

A series of thick, teal-colored wavy lines that curve from the top right towards the bottom left, creating a sense of movement and depth.

**SOCIAL
SUPER
MARKET**

10-Step Impact Checklist

How to buy the best branded merchandise, every time.

Branded merchandise offers a remarkable opportunity for you to connect on a deeper level with your audience. As we've discovered in [our recent deep dive](#), we know the most important element of this is to select the right products – ones that are ethical, sustainable and high quality. Products that tell your story and deliver that deeper connection. Follow our 10-Step Impact Checklist and make the best decision possible on the promotional products that will elevate your brand and protect the planet.

Step 1 | What do you want to achieve?

Branded merchandise has the opportunity to converse with your recipients on a deeper level. Go beyond bottom line-only goals and maximise the potential for storytelling and impact measurement.

- What do you want your recipients to think, feel and do when they get their merch?
- How might your merchandise demonstrate your brand values?
- How will specific ESG goals be supported, communicated and substantiated as a result of the project?

Step 2 | Define your recipients and beneficiaries

With your primary objective in mind (e.g. awareness, customer loyalty, employee engagement), step into your recipient's shoes. What are their needs and wants? Then consider the other beneficiaries of your branded merch project.

- Can you accurately describe your personas and their needs and wants?
- Who else might be affected or supported? (beneficiaries/supply chain)

Step 3 | Don't spend, invest

Changing the perception of 'budgets and costs', to 'investments' will revolutionise your approach. You're not spending a budget, but investing in brand image, relationships and global impact.

- How much value do you place on the relationships you're developing?
- What are your non-negotiables for impact and outcomes?
- How might you de-risk the project to ensure the impact goals stay on top?

Step 4 | How **adaptable** are you prepared to be?

Being adaptable will enable you to meet all your goals without compromising your values. Planning ahead, allowing extra time and being flexible about the end product, will ensure the impact metrics stay front and centre,

- How might you leverage economies of scale or bulk ordering by being early?
- What alternative products could you consider (i.e. stamps over wrist bands)
- What other channels could you use to multiply your impact? (Digital?)

Step 5 | Can you **quantify** your impact?

You can't change what you don't measure. By doing an Impact Audit up front you'll be able to decide which product choices will have the most impact. Then, use impact measurements to determine and report your successes.

- First, complete an Impact Audit to determine the best product swaps
- Create a scorecard for 'must-have' and 'nice-to-have' features
- Create a comms plan for communicating impact internally and externally



Step 6 | Creates ripples of **change**.

Support your audience to adopt positive behaviours that help fight climate change or plastic pollution. Offering a reusable coffee cup or stationery for example, will not only will divert waste from landfill, but will inspire customers to continue make positive changes in their own lives.

- Research and shortlist 5 - 10 items that can delight & inspire change
- Source ethical brands and rank each against your scorecard
- Do the same for the products offered by the top 2 - 3 brands identified
- Create a product shortlist and assess the impact measurements
- Consider communications that engage your recipients with behaviour change

Step 7 | Can you maximise the **lifecycle**?

Products that avoid timestamps and that transcend trends are more likely to be used for longer – reducing their overall impact and increasing your ROI. Think reusable water bottles or quality tote bags. Be strategic in the placement of your branding to ensure it appeals to your audience.

- Check your product is not a response to a fad
- Digitally prototype the design for your product and branding
- Ask yourself “will this delight my intended recipient?” repeatedly
- Avoid timestamps that could reduce the lifespan of your merch

Step 8 | Think global, act **local**.

Consider the global impact of your choices on our climate and communities in the Global South, but take action within your local area. e.g. buy from local businesses or UK-based suppliers and reduce your carbon footprint.

- How close to your distribution channels are your products made?
- Are your chosen brand partners female or Global Majority-led?
- Is there a carbon offset programme if ordering from overseas?



Step 9 | Have you done your **due diligence**?

Be sure to evaluate your suppliers thoroughly for transparency and honesty – this applies to both local and overseas businesses. Ask for proof of social and environmental commitments or work with experts who can vet them for you.

- Get proof of social and environmental commitments (up-to-date certifications) from both your chosen supplier and the companies in their supply chain
- Look at reviews from other customers
- Interrogate all sustainability claims for greenwashing
- Get verification from a third party that all claims are being supported

Our top tip: Work with an impartial third party evaluator.

Step 10 | Seek **support**?

We understand there is a lot here, so if you're short on time or concerned about which elements are going to have the most impact, we can help.

After working with hundreds of businesses and introducing over 200,000 people to ethical and sustainable products sourced from verified brands, we have a tried-and-tested approach to finding that perfect item – and plenty of happy customers.

- Browse our catalogue
- Speak to one of our friendly team members
- Quickly get a quote that suits your needs
- Sit back and let us do the heavy lifting
- Get closer to your ESG targets

We help you plan, measure and share the impact of your purchases

Get in touch today

info@socialsupermarket.org



ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT



FEMALE-LED
BUSINESS



REPURPOSED



CHARITABLE
CONTRIBUTIONS



ECO
CONSCIOUS



BLACK-OWNED
BUSINESS



VEGAN



HANDMADE





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Build your Impact Scorecard

Examples of how to build your ethical and sustainable merchandise buying scorecard.

Product scorecard | sample

When sourcing high-quality and impact-led products you'll need to identify which features or elements are most important to your company. In order to make the best choice possible, consider using some of these hallmarks of sustainability. The more boxes you can tick – the better!

- Do they have high recycled content or use virgin material?
- Are the materials used renewable or organic (cotton, jute, flax or bamboo)?
- Are the ingredients vegan, biodegradable or free from toxins?
- Is the product recyclable, upcycled or compostable?
- Is the packaging minimal and recyclable?
- Is the product timeless and fad-free?
- Is it durable and well-made, with materials that will last?

Supplier scorecard | sample

Finding a sustainable and ethical product involves assessing the process by which the product was made. This means you'll need to dive into the company selling the product and their supply chain. Look for progressive brands with certifications to prove their claims. Some things to consider:

- Can they demonstrate a clean manufacturing process (chemicals, waste management etc)?
- Do they have Certifications like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for responsibly managed forests, or the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certification for organic textiles?
- Do they have a social mission or charity partnership?
- Are they Fairtrade, Fairwear or Leaping Bunny Cruelty-Free?
- Do they have a transparent and traceable supply chain? (who supplies their materials)
- Do they have a carbon offset programme for any shipping?
- Do they conserve water or use renewable energy?
- Do they have high labour standards?



Looking for support identifying products and companies who tick all of the boxes?

We have curated the largest collection of social enterprises to make it easy for your to shop your values without the guilt (or headache). Our social enterprises are vetted by us and verified by independent third parties too, so you can be sure you're getting the best quality while making a genuine impact.

Get in touch today

info@socialsupermarket.org