



ARE YOU BORED WITH THIS TOPIC? DO YOU THINK IT HAS BEEN DONE TO DEATH IN EVERY MAGAZINE AND AT EVERY MEETINGS INDUSTRY CONFERENCE IN THE LAST FEW YEARS? IS ANYTHING HAPPENING AS A RESULT OF ALL THE HULLABALLOO? WELL YES IT IS, BUT NOT ENOUGH - WE NEED TO KEEPING BANGING ON THE DRUM UNTIL IT IS SECOND-NATURE.

ANOTHER ARTICLE ON SUSTAINABILITY

And it takes a number of drums to make up the full drum kit. There is social and economic responsibility; there is the workplace, the office, the home and, in our instance, the conference. It is the responsibility of all individuals to practice and support sustainability through their CSR practices and develop sustainable practices. In the world of conference organisers it is not only the client and organiser who need to adopt sustainable principles but attendees who need to support, adopt and apply those principles to their individual practices.

The 'Green Meetings' element stretches across the whole gambit of the meeting:

- + The destination and venue
- + Accommodation and transport
- + Food and beverage
- + The exhibition
- + Production
- + Marketing & communications
- + Congress materials

Everyone is talking about it, and in general most are doing something about it... but are they doing enough?

Taking Food & Beverage as an example: think about the scenario of 2,500 delegates across a 5 day conference using 62,500 plates, 87,500 napkins, 75,000 glasses and cups, and 90,000 can or bottles, not to mention the Greenhouse emissions from travel along with paper and plastic waste materials from the conference. If you consider that IAPCO members alone in

2010 produced over 6,000 conferences with over 2.2 million participants it is easy to see how important sustainable practices are within the meetings and events industry.

According to the Green Meeting Industry Council (GMIC), a green meeting or event incorporates environmental considerations throughout all stages in order to minimise its negative impact on the environment. So what kind of sustainability practices can the meetings industry adopt?

Conference Organisers are able to **choose meeting facilities and venues** that have a Green Globe accreditation where possible and have achieved an International Association of Congress Centres (AIPEC) Gold quality standard.

Sound **food and beverage management** can assist in reducing conference costs and environmental waste. Considerate organisers use local products and minimise packaging where possible. The use of a food bank will ensure that excess food is not wasted and food safety practices are adhered to. Organisers and managers of catering companies will calculate catering numbers very carefully to avoid excess waste - and create budget savings as well! Inevitably there will be wasted food and in many countries it is not possible to implement a programme of redistribution to community projects, but the compost heap is always an alternative! In addition, organisers might consider providing delegates with water bottles that they can refill.

Choosing hotel options for **accommodation** that are within walking distance to the meeting venue will ensure that delegates use less **transport** and emissions are reduced, if this is not possible promote the use of public transport to reduce emissions or use green efficient transport.

Printed conference materials are now minimised where possible with the use of electronic marketing and web resources. With the introduction of the smart phone and 'app' developments many delegates do not need a printed copy of the program book or registration brochure. For materials that must be printed on paper, organisers have the choice of vegetable inks, recycled paper and printing double-sided to minimise paper use. And organisers could use web-based portals and teleconferencing facilities to communicate with clients with a view to reducing travel associated with administrative face-to-face meetings.

Production companies could be selected on the basis of their sustainable practices, where materials which are still usable, and equipment, are donated to the community, and where equipment is turned off or switched to eco-mode as a matter of course.

Exhibitors and sponsors are fully briefed and abide by the conferences environmental policies. Exhibitors are encouraged where possible to repackage reusable materials instead of creating landfill. Exhibition

organisers need to take a look at minimising lighting outside exhibition hours and carefully consider the need for excess carpeting taking into account tiles, second lay or providing disposal carpet (first lay) to an external venue such as hostels. And of course providing facilities for easy division of recycling materials.

Whilst it is accepted that **sponsors** frequently provide the financial backing for conferences, it is important that organisers create packages that are eco-friendly, and that items contained within 'shopping lists' do not contravene the event's sustainable policy. Via **electronic marketing** alert your delegates and attendees to the conference policies on sustainability. By making delegates and attendees aware of the sustainable practices and providing them with hints and tips, conference organisers can ensure that everyone is

doing their part towards achieving a green meeting. Community activities for delegates and attendees can also be a fun way to experience different cultures and support social responsibilities. Planting a copse of trees or fundraising for an industry specific community green project can be a way to leave a positive **lasting legacy** from the conference to the community. There are a range of carbon offset programs to offer to delegates and exhibitors.

Most importantly conference organisers must ensure that all actions are practical, affordable and viable for the conference. Conference organisers can adopt best practice principles for green meetings by referring to resources such as International Standardization Organization (ISO) and British Standards Institution (BSI). Further comprehensive standards for

environmentally sustainable meetings are being created through a partnership of The **Convention Industry Council (CIC)**'s **Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX)** initiative and ASTM International. Standards will be composed of nine sectors within the planning process and will go a long way to assist organisers through education and reporting materials to manage certified green events, with appropriate reporting structures.



This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers. IAPCO members organise in excess of 6100 meetings annually, totaling some 2.24 million delegates. info@iapco.org / www.iapco.org

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experience. contribute.
excite. convene. present.
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