



Mike Wallace, BrownFlynn   Lee O'Dwyer, Bloomberg   Kristin Bloser, Comercia Bank   Cristina Amorim, Thermo Fisher

## **“The Train Has Left the Station on Sustainability”**

So declared Mike Wallace, managing director at BrownFlynn and moderator of the NIRI OC’s Sustainability Panel discussion on January 19th at Morton’s in Santa Ana. Wallace led a discussion on the state of sustainability initiatives and how companies are adapting to the demands. Wallace says that \$8.6 trillion in the U.S. alone is invested with a socially responsible investing (SRI) mandate. That means companies have a downside risk for not providing metrics around environmental issues, economic impacts, human rights, labor practices and more.

Lee O’Dwyer, equity application specialist at Bloomberg, says his firm actively captures sustainability data and makes it available to its clients, allowing them to easily access company SRI measures and compare them to peers. Both say it goes far beyond “socially responsible” investors. Companies, cities and states are also seeking and rewarding suppliers for strong sustainability scores.

Both Kristin Bloser and Cristina Amorim lead the sustainability efforts for their respective companies and are passionate about driving and reporting sustainability initiatives. Bloser, VP and senior sustainability officer at Comercia Bank, said her company looks at sustainability as a way to build value. They used an impact matrix to identify the most important topics to address – from both the company’s and the external stakeholder’s perspective. From that, she developed their formal global sustainability report, which they issue each year to share their progress.

Amorim, VP facilities, EHS and chief sustainability officer at Thermo Fisher Scientific, has seen the value and impact of sustainability change over time. “Now, in the corporate environment, everyone has a role to play. Naturally, asset management and energy savings can be big contributors, but so can a number of other factors such as materials use in packaging.” She says although she can’t directly quantify the value-add for their sustainability efforts, she can show how many additional company shares were acquired by SRI investors. Amorim says it is important to advocate for sustainability initiatives with management using “financial language.”

In closing, the panelists agreed, companies should start with a few key sustainability data points important within their own industry and build from there. Says Wallace, “If you don’t, you can quickly get “survey fatigue.” While the numerous sustainability surveys from different entities ask hard, yet smart questions, it can get out of control.”