



In Conversation

In Conversation with Laura Martin

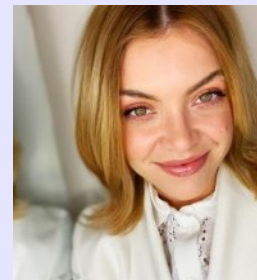
Carol Baker

As Gartner reveals that by 2026 over 70% of technology sourcing, procurement, and vendor management (SPVM) leaders will have environmental-sustainability-aligned performance objectives for their functions, we ask Laura Martin, Customer Success Director at Conga why organizations with real green targets will need to consider transformation and sustainability as one and the same?

*As Customer Success Director, **Laura Martin** works closely with c-suite executives and board of directors to develop and execute successful digital programmes to support revenue operations optimization.*

With a background in business consultancy, she has spent the last decade working closely with some of the biggest brands on their project planning and internal operations.

At Conga (<https://www.conga.com>), she now manages a series of digital transformation projects, advising top organizations on how to unify siloed processes and systems into an overall revenue lifecycle and is developing one of the first Customer Success Centres of Excellences in Europe.



Tell our readers a little about yourself

I am Laura Martin and as the Customer Success Director for Conga I look after our strategic accounts. I work with very complex big businesses – some of which have been with us for years – so it is important to understand how their past has evolved, and how the macroeconomic climate including factors such as the pandemic have impacted their operations. I get to work with lots of different industries and get insight into what leaders are trying to achieve, how the businesses are changing and the importance of overseeing sustainability and the role it plays in digital transformation.

I'm a big customer advocate, so customers come first for me. What I'm trying to achieve with my accounts is to be specific about what added value they want to attain. Sustainability is one of the most important topics of humanity, but also for organizations, especially when it comes to how they govern their operations and how they build their strategies. So, I'm excited to talk to you about this today.



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What sets Conga apart from its competitors?

Conga is the only vendor that looks at revenue lifecycle from end-to-end unlike other companies on the market. Our solutions provide the supporting business framework that combines people, processes, and systems. What sets us apart is that we want businesses to understand their full revenue lifecycle before embarking on a transformation journey – from generating a new customer, onboarding them, working with them to develop value, and renewing them. We underpin this with our revenue lifecycle management framework and unified data model, breaking down silos so that there is a continuous strategy across the whole business – and that includes every person that touches the revenue stream.

At Conga we take more of a business consultant approach. For us, it's important to not only understand the use case and value we can bring, but also how it all fits into the bigger picture meaning how the different departments influence the organization's revenue. This is where we really see our strengths. We're not talking about tech solutions but an end-to-end revenue lifecycle management control.

What is Conga's view of sustainability in business?

When we talk about sustainability, we refer to a set of standards for a company's behaviour – environmental, social and governance (ESG). When setting sustainability business goals all three aspects of ESG needs to be considered.

The environmental factor refers directly to the impact an organization has on the physical environment with which it interacts. This encompasses an organization's risk management practices relating to greenhouse gas emissions, resiliency to climate fluctuations, and natural resource stewardship. For example, can the organization introduce measures that enable them to go 'paperless' or reduce their CO₂ footprint by adopting more digital tools, or removing unnecessary processes.

The social factor encompasses the relationships between the organization and its stakeholders. This pillar includes a company's practices around wages; employee engagement; commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion; and the communities they interact with on all operational levels. ESG practices such as these can be layered into Conga's contract management solutions. Legal teams can implement the inclusion of ESG protections in the same way you currently execute other risk and protection clauses, allowing them to take their processes to the next level in terms of liability protection. By taking into consideration the needs of all stakeholders, we strive to align people, systems and processes before applying the technology. With this comes greater efficiency, higher productivity, happier customers, greater employee engagement and high business revenues.

The governance factor includes how a company is run. This covers all levels of operations, including the rights of shareholders, incentive programs within the employee base, and to what level leadership is open internally. The ability to audit, confirm, and publish counterparty ESG key performance indicators (KPIs) plays a crucial role here. With our revenue lifecycle management solution, we transform each company's unique complexities for order configuration, execution, fulfilment,



and contract renewal processes with a unified data model that aligns the understanding and efforts of every team. Organizations have greater visibility internally and externally allowing them to generate far more accurate reports and insights.

ESG is something which is very important to our customers. In this day and age, companies need to be more transparent about how they conduct business and what impact they have on their environment and stakeholders. Organizations increasingly want to elevate their ESG profile and view the digital transformation as one of the means to do so.

Legal departments can implement policies, processes, and technologies to ensure ESG is a part of the department's culture. Steps such as due diligence checklists, provision requirements, ESG-focused clause libraries, and multi-departmental approval reviews empower leadership to track KPIs and obligations – continuously evaluating and determining the future of business relationships to mitigate reputational damage. Legal provisions obligating ongoing audit rights, verifiable reporting, and dictating termination triggers are examples of deciding factors for whether a company fully controls their ESG journey.

What do you feel are the lessons to be learnt from Gartner's view of sustainability?

Gartner released their top ten strategic tech trends at the end of last year. Sustainability was identified as a top business priority. Gartner is seeing that with changes which governance brings in – for example, by 2025, all businesses in the UK will need to align to a certain sustainability standard, making their plans visible to the public on how they're going to prove their sustainability targets. While in Europe, there are loads of governmental structures, new rules and legacies which are being released that will force businesses to align. Gartner is very specific in how businesses are going to achieve this – and it centres around digital transformation.

What does sustainability mean for vendors?

The change in working practices brought on by the pandemic saw companies rush forward their digital transformation initiatives. With people unable to physically work with paper, we saw a tremendous increase in businesses looking for solutions which could make their contract processing and document generation much easier. For us as a vendor it means advising on sustainability changes. It's not just looking at managing contracts, but about the wider context in how the whole of their businesses are being run and how they could successfully adopt the three pillars of ESG for greater business performance.

Now that hybrid working is becoming the norm, companies are looking at more sustainable digital transformation plans. This can be seen in contract lifecycle management. The law relating to contracts is centuries old, but you know, people love their paper; they love their stamps; their pens, so for someone in the contract industry suddenly being faced with a situation where they just couldn't do that anymore during the pandemic, it was challenging.



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Why does transformation and sustainability need to be one and the same?

Digital transformation now happens mostly within the parameters of environmental impacts. Therefore, when it comes to efficiency, and looking at how a business can perform better, it must always be done within the parameters of those new rules of ESG. There can be no digital transformation without thinking about sustainability. But there's also not a sustainable business case you can make without looking at digital transformation.

Those are aspects which I touched upon already, like using AI and analytics, to really be able to look at what your business is achieving, and how it could achieve things better and quicker. But it's also simple things like increasing efficiencies, with tools, and the right technology. One example of the kind of outside thing we do which I thought is really impactful is about a small company that had developed software to eliminate food waste. Now restaurants are using this software to determine how much they are really using from the things they bring in and are finding they are able to save about 80% of food waste.

Sustainable change is something that we all need to focus on, and digital transformation is the key to that. If you align people, processes, and systems accordingly, you will always have a game changer for your business, but most importantly, for the environment.

Conga run's lots of events. What is the next one about?

Within digital transformation a lot relies on the do's and don'ts of change management. At Conga's next quarterly Conga Success Forum event on 30 March 2023, 3pm BST we will be talking about the do's and don'ts of change management and its role in digital transformation. More details can be found at: https://conga.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VWw7i11TQu-_DxiWll6plw