How Green Is Your Event?

ATPI Corporate Events’ Yolanda Logt discusses how simple event sustainability can be and shares some useful tips.
Introduction

More and more clients are expecting event managers to deliver sustainable events. Lots of corporates, especially multinationals and government agencies, include corporate social responsibility (CSR) in their marketing strategy. You may wonder about their motivation. Is ‘being green’ a response to societal pressure or a tool some companies use to push sales and show the world how responsible they are?

This insight article has been created for event professionals who are interested in understanding how to incorporate environmentally friendly initiatives into their event strategies.

Yolanda Logt

Yolanda Logt has a wealth of experience in the event industry and since 2013 has headed up the ATPI Corporate Events operations in The Netherlands.

What this insight will tell you

- How CSR blends with event management
- Two differing approaches to CSR
- Sustainability and individual responsibility
- Some useful tips to work towards a green event
Being green: trend or hype?

This discussion has been going on for the past few years and it comes and goes. Whether CSR is a serious economic trend or just marketplace hype, the fact is the meetings and events industry is doing its utmost to offer clients socially responsible options. Especially in regards to providing certification for event companies that give their clients socially responsible choices or demonstrate social responsibility themselves.

Many in the corporate events industry are jumping on the bandwagon. Think of environmental organisations such as Green Key, Green Globe, Rain Forest Alliance, Event Greening and Travel Globe - you can probably add other names to the list. Generally there are two approaches companies take to CSR: ‘Green Washing’ and ‘Green Adopting’.
Green Washing

Green Washing has serious drawbacks. Because it is not integrated into the company’s marketing strategy and more importantly, internal communications, employees are often unaware and uninvolved, and there’s no fit with the corporate culture.

The result is a programme that lacks vision and rarely adds value – more of a one off initiative, for example employees of a bank being asked to paint elderly people’s homes.

Green Adopting

This idea could easily be turned into Green Adopting. How about offering the initiative to the paint industry whereby they use their own paint products and repeat the event each year at a new location? With the right internal communication and marketing, the programme could improve morale within the paint company itself and encourage employees to contribute to local communities on an ongoing basis.

A firm I worked with extended this concept by providing paint, manpower and supplies to help an orphanage and school in Brazil paint their buildings, but in addition used it as a development programme internally to engage and rewards its employees. I can tell you, the strategy was a winner! The client quickly experienced an upswing in employee morale and commitment.
The event industry going green…

And while we are helping clients become more socially responsible, many in our industry are going green, too. Again, the key to success is to make sure the activity is a good fit for your company.

One example of linking strong corporate values to an inspiring philanthropic cause comes from a sporting event company that supplies clothes, shoes and soccer balls to Run-4-Schools, an African project that improves children’s’ lives by getting them off the street and onto the soccer field. Opportunities here are endless. While some event companies donate in-kind products, services or man-power, others prefer to earmark a fixed percentage of company profits to one charity each year.
Let’s go back to certification. Certifying green venues, hotels and products can be tough; while individual countries offer their own guidelines, international standards are still unavailable. A global ‘green’ label with measurable standards is the ideal, but the start-up will surely entail some pretty difficult political and economic hurdles.

But you don’t need to begin with large scale initiative – one easy way we can all contribute to environmental initiatives? Simple: just keep asking questions, research options (your event management company can help with this) and use your common sense.
Useful tips

- Think about social, economic and environmental impacts from initial project planning
- Use the 3-Rs: reduce, recycle and reuse when planning events
- If possible, minimise travel impacts by choosing your destination carefully and staying at only one location. Using public transportation instead of exclusive transfers can be great fun, too!
- Be energy and water-wise (i.e. tap water is safe to drink in many countries – why use bottled water?)
- Don’t forget to factor in the well-being of the local community as well as your delegates and suppliers
- Most important of all: raise awareness of your green efforts by sharing best practices with clients, suppliers and colleagues
About the Expert

Yolanda Logt has a wealth of experience in the event industry and since 2013 has headed up the ATPI Corporate Events operations in The Netherlands.

She has nearly 30 years’ experience in the events business working for another global travel company and running her own consultancy business. She and partner Kim Alderden launched an international digital network for the meetings & events industry called SHARE TODAY, complete with e-magazine and blog. Now Yolanda manages a team of 20 based in the ATPI offices in Amsterdam and Eindhoven offering services for Incentive & Group Travel, Business Meetings, Event Production and Activation Campaigns.

Make contact
If you’d like to chat to a member of the team about green initiatives for your corporate event email hello@atpi.com

Find out more

For business and event management case studies, e-guides and insights from industry experts, visit the ATPI Knowledge Hub.
ATPI is among the world’s leading travel management companies. Our dynamic and innovative approach to savings and service has earned us one of the highest client retention rates in the industry.

With over 100 offices worldwide, the company has successful operations in corporate travel, corporate event management, online travel technology and specialist travel management for a number of key industries.