

Walking the Talk: Spotlight on Alexa Poortier, Founder of itmustbeNOW

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In 2017, **Alexa Poortier founded itmustbeNOW.com** alongside her husband, Onno. The online platform is a legacy project that supports, encourages and connects sustainably-minded properties and companies operating in the travel and tourism sector to foster more mindful travel – starting with the traveller.

We recently had the opportunity to speak with Alexa one on one about her greatest sources of inspiration, her motivations behind founding itmustbeNOW – and why those who work in travel and tourism would be wise to listen to the increasingly loud demands of younger generations!

What inspires you to get out of bed in the morning (literally and professionally)?

Alexa Poortier (AP):

Being fortunate and conscious that we must do more at this most urgent of times. My husband Onno Poortier and I appreciate our good health, caring family and friends, and our home in the Swiss Alps. Onno is a hotelier with over five decades in the luxury hotel sector of the travel industry. Our consciousness of its increasing negative impacts on our planet (8% of global emissions) and the risk of a changing climate to future generations ignited a passion to boldly advance sustainability. We founded [itmustbeNOW.com](https://www.itmustbenow.com) in 2017 as a legacy project to help the travel industry transform and thrive.

What skills do you apply in your role and what are the biggest challenges you currently face?

AP:

My previous careers were in hotel operations/consultancy, in PR as Group Director (Edelman and O&M) and in media as VP, Business Development and Marketing (ABN/CNBC, Sumitomo and News Corp), spanning four decades in Canada, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Europe. The international experience and skills learned in project management, marketing, communications, sales, negotiation and leadership are valuable in my role as Founder of [itmustbeNOW.com](https://www.itmustbenow.com).

Our biggest challenge is the 'business as usual' attitude and behaviour of hotel and tourism operators and owners. While more companies are committing to sustainability at various levels, few are accountably transparent and seriously reducing and mitigating their carbon. Many more are doing nothing or still greenwashing.

What goals do you have, and what are the most useful metrics for measuring your success?

AP:

Launched in 2017, [itmustbeNOW.com](https://www.itmustbenow.com)'s priority is the traveller, the most important person to the travel industry. Our goal is to grow a global community who believe that travellers have a responsibility to be a Force for Good. Our other goal is to change attitudes and behaviour in the travel industry, starting with the hospitality sector, by raising the bar on accountability and transparency around sustainability with no greenwash allowed.

In 2018, we launched the NOW Force for Good Alliance and invited the hospitality industry to join an affiliation of extraordinary and caring places to stay that provides a sustainable travel experience and take responsibility for their impact on the community and the environment.

[itmustbeNOW.com](https://www.itmustbenow.com) is a technology platform and the most useful metrics for measuring success can be tracked by analytics, but the metrics that truly get us excited are the number of properties that join the NOW Force for Good Alliance.

How do you drive and manage change across the itmustbeNOW community?

AP:

itmustbeNOW.com is a platform to inspire conscious travel. We provide curated feature articles each week with bold information, research and solutions, and traveller tools – NOW Sustainability tool and NOW Offset Carbon tool powered by South Pole. We inspire and empower people to travel consciously and use the power of their wallets to only support places to stay that are accountable and transparent about sustainability, and offset their air travel carbon footprint.

Who or what inspires you at the moment?

AP:

The younger generation and the power of their voice, influence, determination and fears to inspire support and demand change. While in Paris in December 2015 with COP21 in the background, it was a millennial in his mid-20s who boldly spoke his mind and told me that "the climate emergency is the fault of older generations" (while pointing at me!) and urged me to "help their generation fix it ... It Must Be NOW!" He was my son Tyler.

Three years later, a 16-year-old Swedish girl said the same thing and inspired the Strike4Climate movement that marches every Friday around the world. Tyler and I joined the Global Climate Strike in Lausanne on September 27, 2019.

What advice do you have for people who want to drive change by working in travel & tourism?

AP:

The biggest generation of employees in the travel and tourism industry are Generations Y and Z. Most prefer to work for companies with purpose who take responsibility for their impact on the community and the environment. My advice is to listen to their values and their concerns about their future and only work for a company committed to sustainability and carbon mitigation with accountability and transparency and no greenwash allowed; and to continue to boldly take a stand and demand policy change to mitigate carbon emissions by 100% before 2050.

Find out how itmustbeNOW is partnering with South Pole to facilitate more responsible travel and tourism with the NOW Offset Carbon tool [here](#).
