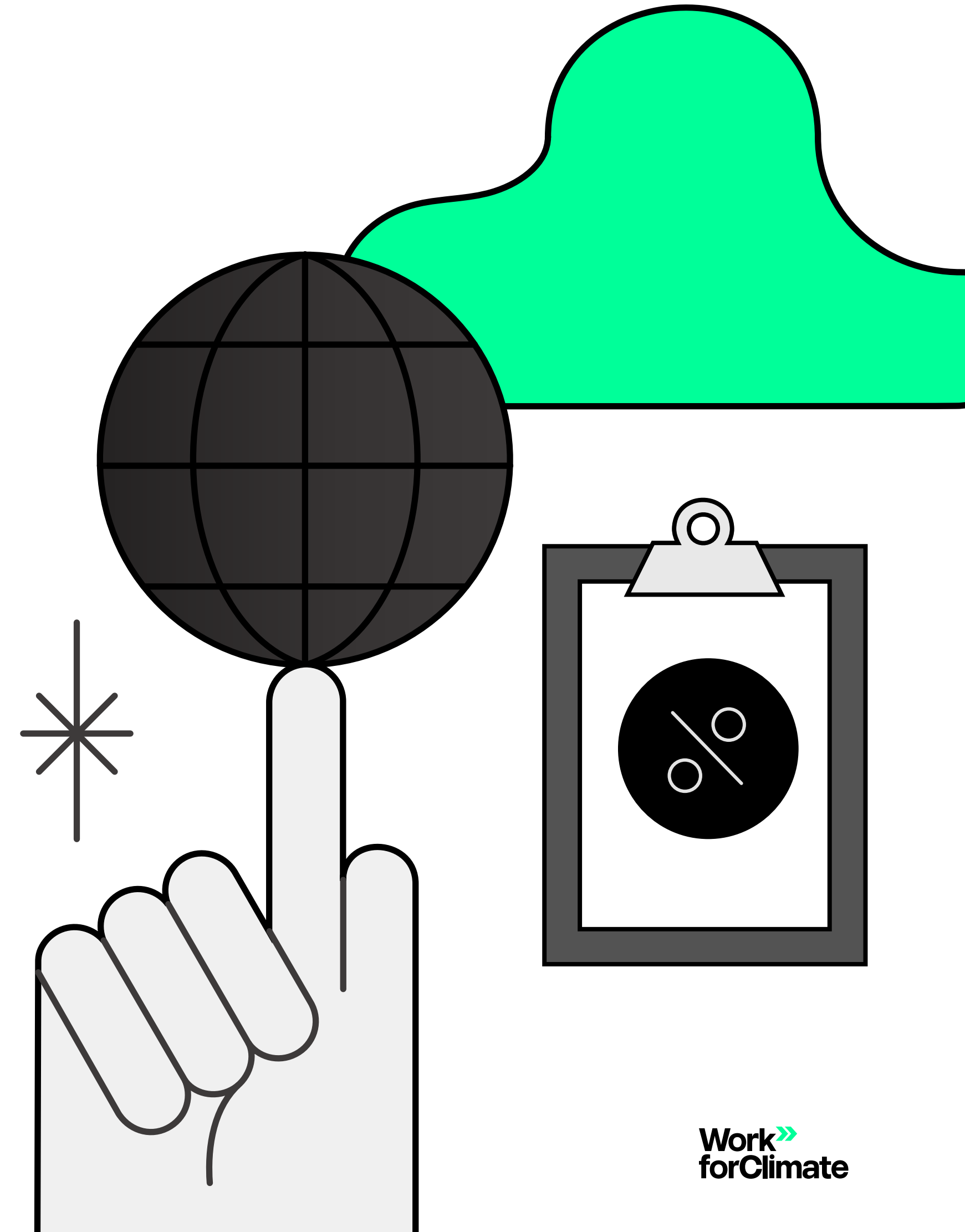
- Confirm with the decision-maker the specific next steps and put them on a calendar.
- Clarify what further information or research is needed, as well as who is gathering it.
- Offer to provide resources or help with researching answers to their questions.
- If they aren't proactively following up with you, then pop into their office or send them a message to ask again "what are the next steps and how can I be of help providing resources or support on this?" Reaffirm your appreciation for their time, commitment to implementing a climate plan, and eagerness to work together to make it happen.

Expanding your working group to include your organisation's senior leadership and creating a game plan to leverage your corporate brand, values will make all the difference.

If you get stuck, please get in touch with us by emailing info@workforclimate.org. You can also schedule a meeting with one of our team members here.

05

Celebrate



Share the impact

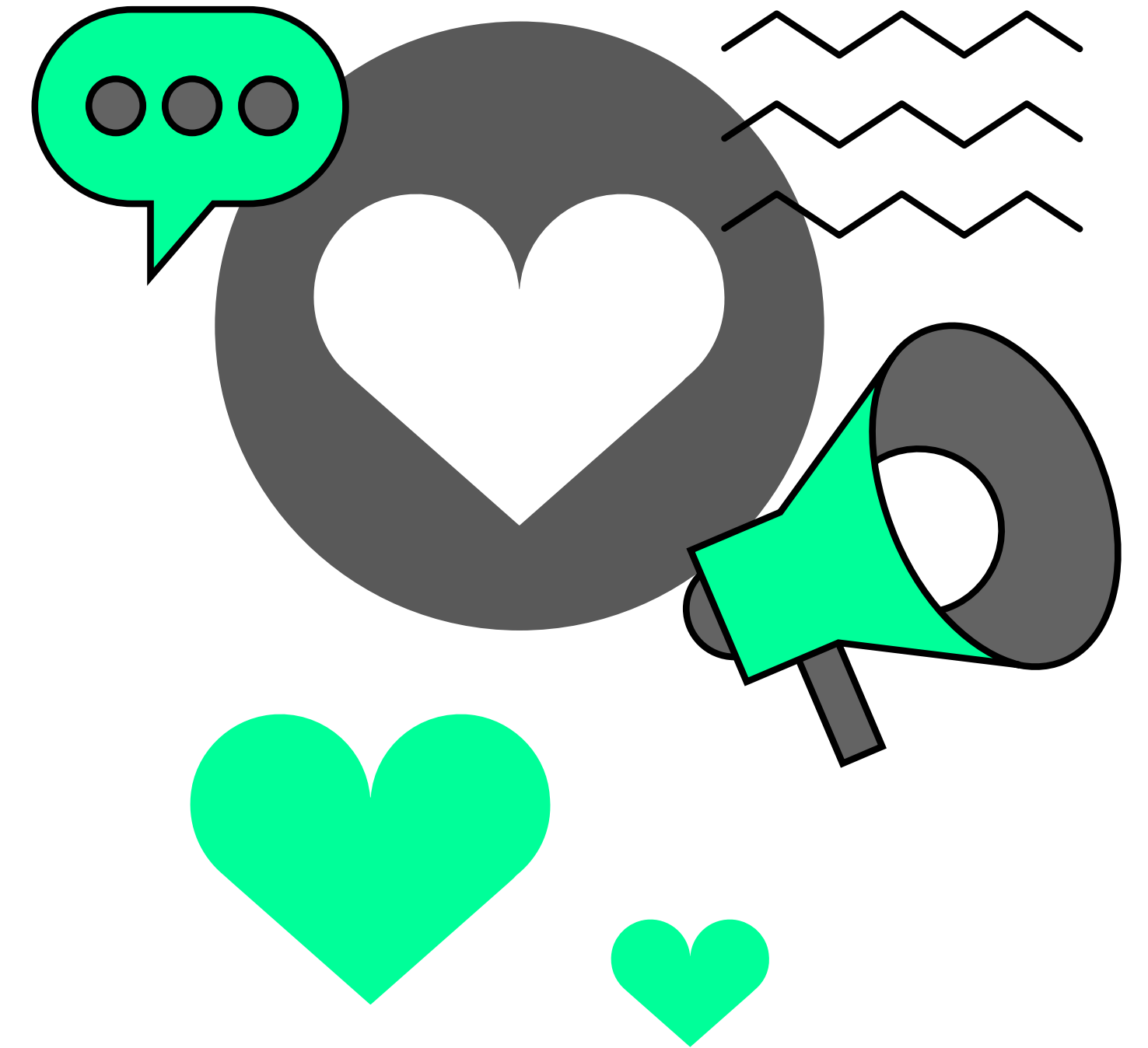
Having a strong climate plan has impact internally and externally, and you can magnify it further through effective communication and advocacy.

You will want to work with your PR and Communications team on how best to represent this commitment externally. We suggest making a public statement through a press release or blog post indicating the commitment and timeline. Sharing externally like this reflects positively on your company, and also adds to the groundswell of companies committing to a climate safe future, putting pressure on others to follow suit.

Evolve your action with the next “ask”

Unlike some of the other impact-focused goals we advocate for, such as switching to 100% renewable energy, reducing emissions is an on-going journey. Your company will not be “done” with this goal until the whole system has collectively reached the global goal of net zero.

For you, this means that you will need to keep working with everyone in the organisation to continue to learn about new ways to reduce emissions, set new ambitious targets, exceed them...then start again.



Resource summary

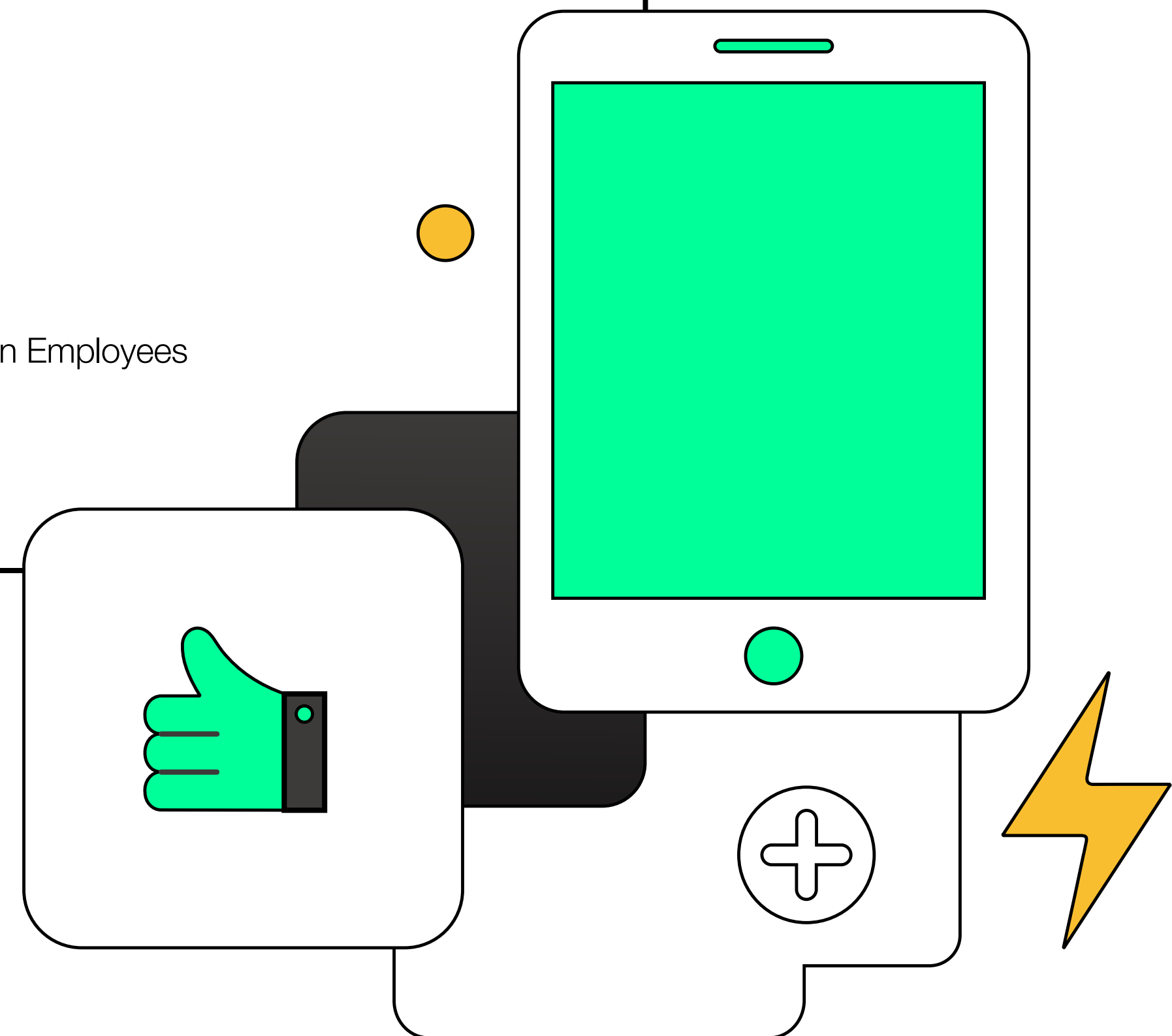
Here are all resources mentioned in this playbook:

[Solutions Guide: Carbon Measurement](#)

[Template: Emissions Pulse Check](#)

[Case Studies](#)

[Toolkit - Tech organising for climate justice](#) - by 350.org & Amazon Employees for Climate Justice.



Get in touch today to:

- Be connected with experts, coaches and mentors to make the case
- Give feedback on the playbook
- Share insights and success stories

BOOK A 1-1 CONSULTATION

info@workforclimate.org

