

CHECKLIST

Going Green



*Tips for planning environmentally friendly meetings—
one recycled invitation at a time*

BY DANA LYNN BERNSTEIN

While saving the Earth is not the top priority for most meetings, it should be in a corner of the planner's mind. Here are a few low-effort suggestions that can be implemented into most meetings.

Planning the meeting:

- Select a facility that is responsive to your "green" concerns, and that has a designated coordinator responsible for waste prevention, reduction, and recycling. These points should be discussed during the site selection process, and hammered out during negotiations and any pre-con meetings.

Sending out invitations:

- Use recycled paper.
- Display posters in key locations that your potential attendees visit regularly, instead of sending invitations to each attendee.
- Place the invitation in the local newspaper or in a magazine/journal that targets your audience.
- Use e-mail.
- Fax one invitation to

many attendees, instead of mailing one to each attendee.

- A footnote at the bottom of the invitation (or in the welcome packet) explaining your interest in holding a greener meeting may attract more attendees.

At the hotel (ask the sales manager if these points can be accommodated):

- Cleaning staff should not discard bathroom amenities if the guest is staying more than one night (replenish as needed).
- Lights and radio should remain off until the guest checks in.
- Sheets/towels should not be changed every day if the guest is staying more the one night. (unless requested)
- Use rechargeable battery-operated alarm clocks.
- Provide labeled recycling bins (for bottles, cans, and paper) in each sleeping room.
- Do not give guests newspapers unless requested.
- Post reminders to turn off guest-room

lights when leaving the rooms.

During the meeting:

- Provide receptacles so you can recycle posters, tent cards, folders, packing boxes, etc.
- Have ride shares to and from the hotel if flight arrival/departure times are close together.
- Use fewer packing boxes (pack more material in each box).
- Photocopy meeting materials on two sides of each page, rather than stapling two sheets of paper together.
- Recycle name badges and badge holders. To make sure attendees recycle these items, collect them in a drawing for door prizes. Another approach is to provide a well-marked, closed box with a slot in the top. Collection boxes should be placed in highly visible, easily accessible places as attendees are leaving.
- Recycle slip sheets (the paper the printer inserts between printed pages).
- Put labeled recycling bins (for bottles, cans, and paper) in all meeting rooms.

- Replace the traditional styrofoam and paper cups of coffee breaks with reusable containers. Use cloth napkins, not paper ones; and provide metal, not plastic, utensils at every meal. Use glass sugar containers with pouring spouts rather than individual paper packets. Do the same for milk and cream.

At the meeting's end:

- Send extra supplies/materials to your home office, rather than discard them (if you print materials without the date, they may be reusable at your next event).
- "Carry and marry" the food (meaning, take what is left over from the reception and use it for the break—don't throw it away).
- Have extra food sent to local homeless shelters (get a letter from the shelters confirming that they have received it).
- Recycle hotel notepads and pens.

Dana Lynn Bernstein plans domestic and international meetings and is project manager for MPE Communications in Fairlawn, New Jersey. She can be reached at (201) 796-6500, ext. 239.