Green and Digital Innovations – Where to Start?

During the research conducted as part of the [Greene 4.0](#) 4.0 project across seven European countries (Italy, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, and Hungary), a total of 422 entrepreneurs were asked to rate their agreement with several statements on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 7 means "strongly agree":

- 4.3 – The cost of transitioning to sustainable production is too high

- 3.8 – The effort required for green transformation is too substantial

- 4.0 – Implementing digital technologies would be too complicated for our employees

Managers tend to view green transformation as a challenging and complex process. When asked about specific obstacles to adopting green and digital innovations, they pointed to a lack of funding, unclear regulations, and insufficient time to focus on new projects. These factors can indeed significantly limit - or even entirely halt - a company's ability to adopt new technologies.

However, beyond these external factors - money, time, and regulations - an equally fundamental element is awareness of one's own needs. Company leaders often aren't sure which areas of their business need change. It may sound like a cliché, but change really must start from within.

So, where should they begin? Start at the beginning, which means:

1. **Analysis: Build a Clear Picture of Your Company's Current State** Start by gathering as much data as possible to get a comprehensive view of your company's situation. Go beyond just numbers – consider employee feedback, stakeholder expectations, and customer insights. What are the recurring problems? How does your energy consumption compare to industry standards? The goal is to create a thorough snapshot of the present state, as it will serve as a foundation for future decisions.

2. **Definition: Transform Problems into Opportunities.** With detailed data in hand, you can identify and define key challenges. Move from general observations, like "high energy costs,"

to more specific issues, such as "outdated machinery consuming too much energy." This helps narrow down intervention areas and set a clear direction for change.

3. **Solution Exploration: Find What Works for Your Company.** Not every innovation will be suitable for your organization, and that's okay. Evaluate different options considering your company's size, resources, and industry context. If your goal is to optimize energy usage, explore energy management systems designed for industrial settings or tools for tracking and reducing CO_2 emissions. It's also worth looking at solutions from startups and smaller enterprises, as they often provide niche, highly effective technologies. Look for information in public sources—technology parks and other organizations frequently publish reports and directories of innovative companies.

4. **Prototyping and Pilot Testing: Bring Ideas to Life.** Start with a prototype, whether it's a new process, software, or a small-scale pilot project. Collect feedback, refine the solution, and repeat. This hands-on approach helps identify potential barriers early and prepares the ground for broader implementation.

Greene 4.0 facilitators can be invaluable in helping companies clearly define their needs and explore innovative solutions. Experts from both the digital and green sectors can offer fresh perspectives, while study visits provide the opportunity to see best practices and technologies in action, which might otherwise seem abstract. The emerging B2GreenHub platform will also be an invaluable source of tools, resources, and frameworks.

Strategic guidance and structured methodologies can help businesses make this transition successfully.