



Extending Brands
into **experience**

Meeting Green: How to Save Money *and* the Environment



"We can't solve problems using the same thinking we used to create them."
— *Albert Einstein*

Today's Business Is Green Business.

WHETHER YOUR organization is large or small, profit-centered or charitable, there are affordable options for green efforts in your face-to-face meetings with customers and employees. The only requirement is some new thinking.

With 29% of US adults (over 62 million people) claiming to be green-aware,¹ it doesn't take long for consumers' wants and preferences to move up the business ladder and into the world of B-to-B marketing. Business people are also consumers and bring their consumer attitudes with them to the workplace. So, if organizations are going to be greener it makes sense to include our B-to-B interactions such as meetings, conferences, trade shows and sales efforts. This means doing some usual things differently but does not mean losing profit or risking market share. On the contrary, green measures are often very good for business and can save money.

Opinion polls have been pointing out the burgeoning environmental consciousness trend since the turn of the millennium. A McKinsey & Co. global survey in 2007 showed an astounding 87% of consumers in 8 major economies around the world were concerned about the environmental impact of products they buy.² Closer to home, an AMP Agency report found that 53% of consumers factor a company's social and environmental activities into their purchasing discussions.³



Green Initiatives Must Be Cultivated

First, do your homework within your own organization. Is there a sustainability plan? Does your company have a Sustainability Officer? Is there a Green Team, and if so, how can you get on it? Make a list of your company's green efforts so you can answer questions from customers or develop a promotional piece to highlight them. Today's audiences are very sensitive to "greenwashing" so don't exaggerate your efforts or their impact on the environment. Your customers realize that going green is a process so they will not expect you to have all programs fully operational right away.

In conducting your research, you may find that your company is greener than you think. For instance, does it encourage recycling of office paper or bottles and cans? Has your office installed water coolers in place of individual plastic bottles? You may find green tactics already in place that you can extend to your B-to-B efforts or others that you can highlight to increase your customer credibility. If you can calculate the dollar savings to the company, do so. For example, if your company has converted any desktop computers to laptops, you can generally count on an energy saving of 10%.⁴ You can find savings figures to work with on manufacturers' websites. Start with makers of CFL bulbs, transportation companies, or electric utilities.

Be assured that you are not alone in your quest to add green tactics to your face-to-face marketing efforts.

Check out these Web sites:

www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/askmrgreen.asp

www.bluegreenmeetings.org

Then, blog your thoughts and questions at:

<http://greeninc.blogs.nytimes.com>

www.greenbiz.com/engage/blogs

Savvy marketers approach green issues as they would any other challenge.

- 1. Research possibilities**
- 2. Make a plan**
- 3. Implement initiatives**
- 4. Reap savings**



GREENWASHING. *The term "greenwashing" is used to describe companies that overstate their commitment to environmentally friendly alternatives in doing business.*⁵



U.S. meetings are a \$107 billion industry serving 136.5 million people attending 1.2 million business events annually.⁶

How To Start Greening Your Meetings, Exhibits and Events

In many industries there are meetings on the calendar right now that need greening. What can be done right now that's cost effective?

Fortunately, the answer is that many small changes can add up to some big savings in actual dollars as well as green credibility. Start as early as possible in your planning process to consider green tactics. Make sustainability a part of your RFP process as you speak with facilities and convention/visitors bureaus(CVBs). Ask for suppliers such as caterers that have sustainability practices in place.

Keep insisting that facilities and suppliers tell you how they will help minimize the environmental impact of your gathering.



Remember the green mantra: Reduce · Reuse · Recycle



Let each of the facilities and suppliers tell you what they're already doing to be more sustainable.

- Saving energy and water
- Reducing the environmental impact of transportation
- Recycling policies
- Donating leftover food to shelters

"...SO MANY EVENT AND EXHIBIT PLANNERS ARE ASKING FOR GREEN MEASURES, THE FACILITIES ALREADY HAVE MANY IN PLACE OR ARE WILLING TO COOPERATE WITH YOU. THEY'RE MORE WILLING TO DIALOGUE AND IMPLEMENT YOUR REQUESTED CHANGES, EVEN AFTER THE CONTRACT HAS BEEN SIGNED. AND WHY NOT? GREEN PRACTICES SAVE THEM MONEY, TOO." — Pam Garvey, CMP, MC²



Tips for Greener Meetings and Conferences

When you are planning a meeting:

1. Consider “walkable” destinations to save money on transportation such as shuttle buses.
2. Ask hotels and caterers about their recycling policies.
3. Supply newspapers to rooms only on guest request and refrain from setting the room a/c to “frostbite” prior to guest arrival.
4. Request paperless signage (LCD Screens) or design your signage to be reused. (Create arrows that can be removed from the sign; when room assignments change, simply reverse the arrows)

Travel and registration practices also can be greener:

1. Request paperless check in/out.
2. Supply meeting agendas by email or beamable to PDAs onsite.
3. Supply walking routes to/from convention center and other venues.
4. Try and find shuttle providers using cleaner energy sources such as natural gas, electricity, or biodiesel. Insist on a no-idling policy for vehicles when waiting for passengers or dropping off.
5. Provide a location for attendees to turn in their name badges for reuse.

In the meeting itself:

1. Serve bulk water not individual bottles.
2. Use smaller, biodegradable cups for hot and cold beverages when china is not available or appropriate.
3. Request seasonal menus with ingredients sourced locally wherever possible.
4. Serve at least one vegetarian meal such as pasta. Animal protein, particularly beef, is hard on the environment.
5. Choose responsibly grown flowers for centerpieces. Consider edible centerpieces such as fruit or flatbread.
6. Don't pre-fill water glasses at the tables.
7. Supply presentations on thumb drives or post to a website.
8. Use both sides of the paper for any necessary handouts.



DID YOU KNOW?

Red meat is approximately 150% more greenhouse gas intensive than chicken or fish?⁷

Cut down on cheese trays to save even more.

Collecting 1,300 name badges for reuse can save \$975 at your next event.⁸



Tips for Exhibits and Exhibit Managers:

Spread the word on every communication you send that your exhibit is going green. Be sure to say that you consider this a process that will grow over time as you replace and update your booth architecture.

1. Ask exhibitors to minimize paper collateral materials or use recycled materials and vegetable based inks.
2. Encourage the use of recycled materials such as aluminum and polyester in booth design.
3. Insist on carpeting, made from recycled fibers such as soda bottles.
4. Provide the exhibitor and booth assignment list as a PDA download.
5. Lighten the load with careful choice of materials and crates. A lighter exhibit means better truck fuel economy and lower drayage costs.
6. Minimize giveaway literature. The Center for Exhibit Research estimates that 65% goes into the trash rather than the suitcase.⁹
7. Consider a thumb drive with company or product logo as a giveaway. Pre-load literature/sales sheets that would have been printed for the exhibit.

Whatever you do will make a difference. Right now, the trade show industry is second only to the construction industry in the amount of waste generated.¹⁰



MC² EcoFlex™ Exhibit System is made of 65% recycled materials and is 100% recyclable.

CONSIDER THIS: Each year that you use the same booth structure you save money. A well-constructed booth can last an average of 5 years with annual maintenance of structure and freshening of graphics.



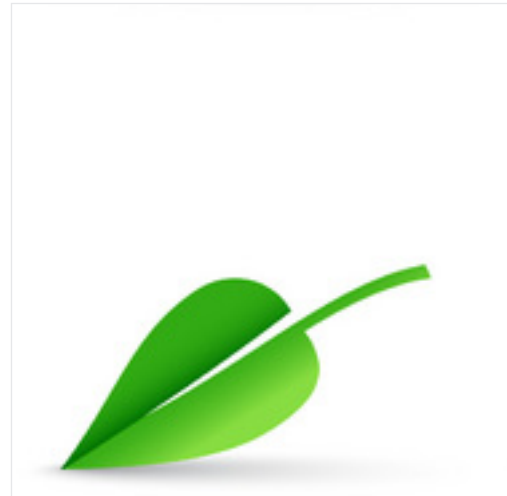
Summary

Does any of this effort make a difference?

Of course, it does. The U.S. is the largest market for paper products in the world, consuming about 100 million tons annually.¹¹ In a typical brochure run, using paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council or recycled paper and soy based inks you can save 47 trees, enough water for 1,100 eight minute showers, 75 large cans of garbage and equivalent exhaust emissions to driving a car for 5,322 miles.¹² If enough companies progress beyond thinking green to actually being green, we'll all breathe and live easier.

However, green can't be your only strategy. As always, focus on your brand and what it means to your customer. Make sure your product message is coherent and consistent with your audiences' needs. Then, when you attract interest due to your green tactics, your customers will come back again and again because of the value of your product or service.

Remember, you need to start someplace. As the old saying goes: If you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you always got. Don't hesitate. The best time to go green is NOW.



ONE MORE IDEA: *During a meeting or conference, invite your customers to participate in a green event with your employees. Ask the CVB to you find a local charity to co-sponsor your efforts. Your team might clean up a park or help build a playground from sustainable materials. You'll do a good deed, generate good will, and provide your team with customer face-time. The opportunities are out there, you just need to do a little searching to find them.*



Further Reading

- Green to Gold. Esty, Daniel. Winston, Andrew. Yale University Press
- Greening Your Business. Sitarz, Daniel. Earthpress
- Greening Your Company: Leading CEOs on Addressing Environmental Challenges. Aspatore Books Staff. Aspatore Books
- Greening Your Small Business. Kaplan, Jennifer. Prentice-Hall
- Strategies for the Green Economy. Makower, Joel. Pike, Cara. McGraw-Hill Books
- The Complete Idiot's Guide to Greening Your Business. Riley, Trish. Gadonniex, Heather. Penguin Group

Footnotes

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2. Bonini S, Hintz G, Mendonca L. "Addressing Consumer Concerns About Climate Change." McKinsey Qtly. March 2008
3. Alloy Media + Marketing. GreenAMPLified. www.alloymarketing.com
4. Convention Industry Council's Green Meetings Report. March 17, 2004. p.9
5. www.balancedgreenliving.com/greenwashing
6. Making conventions environmentally friendly. www.sfgate.com. Feb 10, 2008
7. www.exhibitoronline.com/topics/askmrgreenarchive
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