

GREENING THE MEETING & EVENT SIMRAN SETHI, 10.17.07

According to a 2002 survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers 90 percent of the United States' 140 largest companies indicate enhancing or protecting reputation was their primary reason for adopting environmentally responsible practices. 89 percent believe sustainability will grow in importance as a business issue over the next 5 years.

Going green and being sustainable encompass our efforts to preserve our natural resources. Making changes in our lifestyles to cause less damage to our environment and support individuals and communities, will allow the earth to flourish for future generations.

Sustainability is: The ability to direct the course of a company, community, organization, or country in ways that restore and enhance all forms of capital (human, natural, manufactured, and financial) to generate stakeholder value and contribute to the well-being of current and future generations.

Taking steps to green your lifestyle and business are important in the collective effort to preserve the planet. Working together, small changes can have a great impact.

Here are Some Areas to Consider in Meeting & Event Planning:

1) Management & Organization

- The first step to going green is to build baseline knowledge.
- Communicate successes and emphasize the triple bottom line.
- Garner internal buy-in and educate your supply chain.
- Establish benchmarks.
- Take incremental steps towards your goal.

2) Communication & PR

- Communicate with your supply chain and confirm supply chain support.
- Establish guidelines to:
 - Train staff in sustainability practices
 - Minimize, reuse, and recycle waste
 - Practice energy and water conservation
 - Procure environmentally preferable cleaning materials, paper, linens, china and other products
 - Sources products and services locally
- Green is the new black! Incorporate sustainability education and results into all internal and external PR materials.
- Use electronic communication rather than print materials whenever possible.

3) Materials, Décor & Landscaping

- Consider the end use of all materials used.
- Limit the use of paper products or use paper with 100% post-consumer recycled content.
- Recycle guest nametags.
- Use electronic means for distributing information rather than paper or DVDs.
- Select rapidly renewable and recyclable materials.
- Use non-toxic glues and paints.
- Save and re-use materials from event to event.
- Use native plants in landscaping.
- Favor organic greenery and plants over flowers.
- Maintain grounds without pesticides.

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3) Materials, Décor & Landscaping (Con't)

- Use manual tools whenever possible.
- Recycle & compost.

4) Transportation

- Be discriminating about transportation – consider virtual gatherings/video conferencing.
- Offer programs in cities that offer mass transit systems and major transportation hubs.
- Use alternative fuel vehicles.
- Encourage public transportation/carpooling whenever possible.
- Offset carbon emissions associated with travel with Renewable Energy Credits (RECs).

5) Facilities

- Is the event/meeting location committed to sustainable practices or open to exploring the possibilities?
- Does the building management system allow conference facilities to be heated and air -conditioned separately, so they can be turned off when not in use?
- Are there teleconferencing facilities so that not all delegates have to travel to the event/meeting to take part?
- Are there divided bins for recycling and trash?
- Does the space utilize natural light in meeting and exhibit spaces?
- If using multiple facilities, are the locations within walking distance of each other?
- Will your program bring increased support to the local community?

6) Furniture, Fixtures, Equipment

- Rent furniture whenever possible.
- Select furniture made from rapidly renewable materials like bamboo and cork. Look for furniture made with low-impact dyes, non-toxic adhesives, and organic textiles.
- Use energy-efficient fixtures and Energy Star certified appliances.
- Put appliances on power strips to minimize standby power usage.
- Rent equipment whenever possible.
- Favor local vendors to reduce fossil fuel consumption and support local economies.

7) Accommodations

- Select a hotel that demonstrates environmental best management practices.
- Check in-room initiatives including:
 - The option of not laundering sheets and towels every day
 - Providing soap and shampoo in dispensers rather than one-use disposable packaging
 - Recycling in-room waste
 - Using energy efficient lighting
 - Offering low-flow showerheads, low-flush toilets and other water conservation measures
 - Using linens and reusable utensils and dishes for in-room dining
 - Eco-friendly furniture, linens, and decor
 - Using eco-friendly cleaning supplies
 - Electronic bill options

8) Energy & Water Conservation

- Purchase Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) to offset energy consumption.
- Modify the air conditioning to be warmer and the heating to be cooler.
- Turn down the lighting in empty rooms. Install compact fluorescent bulbs and use timers for lights in use.
- Conserve water in landscaping, catering, and clean up.

9) Catering

- Use local caterers and food suppliers. Support local farmers.
- Minimize procurement of food grown with pesticides or GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms).
- Offer linen tablecloths and napkins instead of paper products.
- Use compostable plastics or china, glass and silverware instead of disposables.
- Favor aluminum and glass over plastic.
- Serve beverages and condiments in bulk dispensers, state law allowing, minimizing individual servings and their associated waste.
- Serve fair trade coffee.
- Offer reusable coffee mugs as part of registration package.
- Using eco-friendly cleaning products to wash dishes and linens.
- Consider providing foods that keep longer and can be donated to a local food pantry as excess or be donated to livestock farmers or composted.

10) Waste Disposal

- Reduce, reuse, and recycle.
- Confirm local recycling efforts to make sure appropriate materials are diverted from the waste stream.
- Compost food scraps, plant décor, and landscaping clippings.

11) Community Outreach

- Involve the local community in your efforts.
- Employ local staff at every level.
- Donate leftover materials or food to local hospitals and non-profits.