



Green Meetings Made Easy

Why Plan Green Meetings?

There is more concern about the rapid decay of our environment today than ever before. As individuals, we have a responsibility to respond to these concerns and there is no better place to start than in the hospitality industry. There are two major benefits of planning green meetings: decreased cost and increased public relations.

Adhering to the minimum guidelines set forth by the Green Meeting Initiative helps planners to substantially decrease cost from event to event. Recommendations include:

- Recycling event supplies whenever possible
- Collecting and reusing items such as table numbers and signage to cut back on the depletion of environmental resources and their budget
- Reduce the total amount of printed collateral by using double-sided printing and PowerPoint presentations



The PR and recognition as a pro-green planner are undeniably beneficial to a company's image. The EPA is consistently creating new initiatives to give preference to companies that have gone green. Hotels and planners that have a policy of waste reduction are given superiority when planning official state meetings. In many areas, government agencies are steadily improving the benefits given to environmentally conscious companies. Going green also automatically provides planners with a competitive advantage by opening up the eco-friendly target market.

Planning Green Meetings

So you have decided to plan a green meeting. What does this mean? Where should you start? How do you reconcile the desire to be green with the need to save some green? As defined by the Green Meeting Industry Council, "a green meeting incorporates environmental considerations throughout all stages of the meeting in order to minimize the negative impact on the environment." If you are unfamiliar with green planning techniques, you might be under the impression that hosting an environmentally friendly event will be more trouble than it is worth. In actuality, planning green meetings is both simple and cost effective.

Ten Key Ways to Go Green

1. Select hotels and suppliers with green policies and practices
2. Host all multi-session meetings at a central location to limit transportation needs
3. Minimize paper with web based invites, online event registration and electronic follow-up
4. Utilize double-sided printing for all collateral and meeting related materials
5. Give recycled materials precedence when making meeting supply purchases
6. Choose a venue with an in-house recycling program and encourage recycling
7. Decrease the usage of paper and plastic by using real china for all food and beverages
8. Select buffet style menus and donate leftovers to eliminate waste
9. Coordinate with venues to use bulk dispensers for all food and beverage
10. Encourage speakers to use electronic means of presentation



While this list may seem daunting, carefully selecting planning techniques automatically eliminates the headache. Technology providers such as Cvent offer event management tools that significantly decrease excessive waste of paper. Online site selection tools help planners find environmentally friendly venues, making the implementation and coordination of green meeting standards a breeze.

Utilize Technology to Cut Costs

One of the main pitfalls to a lean green meeting is the abundance of papers from start to finish. Excessive use of paper can be eliminated by utilizing an event management service such as Cvent to communicate with attendees. Launch email campaigns for your meetings, send web based invitations, distribute pertinent event details and survey your attendees sans paper.

Cvent's software can be used for all facets of event management. Use webinars and online media kits to ease the flow of meeting information without the waste—and cost—of sending out paper alternatives. Create an event webpage to send important updates and to highlight speakers and effectively reduce the distribution of paper materials during the event. Use online tools and resources to manage on-site registration and last minute changes. After the event, send attendees a personalized follow-up email instead of paying the postage on a traditional direct mail thank you note. Follow-up emails and online surveys allow attendees to provide feedback with the click of a button resulting in increased response rates. Online survey open rates can be tracked (versus the invisible open rate of snail mail) and email contacts can be automatically updated by users in an instantly accessible database. As an event management service provider, Cvent is available to assist planners by automating each step of this process, decreasing the hassle for both the attendee and the planner.

Selecting a Green Venue

Site selection plays an important role in helping planners make the transition from simply thinking green to truly going green. Online site selection tools have made it easy to find venues that have are going green in more ways than one.

When selecting a meeting venue, it's important for planners to search for a hotel that can provide sufficient lodging, meeting space and is also centrally located. This eliminates the need for hosting sessions and meeting-related events in additional facilities, while providing easy access to area attractions and decreasing transportation needs.

Work with a venue that maintains a "green certification" to resolve food waste concerns. Most green certified venues provide a selection of vegetarian menus, use organic materials and adhere to a no-waste policy for containers. Green certified venues often switch from sugar packets and cardboard creamers to reusable bowls and pitchers to substantially reduce waste. Menus are usually comprised of seasonal and local foods to limit the transportation of goods. All food and beverages can be served in ceramic containers rather than plastic not only to support the green initiative, but also to create a classier look for your meeting or event. Select a technologically advanced eco-conscious venue with an active recycling program to conserve energy, decrease paper waste, and encourage recycling. Venues with active recycling programs ensure that recycling bins are conveniently located throughout the hotel so that attendees can easily dispose of conference packets and papers while being environmentally friendly. Technologically advanced venues tend to have electronic signage, drastically decreasing the need for paper flyers and brochures. Most high-tech venues also have automated energy savers that conserve energy used when lights are left on in unused rooms.



Go the Extra Green Mile

Begin to think green and proactively go green in order to execute more successful meetings and events. Make green initiatives a policy and consistently make the environmentally friendly choice. Make purchasing recycled goods and encouraging others to do the same a common practice. Work with venues that give transportation comp packages to large parties to encourage event attendees to use public transportation during their stay. Let green certified venues know that their eco-friendly practices were a determining factor in your decision-making process. Encourage other venues to go green by voicing that green amenities do make a difference. Most importantly, spread the word! Tell your colleagues and peers about the green meeting initiative to encourage adoption for the green initiative. For more information about planning green events, please visit the official EPA website and the BlueGreen Meetings website to find a more detailed list of techniques and considerations for making your events environmentally friendly.

Cvent is an industry leader in seamless event management technology solutions. From invitations and registrations to venue selections and payment collections, Cvent offers a comprehensive toolset to help planners go green. Cvent's web-based, on-demand system allows planners to plan, market, monitor and execute all aspects of their meetings, events and conferences while eliminating the waste of paper. For more information on how to use Cvent's software to plan green meetings please call us at: 1-866-318-4358.



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