

ESG training and sales support as a key success factor

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ESG training and support for employees is crucial for the implementation of a sound sustainability strategy. The banking industry should therefore put greater emphasis on the training of its employees in this field.

As an example, at BLKB efforts have been stepped up in the last years with a focus on sustainable investment. For banks that have systematically included ESG aspects in their range of investment products, it is important to ensure that all client relationship managers are comfortable explaining the role of ESG in the investment process and are able to handle related client questions. ESG considerations should therefore be integrated in all forms of investment related training; general product training, ESG focused certifications and in apprenticeships. At BLKB, training topics include ESG methodologies, ratings, market developments, peer comparison, marketing and BLKBs corporate sustainability. ESG training for the lending and mortgage business has also started.

The process of implementing an inclusive and comprehensive training is multifaceted. In our case, trainings are set up or accompanied by internal Investment Specialists. This team bundles the ESG knowhow and is the single point of contact for investment related questions and requests from Client Relationship Managers. In parallel, all marketing documents for our investment products were enhanced to provide relevant ESG information to clients, and company factsheets for the stocks covered by the BLKB investment research now include a description of ESG characteristics. Last but not least, the topic of sustainable investments is also regularly presented at client events. This also supports the objective to improve ESG literacy of clients, contributing to an overall better acceptance and uptake of sustainable investments.

In parallel, an additional program to anchor and develop sustainability knowhow in BLKB are the so-called Sustainability Champions and Topic Owners. They cover and promote, within their normal function, the most relevant sustainability topics in the bank. This also helps to further disseminate sustainability knowhow within the organization.