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case 7-173-427
November 17, 2025

Schneider Electric and the Zero Carbon Project: Reducing Carbon Emissions through the Supply Chain

In April 2021, Schneider Electric, a French multinational corporation specializing in digital automation and energy management, made a bold announcement regarding its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It announced it was launching The Zero Carbon Project (TZCP), which sought to reduce the operational carbon emissions from its top 1,000 suppliers by 50% from 2021 to 2025.¹ This program was a component of Schneider Electric's larger sustainability goals, aiming to achieve a net-zero value chain by 2050.

The company had already received accolades as a leader in sustainability. For example, in 2021 the Corporate Knights ranked Schneider Electric as the Global 100 Index's most sustainable company.² While Schneider Electric had increased the percentage of its operations powered by renewable electricity from 2% to 80% and reduced its scope 1 and 2 emissions (direct and indirect emissions from energy purchased) by 59% between 2017 and 2020,³ the challenging truth now was that scope 3 emissions accounted for 99.5% of the company's carbon footprint.⁴ Further, 10.5% of its carbon footprint originated upstream in its supply chain. With over 50,000 suppliers contributing to the company's operations globally, addressing supply chain and other scope 3 emissions would require a fundamentally different level of effort, both technical and diplomatic.

The challenge lay in particular on the desk of Christophe Quiquempoix, Schneider Electric's sustainable procurement vice president, based in Grenoble, France. He led the procurement team that would be responsible for rolling out TZCP and assuring its success. The clock was ticking. The company had scheduled its Capital Markets Day for investors and financial analysts on November 30, 2021, and Quiquempoix would be presenting the details of TZCP at that meeting. The audience would want details and could be expected to be a critical examiner.

Published by WDI Publishing, part of the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan.

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