

Building Trust, Building People: The Social Heart of Corporate Sustainability



Highlights from Decoding X 2024 with MCCY and Verian

At the **Decoding X Conference 2024**, the conversation around sustainability took a more human turn. On stage, **Ms. Sandra Lim**, Regional President at Verian, moderated a dialogue with **Mr. Shaun Oon**, Deputy Director (Strategic Planning) at the **Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)**, to explore what the “S” in ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) truly means for Singapore.

Their exchange revealed something profound: sustainable business is ultimately about trust — the trust between people, their leaders, and the organisations they call home.

Rethinking what “corporate good” means

As Shaun explained, MCCY launched the collaboration with Verian two to three years ago when global movements such as Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion were reshaping expectations of corporate purpose. Singapore already performed well on environmental and governance metrics, but the social pillar remained undefined.

“We didn’t want to reduce corporate good to volunteering,” Shaun reflected. “We wanted to understand what Singaporeans really want from companies.”

The resulting study — Charting a Sustainable Future: Roadmap to Corporate Social Sustainability in Singapore — was designed to help companies embed social sustainability in a soft-guidance way: through leadership, workplace culture, and people practices rather than regulation.

What Singaporeans told us

The findings were revealing. While fairness and environmental care remain important, Singaporeans — especially younger workers — spoke most about **flexibility, wellbeing, and growth**.

"It's not about shorter hours," Shaun said. "It's about how work fits into life — caring for family, having space to give back, staying relevant."

In other words, social sustainability begins inside the organisation. Employees now expect workplaces that invest in their development, respect their personal responsibilities, and create conditions for both professional and personal flourishing.

These insights informed Verian's **ABCDE Framework** — five practical stages that move organisations from awareness to sustained action:

A – Aware, B – Balanced, C – Convinced, D – Decide, and E – Execute — each helping companies translate purpose into measurable trust.

Trust as the new social contract

Shaun described trust as the thread connecting all aspects of sustainability. Singapore's high trust levels, shown in some global surveys, provide a unique foundation — but trust must be continuously earned.

"Trust is a contract," he said. "It's an agreement that we'll invest in your growth and give you flexibility — and we'll keep that promise."

He shared examples from MCCY: staff with caregiving responsibilities allowed to work temporarily from overseas, and short-term exchanges across departments to build new skills. "These gestures," he noted, "signal belief in people's potential — and that trust comes back many times over."

Aligning purpose and performance

When asked about the perennial tension between ESG and business targets, Shaun challenged the notion that companies must choose between the two.

"Doing good doesn't mean doing it until it hurts," he said. "The real question is how to align business objectives with social outcomes. If companies don't move, social pressures will move them."

He pointed out that even in complex industries like energy, transition and reinvention are inevitable. The firms that invest in future technologies — and in their people — will be those that stay relevant and trusted.

Looking ahead: A forward-leaning mindset

As the session closed, Shaun left the audience with a challenge that resonated deeply across sectors: *"Sustainability is about continual relevance," he said. "Ask yourself — will what we're doing today still make sense five or ten years from now?"*

Sandra Lim echoed that reflection: *"The future of sustainability isn't only greener; it's more human. It's about how we lead, listen, and create workplaces where people can thrive."*

Together, their message underscored a simple but transformative idea — **that trust and people are the real engines of sustainable growth.**

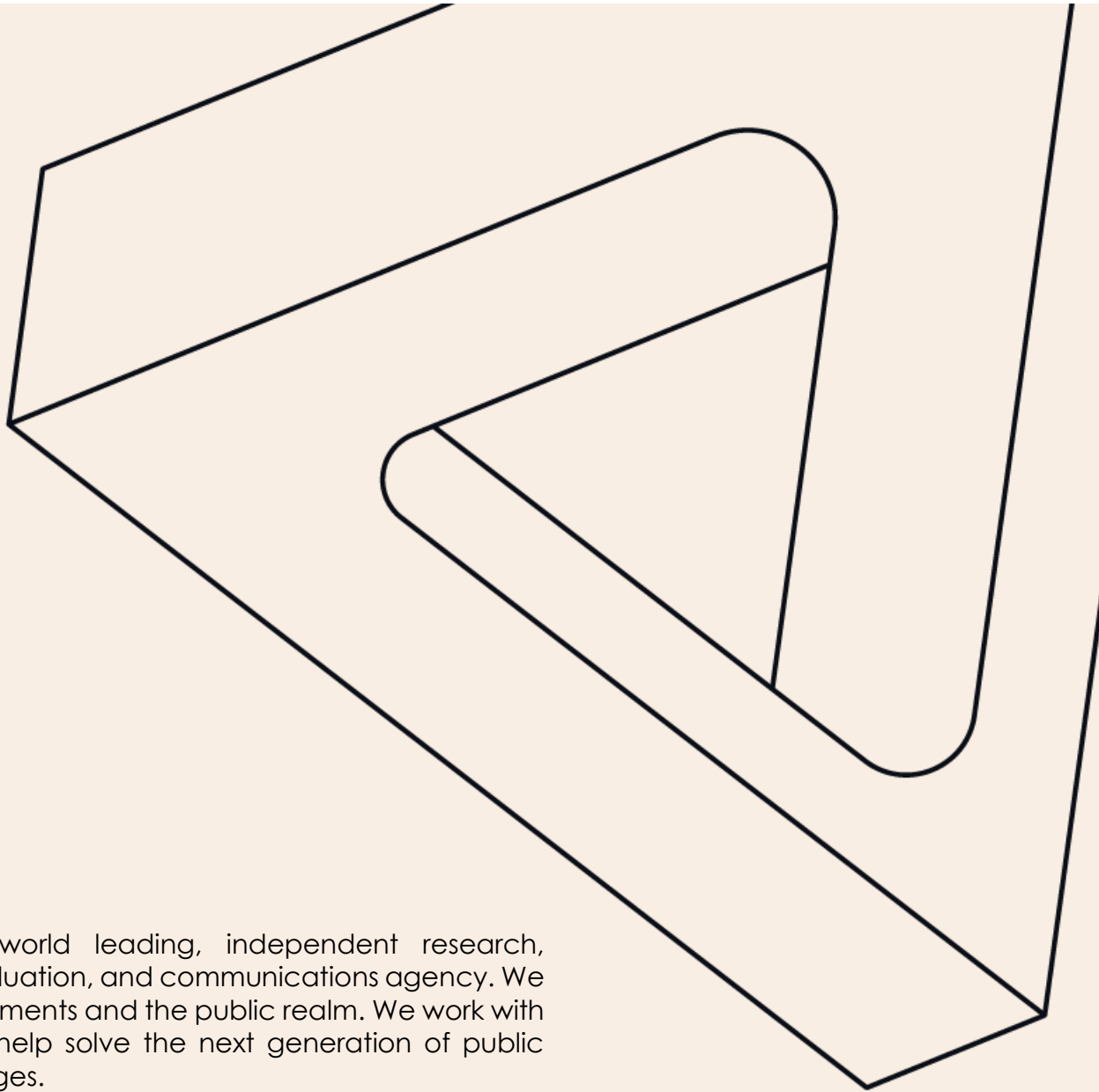
Event Details

- **Conference:** Decoding X Conference 2024
- **Panel:** Corporate Sustainability
- **Date:** 26 July 2024
- **Moderator:** Sandra Lim (Verian)
- **Speaker:** Shaun Oon (MCCY)

This feature draws from Verian's and MCCY's collaborative study and the panel discussion at the Decoding X Conference 2024 on Corporate Sustainability.

Contact us

Please feel free to contact us at VerianSEAMarketing@veriangroup.com if you have any questions.



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