

Podcast on sustainability

Caroline Oates talks to Andrea Debbané

Intro: At Kuehne+Nagel we believe our people, their passion, their resourcefulness are what set us apart and make the difference in the life of colleagues, customers and the society where we live and work.
In this podcast, we share some of the stories that move us and invite you to discover the world of logistics through the voices of the people and customers of Kuehne+Nagel. Find us in our Stories and help us write new ones.

Caroline: 00:00:30 Hello and welcome to our podcast. My name is Caroline Oates and I'm talking to Andrea Debbané, Global Head of Sustainability at Kuehne+Nagel, to find out how we are driving sustainability in the logistics industry. Andrea, what led you to become a sustainability leader?

Andrea: 00:00:50 Hello, Caroline. That's a great question. I fell into my first role of sustainability really by chance. I was working for a company that was building the world's biggest aircraft. I was doing focus groups with a traveling public, and then it became evident that the efficiency story really wasn't understood. And that was my foray really into working on environment and climate change. And throughout my career, I've worked on many sustainability topics from climate change to human rights, social justice, diversity and inclusion. I think what really keeps me in the job and passionate about it, is probably my role as a mom. I've got two kids and I think about their future and I think it's important that that I can do whatever I can today to ensure that they have a safe, secure, a fair and an inclusive future.

Caroline: 00:01:45 Wow. Andrea, that's very touching as a mother myself to hear that. When you look at your job, what is there a best part, something you enjoy more than other parts?

Andrea: 00:02:00 Well, what I really love about my job is meeting people, whether those are employees or customers. I just love talking to people and learning about their own journey. I love speaking to our employees, in particular the younger generation, to understand what motivates them, what gets them up in the morning to come to work, what's important to them and what's important to them in terms of their own sustainability agenda. I love to learn about that in exchange, and I also love to exchange with our customers. We have over 400,000 customers worldwide, so we touch every sector from consumer retailing to heavy industry. And it's fascinating to see what every customer is doing in their own sector, in their own business, to deal with sustainability and big topics like climate change and diversity and inclusion. And that is really very passionate actually, to have so much exchange with so many different people.

Caroline: 00:02:58 So, Andrea, that's I guess that's what we call stakeholder management. You're looking at what the employees are saying, what the customers are saying. And that leads me to my next question nicely. Actually. It's about the other stakeholders, the people that organize the Paris Agreement, the COP 26 events. Have you [...] gone to one of these big meetings? And [...] what have you found interesting about it?

Andrea: 00:03:28 Yeah, well, I've been to several COPs. It actually is a "convention of the parties", and they're not the most exciting meetings, I have to say. They're very long and they can be very technical. I think the meeting where I was really inspired was one many years ago where Al Gore was speaking. And for our younger audience, you may not know who Al Gore is, but he was really the guy who brought climate change and global warming into everybody's household. And it was with his documentary An Inconvenient Truth. And he really inspired me. And I think that pretty well changed my own life in the way that I looked at environment, climate change.

So fantastic experience there.

Caroline:
00:04:14

So Andrea, this brings me nicely to the question how would you sum up the Kuehne+Nagel's sustainability vision?

Andrea:
00:04:23

Yeah, that's a great question, Caroline. What I've noticed since I've been working at Kuehne+Nagel is that [it] is a company that really cares and pays a lot of attention to people and their relationship with different stakeholders. And I think that the vision for sustainability is to demonstrate that care and attention to our different stakeholders, caring really about our customers and making sure that we can bring all the solutions to support them in their own sustainability journeys for decarbonisation and caring about our colleagues, making sure that we're building the [...] right workplace for the future, especially after what everyone has been through in the last two years with the pandemic. And we've spent a lot of time in colleagues, with colleagues and having dialogue to understand what's important for them. So to ensure we can be the best and top employer for [...] good talent across the globe. And caring about our communities [...] really has two aspects. There's the larger business community. So, making sure that we can also support our suppliers in reaching the sustainability goals that [...] we have as a sector and eventually the sustainable development goals of the UN and also the local communities to show that we really are a very good employer in all of our local communities and that we care about their own development, their socio-economic environment in our local communities. And then of course the fourth is caring about the planet. And this is for our sector very important. Climate change is real. We're all facing it. It is a big challenge. It's difficult in our sector [...] transport and logistics because not all of the new transformative technologies are available. But our vision is really to support the Paris Agreement and net zero carbon by 2050. And we set our own goals working with the Science Based Targets Initiative to ensure that we can support that larger, very important journey where we're all impacted.

Caroline:
00:06:54

Andrea I think it's wonderful that you've got care at the center of everything you do with all of our stakeholders. What are [...] Kuehne+Nagel customers asking you about sustainability?

Andrea:
00:07:07

Yeah, well, we have probably two different types of customers, if I can say that. There's one group where we have very large global brand blue chip companies and they've been working on sustainability for years, and sustainability is embedded into their business strategy and into their logistics and transport operations as well. So they're looking to partner with us and they're looking to really, as I said, take the journey with them and help them support supporting them to meet their own, their own decarbonization goals and larger sustainability agenda. Then we have another group of customers where sustainability might be quite new to them. And it's they're looking to us to help, to support them, to start that journey. So, it might be things as simple as explaining and helping them to understand what is net zero carbon, what is, what are the science based targets agreement, how do they take that first step? So we really have, I would say, different customers and we really try and meet the needs of our different customers.

Caroline:
00:08:17

Andrea, you mentioned you've been in the company just less than a year. Has anything surprised you about Kuehne+Nagel?

Andrea:
00:08:27

Yeah, absolutely. Last year, the company launched a campaign. It was called Blue for Green, and it was really to mobilize employees on the topic of sustainability. And we had such a fantastic performance. It was amazing with over 68 countries that participated, over 1500 initiatives across the globe. And that was a real commitment and a sign of the interest. It's more than interest. It's real passion that many of our employees have for the topic.

Caroline:
00:09:02

So, Andrea, this brings me to the final question. We hear a lot about net zero, 2050. How do you personally envisage how this world will look like then?

Andrea:
00:09:16

I think there will be some things that will remain constant. Like I do believe that the need for people and goods to travel will continue. That is something we've seen throughout the history

of mankind. So I have no doubt about that. How that happens, I think will be very different and we'll start to see the technologies we're working on today will be a reality in the future. Things like flying taxis or cargo drones, distributing personalized medicine to the doorstep of every household that I definitely could envisage. And I think it's a fantastic future. And I also think that it is our responsibility to do whatever we can today to ensure a bright, secure, a fair and inclusive future for our kids. And I just like to end with sharing one of my favourite poets and philosophers, which is Kahlil Gibran, and as he says on his poem about children, that we as parents are the archers and our kids are the arrows, and it's our role to fly them into the future. You know, [...] our children live in the houses of tomorrow, and it's our responsibility to make sure that they can have the best possible tomorrow.

Caroline:
00:10:42

Andrea, that was a fantastic way to end the interview. Thank you very much for talking with us.

Andrea:
00:10:48

Thank you, Caroline.



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