



5 Claude prompt patterns for supplier emissions data

The part of Scope 3 where the data lives in companies you don't control.

Episode 3 of 7 · The Supplier Engagement Problem

Rob Aldrich

25 years in enterprise tech and sustainability

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Suppliers aren't answering.

<25%

of suppliers respond to many companies' data requests (CDP research)

70%

of professionals name lack of supplier data as the top Scope 3 barrier (MIT, 2025)

75%

of a typical company's footprint sits in Scope 3, beyond your direct control (CDP)

At Cisco in the Green IT era, fewer than 30% of our 400+ suppliers provided credible data. Twenty years on, the economics haven't changed. Claude changes them.



PATTERN 1

Segment before you send

Rank suppliers by estimated emissions materiality, not just spend. Your top 20 get personalised outreach. The long tail gets a lighter standardised ask.

PROMPT PATTERN

"Here's my supplier list with annual spend and industry classification. Estimate each supplier's share of my Category 1 emissions, rank them, and propose three engagement tiers with a recommended data request depth for each."



PATTERN 2

Match requests to supplier maturity

A steel producer with a CDP score needs a different letter than a 40-person components shop. Specific, goal-connected requests get responses. Generic compliance requests get deleted.

PROMPT PATTERN

"Draft two versions of a supplier emissions data request. Version A for a supplier with an existing CDP disclosure. Version B for a small supplier with no measurement history: request only the activity data they already hold, and explain in plain language how we'll use it."



PATTERN 3

Normalise what comes back

Responses arrive with mismatched boundaries, emission factors and base years. Convert what's convertible. Mark what isn't.

PROMPT PATTERN

"Here are twelve supplier responses. For each: identify the reporting boundary, emission factor source and base year. Flag market-based Scope 2 where we require location-based. Produce a table of what can be used directly, what needs conversion, and what needs a follow-up, with the follow-up drafted."



PATTERN 4

Chase gaps without burning relationships

Follow-up is where response rates are won or lost, and it's the first task stretched teams drop.

PROMPT PATTERN

"Draft a polite, specific follow-up for each supplier referencing exactly what's missing from their response. Do not re-send the whole questionnaire."



PATTERN 5

Make it easier to answer

The highest-leverage move: turn your data request into supplier-facing guidance.

PROMPT PATTERN

"Turn our data request into a two-page plain-language guide per supplier segment: what each term means, where the data lives in their business, and a worked example for their sector."



What Claude can't do

Fix the incentives

If a supplier has no commercial reason to respond, a better email won't create one. Contracts and procurement leverage do that.

Verify the data

Normalising inconsistent responses is not auditing them. Faster outreach can mean faster garbage.

Own the provenance

Under CSRD and SB 253, you must log what was asked, received and transformed. That's process discipline, not a model feature.

Cure survey fatigue

If every buyer sends more AI-written questionnaires, suppliers drown faster. Send fewer, lighter, shared asks.



The full episode has the sources, the numbers and the failure modes.

Claude for Climate, Episode 3 of 7: The Supplier Engagement Problem. Link in the first comment.

robaldrich.com

Follow Rob Aldrich for the rest of the series.