

# Creating Environmentally Sound Conferences

Meetings, Conferences & Events (MCE)  
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# Old News?

- A 2008 poll commissioned by SCA/Tork and conducted by Harris Interactive found:
  - 48% of all U.S. adults surveyed agreed that they make an effort to support businesses that use "green " products and/or environmentally friendly practices
  - Respondents were willing to spend an average of 17% to 19% more for these products or services.
    - April 2008 survey of 2511 participants aged over 18.

# Recent Results

- “How have the recent changes in the economy affected your purchasing habits of “green” products or services?”
  - 73% reported buying “green”:
- Of those:
  - 67% reported buying the same
  - 26% reported buying more
  - 8% reported buying less
- People are paying attention, and it matters
  - April 2009 survey of 2041 participants aged over 18.

# Sustainable Meetings:

- Save money by conserving resources
- Create and enhance competitive advantage and reputation
- Open up new or niche markets
- Present positive opportunities for marketing, improve public relations and demonstrate a commitment to corporate responsibility

# How to Get Started

## ■ Plan.

- Make a decision in your early planning stages to incorporate as much green and/or sustainable elements as possible into your conference.

## ■ Ask.

- Ask hotels, meeting management company, vendors, etc. what they're doing to minimize their impact. Select vendors with an environmental commitment.

## ■ Repeat.

- Check back frequently to see how you're doing.

# Ask yourself...

- How can we save time, money and resources?
- What items can we use year after year?
  - Badge holders
  - Certain supplies
  - Cloth banners
- Could we do this a little differently?

# Ask your location...

## ■ Specific questions

- Not “Do you recycle?” but “What do you recycle, when, and where are bins located?”
- Not “Do you have a linen reuse program?” But “How is it implemented?”
- “Where do you source your food?”
- “Do you have information we can distribute on public transportation?”

## ■ Be wary of vague answers. Vendors that are actively involved in sustainability can provide metrics, not sound bites.

# Something to think about...

- Focus on full life-cycle of every aspect of your planning:
  - Where did this item come from?
  - How will it be used?
  - What will become of it after your conference?
- If it came from a factory, is used once, and will be thrown away, it's not sustainable.
  - This includes paper, gift items, plastic plants, table coverings, signage, badges, etc.



# Explore Alternative Technologies

- Use print-on demand for proceedings or distribute via flash drive or CD
- Look into remote collaboration tools
- Eliminate or minimize traditional mailings
  - Using postcard rather than a letter has significant cost and environmental savings
  - Variety of inexpensive online tools available
    - Conference Organizers' Newsletter
- \*Utilize social networking for communications and outreach

# Beginning

- Offer online registration
- Provide information regarding rideshare or public transportation options
- Include vegetarian options
- Digitize “hand-outs”
- Distribute practical gift items (avoid items with dates or trendy references)
- Use silver utensils, cloth table coverings, larger serving condiments

# Intermediate

- Use local vendors
- Offered tiered fee structure for those taking transportation
- Offer online forum for people wishing to rideshare
  - Many social networking sites have a “group” feature
- Use potted plants rather than cut flowers. Encourage attendees to take home

# Advanced

- Locate your conference at a certified green building
- Offer all locally grown and/or organic food, including sustainably harvested seafood
- Donate leftover food to a shelter
- Communicate and register via web only
- Have clearly marked and frequently placed recycling bins
- Compost

# Sustainable Outreach to Your Host Community

- Collect and distribute leftover exhibit materials to local charitable organizations
- Offer attendees the opportunity to participate in a volunteer activity, such as a tree planting or construction of community housing
- Provide unused office supplies and equipment to local schools or charitable organizations.
- Set aside free or offer leftover exhibit space for local non-profit organizations

# Beware Greenwashing

- “The practice of promoting environmentally friendly programs to deflect attention from an organization's environmentally unfriendly or less savory activities” (Websters)
- The dissemination of misleading information by an organization to conceal its abuse of the environment in order to present a positive public image. (American Heritage)
- Criteria for identifying greenwashing:
  - Ad misleads with words
  - Ad misleads with graphics or visuals
  - Ad makes a green claim that is vague or seemingly unprovable
  - Ad overstates “greenness”
  - Ad leaves out important information to make green claim sound better. (University of Oregon)

# Remember...

- Most green(er) vendors will have information you can use on your website
- If something does not sound right, ask more questions
- Hotels and convention centers can implement many requests easily
  - They want your business
- Many attendees look for this sort of information

# International Green Building Certifications

- Australia: Nabers/ Green Star
- Brazil: AQUA/ LEED Brasil
- Canada: LEED Canada/Green Globes
- China: GBAS
- Finland: PromisE
- France: HQE
- Germany: DGNB
- Hong Kong: HKBEEM
- India: GRIHA National Rating System /LEED India
- Italy: Protocollo Itaca
- Malaysia: GBI Malaysia
- Mexico: LEED Mexico
- Netherlands: BREEAM Netherlands
- New Zealand: Green Star NZ
- Portugal: Lider A
- Singapore: Green Mark
- South Africa: Green Star SA
- Spain: VERDE
- United States: LEED/Living Building Challenge/Green Globes/Build it Green
- United Kingdom: BREEAM



# Resources

10 Easy Tips to Green Your Meeting

[www.amg-inc.com/leader-portal/green-meetings.html](http://www.amg-inc.com/leader-portal/green-meetings.html)

Convene Green

[www.convenegreen.com](http://www.convenegreen.com)

Green Meeting Industry Council

[www.greenmeetings.info](http://www.greenmeetings.info)

Leave No Trace (Guide to low-impact techniques in the outdoors and beyond)

[www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org)

U.S. EPA Green Meetings Guide

[www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)