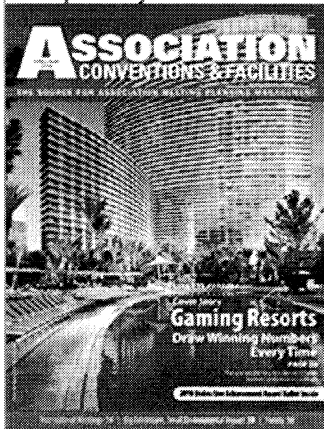


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THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT

Apr./May 2010 Issue

Feature - April/May 2010



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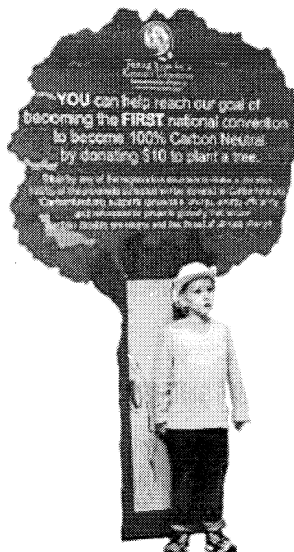
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The Challenges Of Growing A Green Agenda

Tall order: The American Academy of Pediatrics set high sustainability goals for their 2009 National Conference and Exhibition. Though they fell short of their 100 percent carbon neutral goal, the effort was well supported.

Photo courtesy of American Academy of Pediatrics

By Cynthia Kincaid

Trade shows and conventions are the second most wasteful industry in the United States, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. If that's not enough motivation for organizations to reduce the carbon footprint of their exhibitions, the fact that much of the convention and exhibition industry is going green — and



**Jared Cohen
Manager of
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"Attendees had the opportunity to make a donation that we passed on to an organization to offset travel expenses and the carbon footprint of the meeting."

implementing standards to that effect — may necessitate it.

"The green movement is gaining steam, and it's going to become commonplace," said Tracey Messina, executive director for the Convene Green Alliance (GCA). "Green practices and initiatives aren't going to be something that people at the head of the pack are doing; there are going to be things that everyone is doing. Certain standards are being developed to regulate the industry, and as we get a handle on all of these things, people are going to have no choice but to comply with environmental standards."

Messina is referring to the Convention Industry Council's (CIC) Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX) Green Meetings and Events Standards, which are currently undergoing final review. The CIC has partnered with ASTM International to define what is green in the meetings and exhibitions industry and develop accredited standards. Once the standards are adopted, compliance is voluntary, however, according to the CIC, various bodies, such as the U.S. government intend to use the ASTM standards. Industry segments to be standardized include exhibits, accommodations, audio-visual and production, communications and marketing, destinations, F&B, meeting venue, onsite offices and transportation. (Visit conventionindustry.org for details.)

It is clear that meeting planners are going to be under increasing pressure to host green meetings and events, especially where exhibitions are concerned. Already, many planners are on board.

"At the annual exhibit or show, the number of sessions covering green has grown dramatically in the last couple of years," said Tom Bowman, president of Bowman Design Group and Bowman Global Change. "The dipping-your-toe-into-the-water phase is over. The challenge is, people don't know how to deal with it or what to do."

The Professional Convention Management Association's 2010 Annual Meeting in Dallas earlier this year served as a "living laboratory for meeting professionals looking to make their events environmentally friendly," said Messina. (See box on page 33.) In addition, there were green meeting educational opportunities during the conference, including a session on the APEX Green Meetings and Events Standards.

Kelly Peacy, PCMA's vice president of meetings and events, noted during a GCA Focus Forum prior to the conference, "You don't just go out and suddenly become a green organization. You have to build on it. You need to decide how high green ranks on your list of organizational strategic objectives. We asked that question and determined that it was very important, so we put significant resources toward it. At PCMA it is half of one person's job. Every year we build new objectives. If PCMA can be recognized as an industry leader to educate our members about green that would be a success."

Measuring Success

Part of the current challenge is defining just what a green exhibition or trade show is, according to Kimberly Lewis, vice president of conferences and events for the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). And a good part of the solution is to know what you want to accomplish and how you're going to get there.

"It's about setting benchmarks and baselines, and measuring your performance, so that you understand what the green show means to you, your stakeholders, the facilities that you're in, and the community," Lewis said.

Bowman emphasized that those who want a reduced footprint should decide on their goals. "Otherwise you'll just nibble around the edges and you won't get a feeling of whether or not you've achieved anything," he said. "The companies that have had the most success are those that set the most challenging goals. The advantage of



The Vancouver (BC) Convention Centre's waterfront West Building recently achieved the prestigious LEED Platinum certification. Among the building's sustainable design features is its six-acre "living" roof (visible left), the largest living roof in Canada and the largest non-industrial living roof in North America.

Photo courtesy of Vancouver Convention Centre

doing that is that it makes you look at everything in a new way."

Bowman recommended that exhibitors should quantify everything about the exhibition: "How many shows do you go to? How many are distributed around the country? Can you cluster any of them together so that you can ship from show to show? Transportation of your properties and flying to the shows are most likely two of the biggest pieces in your carbon footprint. You want to get a sense of where most of your activity lies and deal with that."

Convene Green's Messina stressed that goal setting is an important piece, but it has to come from a willingness of the organization and the facility to

achieve a particular environmental goal. "The environmental goal needs to be made known to all parties involved, as well as communicating any challenges and successes of the green initiatives that are implemented," she said.



Tracey Messina
Executive Director
The Convene Green
Alliance
Arlington, VA

"Certain standards are being developed to regulate the industry, and as we get a handle on all of these things, people are going to have no choice but to comply with environmental standards."

Scrutinize Contracts

Planning a green trade show requires much input and planning, but it also requires agreement from all parties ahead of time. As most meeting planners know, they have greater power in getting what they want before signing contracts, so this is the time to really focus on getting as much "green" as possible. "Cities, convention centers and hotels want your business," said Noreen Burke, group show director for Corcoran Expositions, Inc. and show manager for Green Build International Conference and Expo, which is organized by the USGBC. "Before you sign a contract, that's the time to ask for things."

Burke also recommends tasking the general service contractor responsible with getting everything needed for a successful green exhibition. "Tell them, 'we want to start moving in this direction, what can you bring to the table?'" she said. "Tell them, 'I want you to do some research and tell me what you can offer me in this regard.'"

Asking up front will make the entire process go more smoothly.

Take Concrete Steps

In implementing a green program, Lewis urges planners to look at the big picture in a more creative way. "You need someone to push the envelope and start doing the research," she said. "You may need to back off of past relationships to be creative and look at doing things differently to give your attendees a better experience."

For instance, think about sharing resources in a more innovative way. "Folks coming from the same region have often decided to share trucks," Lewis noted. "Some of our exhibitors have been together for seven or eight years, and they have learned to share best practices and resources in working together, as long as they are not competitors."

Printing is another area to closely scrutinize. Today's attendees are techno-savvy, especially in the financial arena, so posting registration materials and exhibitor kits online can cut printing costs significantly, while making these materials easier to access.

If you do have to mail out registration and exhibitor materials, look for reprinting alternatives that use recycled content paper and water- or soy-based inks. "If you can do away with the materials altogether, that's great," said Burke. "If you have to print, print responsibly. There are a lot more green printers to choose from today than there were five years ago."

If your trade show involves food and drink, serve locally grown food on china, and use stainless steel utensils. If you must use paper plates and plastic utensils, try to use sustainable, corn-based plates and utensils, Burke advised. "And have water stations instead of bottled water."

To Build or Not to Build

Some organizations that want to start developing more sustainable exhibitions vacillate over whether or not to discard their current exhibit booth for a more environmentally friendly one. The answer may surprise you.

"The most sustainable answer is, no don't build a new exhibit," said Bowman.



Tom Bowman
President
Bowman Design Group
Signal Hill, CA

"There is a direct



The Green Build International Conference and Expo, held last year at the Phoenix Convention Center, is organized by the U.S. Green Building Council and is the world's largest conference and expo dedicated to green construction. The expo aims to help attendees learn "how green can grow your business."

Photo courtesy of Corcoran Expositions

"Continue to use the property you already have. You can conserve a lot of resources that way." Once it has been used to its fullest extent, then it can be replaced with a more eco-friendly version.

Staffing your exhibit also can have green implications. "If I can have three local reps staff my booth and send three fewer people out to the show, then I have saved a lot of money and reduced my carbon footprint," Bowman added.

Shipping booths and other exhibit materials from show to show, without having to ship them back to, say, the corporate office in between gigs also can save

There is a direct cost savings advantage by being energy and resource efficient. Companies in general are going to find more ways to be more efficient in how they operate from end to end, and exhibit programs are going to be no exception to it."

significant money and reduce the carbon impact on the environment. "Start with things that make good cost-efficiency sense in the first place," Bowman said. "There are lots of ways to strategize that don't cost more."

Cut Costs

"There is still a fear with meeting planners that it is too expensive to go green," said Burke. "I think it's a myth. The costs are starting to break down because there is more demand for [green practices], so prices are going down and becoming more mainstream."

In fact, Burke argued that there are things today that any association, or any meetings department within an association, can implement immediately that won't cost much money, such as moving most of the registration and exhibitor kit materials online and keeping signage and graphics the same every year to cut down on printing. "There are other things they can do that are more of a financial commitment, but if they budget for those incremental changes every year, the impact won't be as great for them financially," she said.

Messina agreed. "Going green isn't necessarily more expensive," she said. "We have found a lot of green initiatives are actually more cost-effective, which is why we think, even through the downturn of the economy, that people haven't ignored the idea of going green." She cited eliminating printing, scaling back on shipping costs, and serving organic and locally grown foods as just a few examples. "There are cost-effective green options to be had."

Green Guidelines

The U.S. Green Building Council has recently implemented mandatory green guidelines that exhibitors at its Green Build International Conference and Expo must follow.

"It's very bold," said Burke. "If they don't comply, there are repercussions, and they won't be invited back next year."

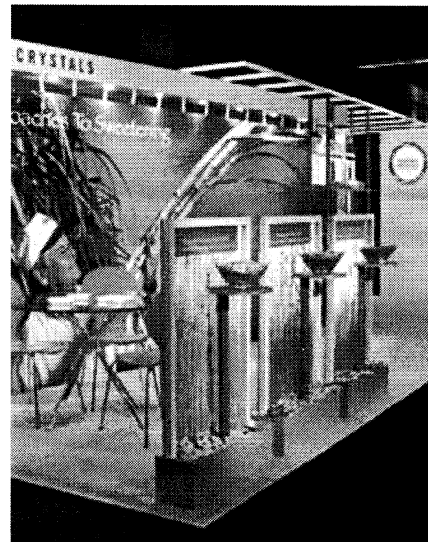
For instance, the guidelines require that exhibitors not add additional graphics and signage and reuse the ones they currently have. "If they are going to create new graphics, we asked that they integrate sustainable elements made of recyclable materials," Burke said.

The USGBC's guidelines also call for the elimination of print and promotional giveaways, if possible. If they have to be provided, exhibitors are required to provide no more than 5,000 promotional items, which must be made from sustainable materials.

Exhibitors are also asked to provide a material usage report. "We ask them to tell us how their booth is made and what materials make up their booth," said Burke. "The material they use may not be as sustainable, but if they are using it year after year, instead of creating a new booth every year, that still applies."

The guidelines also call for no products to be left behind after the exhibit. "We work hard researching and partnering with local communities and nonprofit organizations," said Lewis. "We have a very vigorous donation program for any of the materials or promotional items to be reused."

The USGBC's mandatory guidelines have been phased in over the past couple of years and are expected to be industry standard going forward. The guidelines also include energy use. "We look at how they conserve energy within their booths, and if they are using water, we want to make sure they are constantly reclaiming and reusing that water," said Lewis. "We look at how a person presents their products to the marketplace and make sure they are thinking about



Bowman Design Group's Florida Crystals exhibit at the Natural Products Expo uses sustainable lumber and recycled carpet, plus resin panels rather than plexiglass, which is less polluting and more recyclable.

Photo courtesy of Bowman Design Group

sustainability.”

Developing a Sustainability Policy

The USGBC has also included a requirement that Green Build exhibitors provide a company sustainability policy. “It’s not just about what you bring to Green Build, it’s what you bring to the environment as a whole as an organization,” said Burke. “This has opened a dialogue for them to go back to their board or executives and say, ‘if we are serious about the products we are delivering to the marketplace, then we need to have a sustainability policy to back up our word about who we are as an organization.’”

Lewis sees the company sustainability policy as a tool that connects what the company is communicating to the marketplace and what it is actually doing within the organization. “It’s about connecting the dots and making sure there’s not just one person that understands sustainability,” she said.

Bowman finds that meeting planners who work for organizations that don’t have green missions can find themselves adrift.

“If you’ve decided to have a greener exhibit program, but there is no corporate mission to green your company, you are sort of a lone wolf and it’s tough,” he said. “If you don’t have a corporate mission to go green, you’re often fighting a losing battle.”

What’s more, Messina pointed out, there is more and more outcry for the greening of meetings, events and exhibits. “There is a lot of pressure coming from the executive boards and trustees of organizations, as well as the membership and staff of the organizations, to green their meetings and events.”

Make the Commitment

Burke reminds planners that the greening of an exhibition is a commitment that needs follow-through — even if the pace is slow at first.

“An organization has to decide at what level they want to make a commitment, and it’s okay if they go slow,” she said. “Every change that they make in the direction of sustainability and green practices is one step farther than they were before.”



Kimberly Lewis
Vice President
Conferences and Events
U.S. Green Building
Council
Washington, DC

“It’s about setting benchmarks and baselines, and measuring your performance, so that you understand what the green show means to you, your stakeholders, the facilities that you’re in, and the community.”

She recommended making incremental changes, and then adding to them every year, to slowly build a sustainable green model, especially where exhibiting is concerned.

“Getting their boards and executive management to agree is one of the biggest challenges that meeting planners have,” Burke said. “But more and more companies, who typically don’t have a business model that is green, are starting to incorporate some green initiatives into their program. Every little bit helps.”

Whatever the pace, green is here to stay, and smart meeting planners will start incorporating green exhibits into the mix.

“Energy and food demand are going to go up, lumber demand is going to go up, and there is no way this issue of green is going to go away,” Bowman said. “It’s only going to get more important. Companies that go green are starting to find a customer loyalty advantage, and as time goes by, they’re going to find there is a direct cost savings advantage by being energy and resource efficient. Companies in general are going to find more ways to be more efficient in how they operate from end to end, and exhibit programs are going to be no exception to it.”

Lewis sees the green exhibition movement, and the green movement overall, as a way to think about maximizing resources and leaving things better. “It’s about how we can support the local community and local businesses, and create those relationships back and forth,” she said. “That’s the broadest story of sustainability that we don’t often hear about.”

Messina acknowledged that companies are going green for different reasons, whether it is to save money, make money or put forth good public relations. Holding green exhibits can certainly impact all of these things. “But at the end of the day, it’s all going to bring about positive environmental change, which is all that really matters,” she said.

Burke urges meeting planners to get ahead of the green curve and do everything

they can to make their exhibitions and trade shows as eco-friendly as possible. "You either get onboard or you're going to be lost in the shuffle, because it's not going away and it shouldn't," she said. "And it's a good thing because it's long overdue."
ACF

AAP's Green Commitment

Raising the sustainability standard for its meetings and events has been anything but child's play for The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), which drew more than 12,000 attendees to its 2009 National Conference and Exhibition at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. To improve upon its "not so green" history, the AAP has significantly increased its commitment to sustainability over the past two years.

"We took a look at our 2007 meeting and made a list of what we could do to improve the meeting," said Jared Cohen, manager of convention & meeting services for the AAP. "We came up with our green plan. It started out as a list of everything we could do, then we narrowed it down to the practical."

For the October meeting, AAP relied heavily on its general contractor, TradeshowLogistics to organize its green conference and exhibition efforts. AAP exhibitors were offered online exhibitor manuals, forgoing costly printing. Attendee materials were offered on CD. The trade show also demanded green practices from their audio-visual, cleaning, floral, furniture, carpeting, labor, shipping, signage and storage providers.

"We really wanted to get our vendors involved and have an equal partnership between the host community and the convention center," said Cohen. "The attendees also had the opportunity to make a donation that we passed on to an organization to offset travel expenses and the carbon footprint of the meeting."

Biodegradable material was used for plates and utensils. Food was composted or donated to local charities; grease and oils were recycled. An innovative Carbon Offset Shuttle Program was instituted that tallied the number of gallons of diesel each bus burned and the number of numeric tons that each bus emitted.

"Our shuttle bus and shipping vendor each made a donation on our behalf that equals the carbon offset of our meeting," said Cohen.

The meeting was a green success, one that the AAP wants to not only duplicate, but also improve upon. "The whole process has been a learning experience," said Cohen. "Each year we are going to look and see what we can do better." — CK



A reception at AAP's 2009 National Conference and Exhibition: AAP worked with the Walter E. Washington Convention Center to minimize the event's impact in five areas: site, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality.

Photo courtesy of American Academy of Pediatrics

PCMA Leads The Green Way

Much of an exhibition's green compliance lies with the choice of the venue itself. This year's Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) Convening Leaders Conference landed at the Dallas Convention Center, one of only two exhibit facilities of more than 2 million square feet to be ISO 14001 certified (a system of evaluating and managing environmental impact) across all of its major operations. The center's sustainable initiatives include: wind power, which provides 100 percent of the center's electricity; 54 rooftop solar panels for hot water; high-efficiency chillers and lighting systems, new heating and air



conditioning controls: high-speed overhead doors that close automatically when there is no movement to help maintain temperatures in exhibit halls; water-saving plumbing fixtures; use of environmentally safe cleaning supplies; and an expansive recycling program with complimentary recycling collection containers and removal of recycling dumpster. The center also is

part of a citywide commitment to obtain 40 percent of energy from renewable resources. For the PCMA conference, Centerplate catering at the convention center strived to use as much organically grown food as possible. Plus, leftover food was donated to a local food bank, and other unused food was composted.

The convention center's environmental commitment is guided by its Environmental Management Committee. During a Convene Green Alliance Focus Forum prior to PCMA's annual meeting, Frank Poe, director, city of Dallas conventions and event services explained, "The committee is the filter through which these programs flow. We have systems and processes in place to mitigate the effect on the environment. We also soon expect to be the only existing convention center — not a new construction center — to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold or silver certification."

PCMA Vice President of Meetings and Events Kelly Peacy noted during the forum what every planner needs to keep in mind during the site selection process: "You need to look at your facility as a true partner. Sit down and talk about your specific goals. Show them that when we are successful you will be successful. But you can't put the onus on the facility — you have to drive your own green efforts." — AC&F



PCMA found that 60 percent of its members still want a registration bag, so for this year's annual meeting, they made them from organic materials and offered an option to donate the bags to a local school after the meeting.

Photo courtesy of PCMA



PCMA conference attendees helped to pack up leftover food from the Dallas Convention Center that was donated to the North Texas Food Bank.

Photo courtesy of PCMA