

THE TIME IS **NOW**



Sustainability in Business Events Industry
The Sustainable Event Starting Line



INTRODUCTION

As an event organiser, we know you are busy. You are constrained by time, by budgets, and by human capital. Costs are rising, and resources scarce. Yet there is one more thing everyone will have to accelerate on: saving the planet. Sustainability is top of mind for governments, businesses, and consumers. Research has shown growing interest in sustainable events, and planners are starting to do more. Destinations and suppliers are gearing up.

It can be daunting to stare down the path of sustainable events. So many topics, buzzwords, long checklists, and potential cost increases. Where and how to start?

Here are five essential steps to kickstart your sustainable event journey. These are not the only things you can do. Some sustainability experts may differ on whether these are the most important. However, they are straightforward, do not require immediate cost increases, and will not take up too much time. If all event organisers can do these five things to start, it will help move everyone forward on this path, and the event industry can collectively drive change. Let's raise the starting line today.





ACTION 1

ADD SOME GREEN FLAVOUR TO YOUR MENU PLANNING

What To Do

Pinpoint who is involved in menu-planning for your event and ask them about sustainable menu options. Ask your venue, your catering company, the hotel, the restaurant, and/or anyone else who is planning meals served. There are many ways menus can be sustainable, but the best thing you can do is try to offer more vegetarian and vegan menu options as it reduces carbon emissions. Ideally, this should be the default, and make attendees request

meat separately. Locally produced food is also good to have. Offer items like seafood and coffee that have been certified to sustainability standards.

Some items may cost more, but this could be compensated with better planning to reduce waste and precise ordering, along with some attendees' engagement. All this is possible and can give more content, and a better experience to your event.

Why This Can Make A Difference

Everyone has to eat. Meat takes large amounts of water to produce, and has a high carbon footprint. Having less meat on the menu is one of the best things that you can do to make a positive impact, and is sought out by more and more consumers for health and other reasons. The cultivation of many other items on the menu have been linked to land and sea problems and issues like child

labour and/or forced labour. Speaking of carbon footprint, when you source for ingredients locally, it reduces the distance and corresponding amount of fuel needed to transport them to your event. By seeking out local supplies and local providers, you make a positive impact within the community when the proceeds from your event stay within the destination.



ACTION 2

RETHINK YOUR PRINTING AND GIVEAWAYS

What To Do

Follow that mantra from the bottom of the email signature: consider the environment before you print. Rather than by default, giving away random gifts, products, paper handouts or flyers, rethink whether this is necessary and will be used. Sometimes we give things away because it is a habit developed over the past 20 years. However, as you go through the list, think about whether booth drops, room drops, seat drops actually add value and is something you want to flood your attendees with. This also applies to exhibitors and sponsors, or others distributing information to

get attendees' attention. Ask them to reconsider this as well. Instead, use QR codes and digital visuals. See if there is a better way to give an experience, make a memory, or come away with a better understanding of something without needing a bunch of stuff. Approach your colleagues and partners/suppliers to check if they have seen good ideas or had experiences with less SWAG.

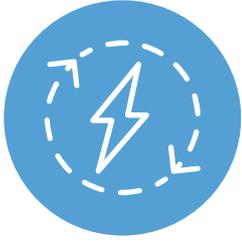
Many venues will have digital signage options, reducing printing. If you need to print out a sign, a banner, or something else for show, then design it without the event's specifics, so it can be reused.

Why This Can Make A Difference

People generate a lot of waste. Business events also generate a lot of waste. The steps you take to reduce waste generated from events are probably the biggest and most important way the business event industry can contribute to the circular economy. Instead of producing stuff that gets thrown away, more thought has to go into reducing the amount of stuff created, reusing items, and offering services that do not generate waste by default.

Every product has a carbon footprint. Paper may have come from sustainable sources, but it is processed in a building that uses energy, shipped to your event, then hauled off to be recycled or thrown away (which takes more energy). Products made of other stuff can be more impactful. In doing so, you reduce the amount of waste that potentially goes to landfill, as well as the amount of resources to produce those items.





ACTION 3

ASK THE VENUE FOR RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY

What To Do

When planning your meeting, ask the venue, be it a hotel, convention centre or other facility, if the meeting will be powered by 100% renewable electricity. Ask if the amount of electricity from your events will be powered by renewables. Ideally not just for your event, but for the entire year. If it can be, then it should be, and the venue should consider this to receive your business. If not, ask the venue why not. And if you can ask earlier on before choosing the venue, then you can probably make this happen.

Why This Can Make A Difference

To cut carbon and reach net zero, the electric power grid will need to go almost entirely renewable within your professional lifetime, and make the biggest shift toward it within the next 8 years. To do that, everyone needs to drive change where we can to help accelerate that transition. Buildings such as hotels, restaurants, and convention centres are a big part of that. While not all buildings can put solar panels on the roofs, in most locations purchasing things like Renewable Energy Certificates help translate the electricity a building consumes to that amount of renewable power being added to the grid. Most importantly, in asking this question, you build a business case for the hotel or venue to install and procure more renewable energy, because their customers are asking for it.



ACTION 4

ASK THE VENUE ABOUT WASTE

What To Do

First, ask the venue what they have in place to ensure waste is reduced at your event.

Second, ask the venue what options are available through them or others, where you can use or rent reusable products, and tap on additional options for recycling, composting and other forms of donation. This will ensure waste generated is kept to a minimum and cut down on the amount going to a landfill or being incinerated.

Third, ask the venue to give you more details on what they cannot do to help reduce waste. This may be due to limitations of the venue, the destination, or just because something was not set up or planned earlier when needed. In asking this question, you can understand what the limitations are. More importantly, you can start to plan better going forward to help solve those problems, budget and make the appropriate requests in time.

Why This Can Make A Difference

Waste is still the most visible issue in an event. Nobody likes to see that waste bin overflowing with stuff toward the end of the day as they leave. The venue can be your critical ally and the gatekeeper to waste management. Even if not responsible for much of the waste being generated, the venue will know where waste comes from and how you and your suppliers can reduce it. The practices in place at the venue are most important, to understand where waste is going and how it will be handled. If planners can keep asking more about a venue's practices and methods, this will send a strong signal in expectations and can drive change.



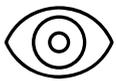


ACTION 5

LEARN MORE ABOUT SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

What To Do And Why This Can Make A Difference

Now that you have embarked on the sustainable event journey with the first five steps, it is time to take the discussion even further.



Seek out courses to look more into the topics you find interesting. Look to your company or professional associations. There are plenty of longer detailed courses available, even an introductory webinar or podcast on sustainability is good to get started. And you do not have to immediately dive into a training for all things related to sustainability, but just a handful of topics.



Ask your peers, ask your suppliers. As you become more acquainted with sustainability, this will help guide better decisions and help you meet the growing needs and requests of your clients and attendees.



In learning more, you can help strengthen your programme, find opportunities to create a better experience, get best practices under your belt, and help take your professional event planning to the next level.



Sustainability is an evolving topic. The innovative practices of yesterday are the common ones today, and that evolution will continue. The sooner you get started, the sooner you can get up to speed, and then maintain strides in sustainable events.

