



Sense and sustainability

GREEN BUSINESS When it comes to events, 2013 is going to be the year where sustainability will be at the forefront of PAs' planning says **Karen Lindsey**

IF YOU, TOO, CAN EMPATHISE with your peers who responded to a survey conducted by *Executive PA Magazine*, whereby 100 per cent of the finalists for PA of the Year and Up and Coming PA of the Year said that the greatest challenge they faced was organising an event the very last thing you probably want to hear about is yet another organisational issue that you'll need to factor into your planning.

When Health & Safety first became the key industry issue, a whole revision of our processes had to be undertaken to ensure that the events we planned underscored the relevant H&S needs. It may have made the process more laborious but I soon identi-

fied that far from having a negative impact H&S was actually having a positive impact on the planning process and execution of events. Many years on, however, add the latest subject of 'sustainability' into the mix and well, I wonder how you are presently reacting to simply reading this article about yet another issue?

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

I believe that sustainability is this decade's H&S concern. It doesn't quite have the same shock factor, but it is my belief that sustainability equally has many significant and damaging ramifications if we choose to avoid it as a genuine issue. ➔

But what is sustainability? For me, it's all about organising 'responsible' events. I believe that it is a natural extension of H&S but not only for considering people's well-being but that of the economy and environment too.

Taking the lead, sustainability factored high on the agenda of organisers for the Olympics. LOCOG openly promoted... "Sustainability is far more than being 'green'. It's ingrained into our thinking". But, if it's not ingrained into your way of thinking, how do we at least start to consider sustainability for our slightly less high profile but equally important events?

This is where I suggest you don your 'sustainability' hat and visualise the event from beginning to end to establish the measures you can effortlessly put in place.

PRACTICAL STEPS

Asking the location and suppliers whether they comply with an environmental policy and securing an understanding that you wish to work alongside them to take practical steps to help reduce the event's carbon footprint is a good starting point. You could consider creating a dedicated website which gives prevalence to public transport information and car-share opportunities. If providing delegate packs, format them to minimise the amount of paper and ink used. Better still, do away with them completely and provide documents via download or memory sticks. When contemplating sustenance, ensure that guests and personnel are provided with healthy, nutritious and fresh seasonal produce served in rooms that have natural daylight and ventilation. Instead of providing bottled water, arrange for jugs of tap water and pre-arrange recycle bins and collection points.


Generally share your vision of sustainability throughout the entire event life cycle and seek the engagement and support of all stakeholders. These kind of simple measures can readily be actioned and go a long way to ensuring your event has its sustainable make-over.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR CHANGE

There is evidence that the event industry as a whole is starting to take sustainability really seriously. One of the indicators is the advent of the Global Sustainable Events Summit which took place in London on the 24th January. Its aim is to 'inspire the continuous development of a global sustainable event industry'. The Summit's intention is to encourage event industry professionals to engage, share ideas and network within a live forum which will ultimately assist to drive change.

Another flag is the development of a British Standard (*BS 8901 - Specification for a Sustainability Management System for Events*), which was first developed in 2007 but due to its high level of interest an international version of the standard was born to coincide with the London 2012 Olympics. ISO 20121 is a management system standard that has been designed to help organisations in the events industry improve the sustainability of their event-related activities, products and services.

Whether a caterer, lighting engineer, security company, stage builder, venue or an event organiser, this international standard describes the building blocks of a management system that, it states, 'will help any event-related organisations to continue to be financially successful, become more socially responsible and reduce its environmental footprint.' ISO 20121 could be inter-



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preted as a blueprint for best practice.

'That's all well and good' I can hear you say 'but I am not an industry expert nor am I a progressive event company employee.' But, what I believe you may be is a person responsible for organising events within your own job role and by applying some simple practical steps to reduce your next event's carbon footprint, you too can help drive change and create your own internal management processes by placing 'consider sustainability' firmly on your tick list!

TIME FOR CHANGE

In time, after the likes of the Global Sustainable Events Summit has studied its findings, some broader measures may also come to light. One thing is for sure, your employer may also have its own sustainability goals and by ensuring that the events that you organise are as sustainable as you can make them, you will undoubtedly contribute towards your company achieving its vision.

Sustainability really is common sense most of the time and as we now consider H&S part and parcel of staging an event, in time, I believe we shall all consider the importance of creating a sustainable event in a similar way.

The question remains, however, will sustainability become the latest thorn in the events organiser's side or will it simply be regarded as the responsible thing to do?

Although organising an event understandably provides its challenges, surely failing to create events that are socially, economically and environmentally sound would provide us with an even greater challenge to overcome in the future. ■

INFO Karen advises clients, hotels and PAs on how to create sustainable events. Visit www.klc-uk.com for further information.