

How to

Maximise centres' green capabilities

Most convention centres have sustainability programmes that meeting planners could use to achieve CSR objectives without spending an extra dime. **Edgar Hirt** shows you how

The greening of meetings has gone from being a "cause" that had to be argued to an expectation by all parties.

Actions taken by convention centres have gone a long way to making this possible: recent surveys have shown that almost 90 per cent of centres worldwide have significant and extensive sustainability policies and practices in place, including programmes that are available for their customer's use.

In fact, supply is far ahead of demand in this regard, as these same surveys show that a relatively small proportion of clients is making sustainability a big factor in their decision-making or programming.

The reason for this divergence is simple: as large and most often government-owned structures, centres are a very visible factor in their communities and must respond not only to client expectations but those of their citizens and governments. This means they are more likely to be leaders in environmental measures whether or not there is a strong market demand or, more importantly, a willingness on the part of clients to participate in the cost of such programmes.

However, the fact that 90 per cent of convention centres have ready-to-use eco-programmes creates a great opportunity for organisers who want to go green.

Here are some suggestions for going green more efficiently in a centre.

First, make it clear from the start of your negotiations with the centre that this is a priority for you. Facility managers are not going to be as sensitive to your needs if you don't tell them, and if they understand that this is a priority they will be in a much better position to offer cost-effective solutions.

Second, become familiar with the programme opportunities that are available in a particular centre and see how these match the interests of your organisation or membership. Again, the most efficient approach will be one that uses existing programmes in centres (i.e., recycling, energy management) rather



than those that require a whole new approach.

Third, look at ways in which you can organise the event around taking advantage of green programme options. It may be possible to save a lot of time and costs just by making modest adjustments to different conference activities.

Fourth, make "greening" a line item in your budget. Even if your commitment is a modest one, the simple fact of including this in a formal way will be a demonstration of commitment and make everyone – including your own staff – more devoted to accomplishing something in this regard.

Finally, plan to promote use among delegates. Any green initiative is only

as effective as the degree to which individuals are prepared to participate, and this needs to be conveyed through conference materials and messaging well in advance.



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The AIPC is a global network of over 169 leading centres in 53 countries, with the active involvement of more than 750 centre management professionals.

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