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We're going to need a smaller shoe

How we're planning to reduce our carbon footprint



At [WeTransfer](#) we believe creativity has the power to change the world – which is why we've spent the last ten years proudly supporting artists we admire and causes we care about. To date we've donated more than \$100 million in advertising space to give creative communities a much-needed platform while raising awareness for issues like gun control, climate change and net neutrality.

We've built a business with empathy at its core, prioritizing the relationship we build with our community above all others. In fact we even published an [in-depth whitepaper](#) on the subject, exploring how businesses can and should be working with their local communities.

But now we want to take our efforts further than local, we want to extend our empathy and our social impact to the whole planet. This means rethinking the way we do business to become a more responsible and more sustainable organization.

If you've been following our sustainability journey you'll know WeTransfer is working towards becoming a certified B Corporation. With B Corp status we'll join companies like Patagonia, Ben & Jerry's and The Guardian, who balance people, planet and profit to use business as a force for good.

As part of the thorough B Corp assessment we had to offer up data on our environmental impact as a company and, honestly, we struggled with the findings. It was clear we needed to do something about our carbon footprint, so we partnered with Sustainalize and Climate Neutral Group and got straight to work.

The result is this. An ambitious plan to reduce our carbon emissions – starting with carbon neutrality by the end of 2020, and a pledge to reduce our emissions by 30% by 2025.

What does this actually mean?

Good question. Let's backtrack a little and cover the basics – starting with the carbon jargon.

Carbon neutral: Being carbon neutral means taking action to remove as much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as we put into it (usually through carbon offset schemes but ideally without). This is also known as having a net zero carbon footprint.

Carbon offsetting: Carbon offsets are a form of trade. When we buy or invest in an offset, it means we're funding projects or schemes that reduce greenhouse gas emissions – mainly carbon dioxide.

Although it sounds peachy, some offsetting schemes simply avoid emissions, instead of removing carbon that's already been emitted. E.g. Paying somebody to not cut down a tree, instead of paying them to plant ten more. But even in doing the latter (which is imperative for everyone), it's not enough to address the climate crisis. We need to be actively removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere – which brings us to our final definition...

Carbon negative: Being carbon negative means going beyond net zero to actually remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. (Pretty neat, huh?)

So do we get started?

It starts with choosing the right partners. Long before we started thinking about B Corp status, we started working with Doteveryone to internally define what a responsible approach to business, growth and data looks like for WeTransfer.

From the start, we established a set of principles to guide our decision-making process: people first, creativity second, technology third. WeTransfer has always prioritized bringing offline values – like trust, transparency and ethics – online. It's why we have a responsible data policy, why our tools don't distract people from their flow and it's why we do things differently when it comes to advertising.

So when we started looking for partners to assess our environmental impact, it was important they shared these same values. Luckily we found the perfect fit with [Sustainalize](#) and [Climate Neutral Group](#). Not only were both partners vital in navigating our B Corp assessment, but they've produced an in-depth sustainability report showing where WeTransfer stands currently, and what we can do to be better.

Right, so let's break down the report

To get a better understanding of where we're at now in terms of carbon emissions, we needed to do a bit of "carbon math." These mathematical concepts are common practice when measuring our carbon footprint, whether as an individual or, like WeTransfer, as a business.

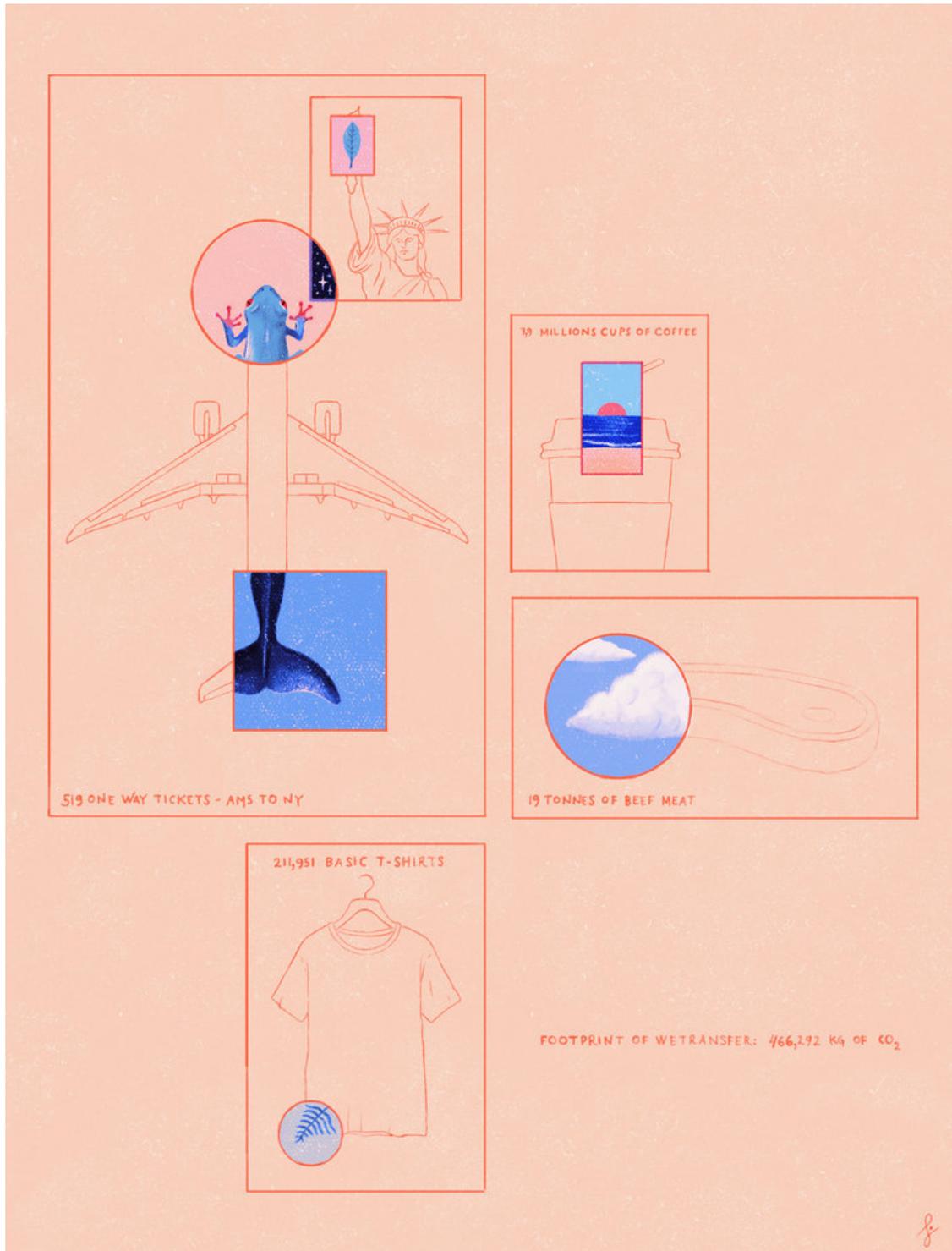
We won't get into all of the equations, instead let's focus on one in particular: the scope approach. Scientists account for and measure carbon emissions by splitting them into three different categories, or scopes.

Scope 1 emissions come directly from the sources or activities we own and control, like the exhaust from our cars. For us, these emissions largely come from our data centers, which require a lot of electricity.

Scope 2 emissions come (indirectly) from the energy we purchase and consume. So that's the heat and electricity we use to run our offices in LA, London, New York and Amsterdam.

Scope 3 emissions come from all other activities in our business and production chain. For businesses these sources are often extensive and include everything from employee or company travel to the food we serve and the products we clean with. It also includes the emissions other people generate when using our tools. This means a company's scope 3 emissions are often much bigger than its scope 1 and 2 emissions put together.

When considering all three scopes, our carbon emissions in 2019 gave us a carbon footprint of 466 tonnes. To help wrap our heads around this, we came up with some equivalents:



The first hurdle: becoming carbon neutral

Once we crunched the numbers, it was time to make some changes. This gives us our first challenge: to come out of 2020 as a carbon neutral company.

We're already looking at offsetting our emissions, choosing the right [Verified Carbon Standard \(VSC\)](#) or [Gold Standard \(GS\)](#) programs to invest in within the Climate Neutral Group. These are the highest standard of offset programs and contribute to improving the lives of local populations and developing the region.

But we know that offsetting is not enough. While it is imperative to balance our emissions, we know that in the future we need to be actively removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere – which leads us to our five-year plan...

The big goal: cutting our carbon by 30%

Truly, our big goal is to become a carbon negative company (and when we say big, we mean colossal). It's an ambitious statement, so we're breaking it down into achievable sub-goals, starting with reducing our carbon footprint by 30% by 2025.

In addition to reducing our energy use, to reach carbon neutrality by the end of 2020 we'll have to rely on offset programs. But with each year that follows we'll rely less and less on offsetting and focus on cutting our carbon emissions instead. And with our ambition to grow WeTransfer as a company by around 30% year on year, this is a big ask.

Luckily, we like a challenge.

By 2025 we're confident we can slash our carbon footprint by 30%. That's almost a third of our emissions we'll no longer need to offset – because they'll simply no longer exist.

There'll be big changes to make and hard work to put in, but when it comes to the future of our planet, it's a no-brainer. And if we can set an example to other tech companies along the way – even better.

To achieve this, here's what we'll be focusing on:

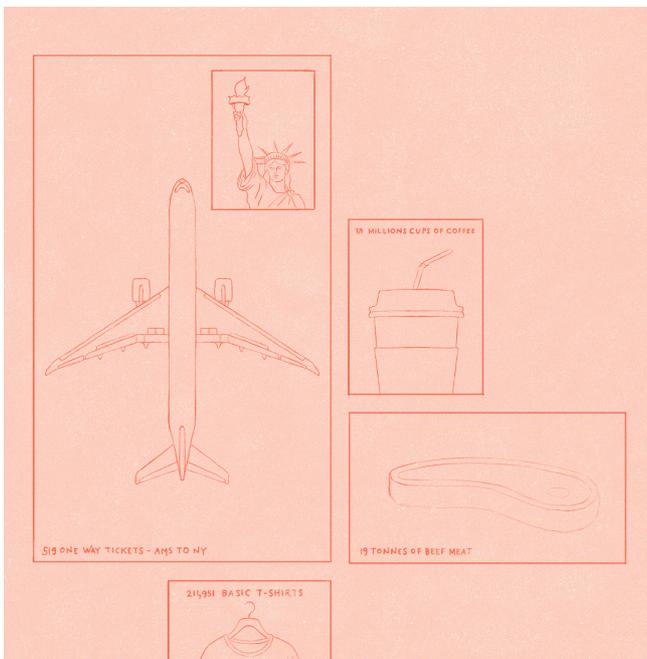
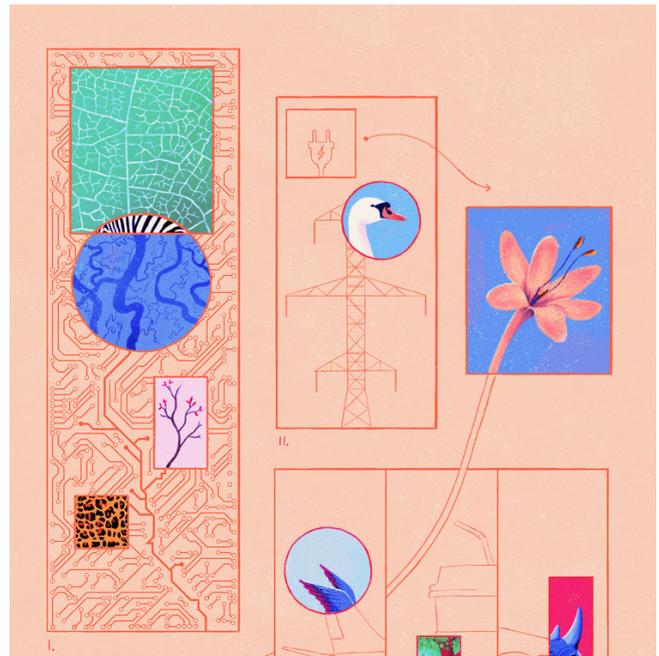
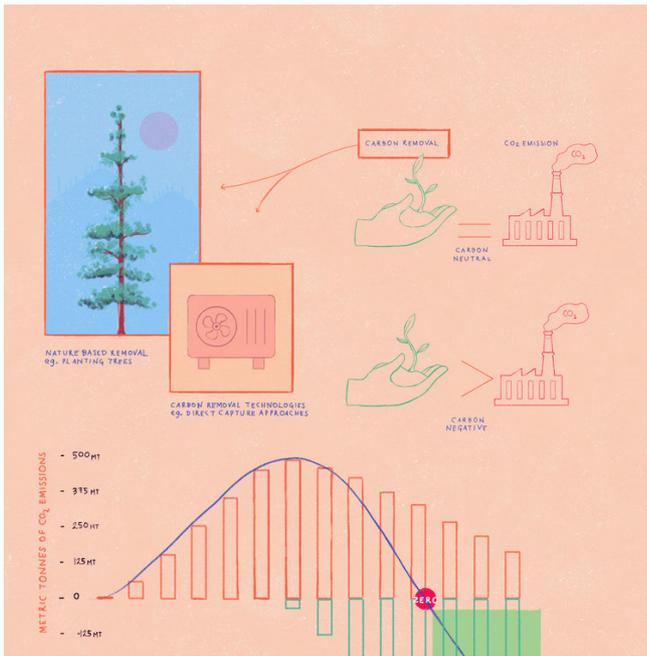
- Using renewable energy sources to power our HQ
- Reducing business and commuting travel for the entire company
- Making intelligent and sustainable purchases – we've already established a sustainable purchase policy which we'll expand over time

- Empowering our employees to get involved and do what they can – we have an internal sustainability group who help implement new schemes and ideas around the office

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A pledge to the planet

Sustainability is not black and white. There's a lot of trade-offs we need to make to keep reducing our carbon footprint, but part of being a responsible business is being honest and transparent about those decisions. We want our users, partners and communities to have a clear understanding of the impact we have, as a tech company but also as an advocate for the environment. We'll publish our progress in annual sustainability reports, and probably talk shout about it on our own platforms too.



Images by Daniel Liévano.

ABOUT WETRANSFER

WeTransfer makes tools to move ideas. Founded in 2009 in Amsterdam as a simple, well-designed file sharing service for the creative community, WeTransfer has grown to include tools that scale across the creative spectrum, including editorial platform WePresent (with 2M monthly readers), mobile app 'Collect by WeTransfer' (with 4M monthly users), quick slide-making tool Paste® (with 40,000 active teams), immersive sketching tool

Paper® (with more than 25M downloads), and the original web platform with 50M monthly users and over a billion files sent each month.

From the beginning, WeTransfer has prioritized bringing “offline” values - trust, transparency, and ethics - online. This means having a responsible data policy and tools that don’t distract people from their creative flow. WeTransfer has pioneered a new means of online advertising, resulting in the platform’s full-page wallpapers, designed by our award-winning in-house creative studio. Advertisers include industry-leading brands like Apple, Saint Laurent, Google, Balenciaga, Samsung, Netflix, Adidas, and Squarespace.

Since its founding, WeTransfer has proudly supported the creative communities and given up to 30% of advertising space to support the arts, donating over 5 billion impressions in 2017. Through our ongoing advertising grant program and content platform, WePresent, we have partnered with hundreds of groundbreaking artists and organizations, including Björk, King Krule, FKA twigs, Ryan McGinley, Ami Vitale, the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the UN Development Program, the World Wildlife Foundation and the Prince Estate. In 2016, WeTransfer launched the world’s first free Masters of the Arts in design thinking with the University of the Underground and Worldwide FM, the global radio station run by legendary BBC DJ Gilles Peterson.

Following a \$25 million investment from Highland Europe in 2015, WeTransfer opened a US office in Venice Beach, Los Angeles, to add to the Amsterdam headquarters. In 2018, WeTransfer acquired popular creative apps Paper® and Paste® and expanded its US presence to New York City.

