

FEATURED IN



Ask the Execs

Leading Green

Four executives from this year's 100 Best Green Workplaces in Oregon share how sustainability shapes company culture, operations, employee engagement and more.



CARLY COLGAN
CEO, Best-Reduced Habitat for Humanity



MICHAEL JONES
CEO/FOUNDER, Hartmann & Forbes

How do you encourage employees at every level of the organization to participate in and take ownership of your sustainability efforts?

Carly Colgan: We encourage employees to participate in sustainability efforts by connecting sustainability directly to the purpose and day-to-day realities of each area of our work, rather than treating it as a separate organizational initiative. In our retail operations, the ReStores, sustainability is closely tied to waste reduction, reuse and financial stewardship. Team members see firsthand how diverting materials from the landfill and maximizing donations not only benefits the environment but also strengthens revenue that supports our mission. In construction, sustainability is tied to building high-quality, durable, energy-efficient homes that create long-term stability for homeowners. Staff take pride in knowing that sustainable building practices reduce utility costs, improve home performance and contribute to healthier living environments for families. Within our administrative and support teams, sustainability is connected to operational efficiency, thoughtful resource use and long-term organizational health. This includes reducing paper use, improving digital systems, streamlining processes and making decisions that support both environmental responsibility and organizational sustainability over time.

Michael Jones: At Hartmann & Forbes, sustainability isn't a department. It is part of the company's culture and daily decision-making. Employees are encouraged to participate by feeling connected to the impact of their work, whether they are designing products, supporting clients, managing operations or handcrafting products. Through initiatives like Project Green, volunteer opportunities, internal education and company-wide sustainability goals, employees are empowered to contribute ideas and take meaningful action. Ownership comes from transparency and purpose. When people understand why sustainability matters — not only for the environment but for the health of our homes, communities and future generations — they naturally become invested in helping move the mission forward.

Sarah Wilcox Mason: "Walking Lightly on the Earth" is one of Softstar's core values, but it is not just about making sustainable leather shoes. We consistently evaluate our environmental initiatives and seek out new ideas for reducing our carbon footprint on every level. This includes not only the materials that go into our products but also the daily activities and processes used by our staff, the infrastructure of our building, our involvement with our community and many other seemingly small changes that add up to make a big impact.

Lynn White: Epson's purpose — to enrich lives and create a better world through efficient, compact, and precise innovation — and our guiding principles outlined in the Epson Way create a strong foundation for employee engagement in sustainability efforts. Preserving the natural environment with future generations in mind is embedded into how we operate as a company and how employees approach their daily work. We encourage employees at every level of the organization to participate in sustainability by

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HARTMANN & FORBES
EPSON PORTLAND

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CEO/FOUNDER
HARTMANN & FORBES

The activity was educational, creative and generally fun. It gave employees an opportunity to think differently about sustainability and connect it directly to their daily work. It also highlighted the wide variety of ways sustainability can show up across departments, from operations and construction to administration and retail.

The challenge increased engagement because staff felt ownership over the ideas instead of sustainability being something directed from leadership. It sparked cross-team conversations, generated practical improvements, and reinforced that sustainability is part of our organizational identity and culture, not just our construction practices.

Michael Jones: One practice that had a surprisingly powerful impact was creating more opportunities for employees to participate directly in environmental initiatives outside the workplace. Activities like tree planting, recycling drives, Solve Clean and community partnerships strengthened connections between teams in a very organic way. What began as sustainability efforts evolved into culture-building experiences. Employees felt proud to work for a company whose values aligned with their own, and it reinforced the idea that environmental commitments are not just messaging. They are lived experiences that bring people together.

Sarah Wilcox Mason: We've always focused on sourcing materials domestically rather than overseas to decrease our environmental impact and ensure we have high-quality materials. During COVID we experienced far fewer supply-chain issues compared to the many companies that depended on international sourcing.

Lynn White: One sustainability practice that had an unexpected impact on company culture was the level of employee engagement and shared purpose that developed through our waste-reduction and community-recycling initiatives. What began as operational sustainability efforts evolved into opportunities for employees across the organization to actively contribute ideas, participate in programs and take ownership of environmental improvements.

Employees became highly engaged in identifying new recycling opportunities, reducing waste streams, and participating in collection drives throughout the year. Two notable initiatives — including partnering to repurpose plastics into NewTrex® products and hosting Metro Hazardous Household Waste Collection

fostering a culture of shared responsibility, continuous improvement and collaboration. Employees are encouraged to reflect on how their personal values align with Epson's corporate purpose and environmental commitments, helping create a stronger sense of ownership and accountability. Sustainability is not viewed as a separate initiative but rather as an integral part of decision-making, operational practices, innovation and workplace culture across the organization.

What is one sustainability practice that had an unexpected impact on morale, operations or company culture?

Carly Colgan: A sustainability challenge that we ran across the organization had an unexpectedly strong impact on morale and culture. Each department was tasked with creating a new policy or practice that would contribute to sustainability within their area of work. Rather than simply submitting ideas, teams presented their concepts through skits during an all-staff meeting. What started as a sustainability initiative quickly became a culture-building experience.

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SARAH WILCOX MASON
Chief People Officer, Softstar Shoes



LYNN WHITE
HR Manager, Epson Portland

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I-Mobile
Salem
Employees: 450
Worldwide: 90,000
Overall score: 269.33
page its impact on the Mobile is committed to net-zero emissions by the company set a U.S. first by committing to

source 100% of its total electricity usage with renewable energy by the end of 2021, a goal it achieved and has continued to maintain each year since.

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Hartmann & Forbes	Mountain Rose Herbs	Green Acres Landscape	RoseVillas	Epson Portland	Bark Boys
Tualatin hartmannandforbes.com Oregon employees: 76 Employees worldwide: 30 Overall score: 276.68 The core of the business at Hartmann & Forbes is handcrafting products made exclusively from rapidly renewable materials. Over 30+ natural materials are woven into shades, textiles and wall coverings, such as arrowroot, bamboo, jute, palm and more. Shades are hand-woven using centuries-old techniques at their place of harvest in order to minimize their environmental footprint.	Eugene mountainroseherbs.com Oregon employees: 185 Employees worldwide: 195 Overall score: 277.14 This independently owned and women-led supplier of high-quality organic and fair-trade products was the first company in Oregon to receive the Zero Waste certification from Green Business Certification Inc. Not only did the company make history in its home state, it also achieved the highest available Platinum certification.	Salem greencreslandscapeline.com Oregon employees: 125 Employees worldwide: 130 Overall score: 273.81 The Green Acres mission is to provide an unequal/landscape solution and value to each client while always respecting and protecting the environment. The company offers full landscape options — from custom outdoor installations to maintenance solutions. — But are safe for kids, pets and the planet.	Portland rosevillas.org Oregon employees: 216 Employees worldwide: 215 Overall score: 269.24 This senior living community fosters a comprehensive environment and culture, including a commitment to eco-friendly design with two Zero Energy Independent Living neighborhoods. From an innovative greywater reclamation and water conservation system to comprehensive campus-wide composting and recycling programs, the RoseVillas team strives to incorporate ecologically sound practices into everything they do.	Hillsboro epson.com/hillsboro Oregon employees: 270 Employees worldwide: 270 Overall score: 269.00 Epson Portland takes a comprehensive approach to corporate social responsibility through effective use of energy and resources, employee engagement and corporate giving campaigns. The company manufactures with zero waste to landfill and is a partner-level participant in Portland General Electric's Clean WindSM power program.	Salem barkboys.net Oregon employees: 22 Employees worldwide: 22 Overall score: 287.56 This landscape company offers a post-order recycling service, accepting green waste brought to its facility such as grass trimmings, wood, fill dirt, soil and concrete. Wood debris is ground up for use in products such as particleboard, MDF, paper and charcoal briquettes, or as a fuel supply at a physical plant.