

Sustainability Progress and Kanter's Law

Introduction

Sustainability efforts often feel slow or discouraging, especially when progress seems invisible. However, understanding Kanter's Law—"Everything can look like a failure in the middle"—can help us reframe this perception and recognize the momentum we've built.

The Urgency of Sustainability

We need faster and broader progress on sustainability. While it may feel like we're stagnating, the reality is more nuanced. Even the backlash against ESG initiatives is a sign of their growing influence—opponents only attack what matters.

A Case Study: Coca-Cola's Goals

2011 Goal

- Target: Reduce absolute emissions from manufacturing operations in developed countries by 5% by 2015.
- Scope: Limited to Scope 1 & Scope 2 emissions, and only in developed countries.

Current Goal

- Target: Reduce absolute greenhouse gas emissions by [25% by 2030](#) through a Science-Based Target.
- Ambition: Achieve [net-zero](#) carbon emissions by 2050.
- Scope: Global, including Scope 3 emissions, with rigorous SBTi standards.

This shift represents a 4x acceleration in ambition and scope.



Barriers and Acceleration

And there has been real progress on the ground too. In 2025, the use of renewable energy to generate electricity [surpassed the use of coal](#) for the first time.

But despite real progress, the pace of change is still insufficient. That's why many focus on removing barriers—like ROI concerns—and deploying tools that make sustainability tasks 2x–4x faster.

Everything can look like a failure in the middle.

– Professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter

Kanter's Law in Action

Rosabeth Moss Kanter's insight is especially relevant now:

“Everything can look like a failure in the middle.”

We're no longer at the beginning of the sustainability journey—we're in the messy middle. But history shows that many successful transformations endure rough patches before breakthrough.

Conclusion

Progress is happening. It's not always linear or visible, but it's real. By recognizing where we are and pushing through the middle, we can accelerate toward a sustainable future.

The world is counting on us.