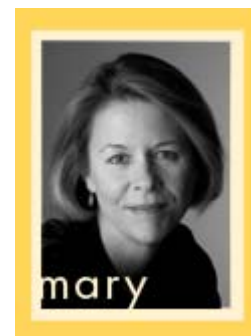




"In a recent survey, 67% of meeting and incentive planners said they have taken environmental considerations into account when making program decisions.

As companies put into place environmental initiatives, consumers are demanding that their behavior be consistent with their message. As such, it only follows that organizations have begun to look at the events and meetings they plan with a more critical eye. That includes the energy and waste that's used and produced at trade shows, conventions, festivals and other events.



Organizations are making intentional decisions to select "green" cities when choosing their convention destinations. Planners are asking facilities to provide evidence of environmentally sound practices before signing contracts.

The meetings and convention industry is going green.

In 2004, the Convention Industries Council produced a report outlining best practices for convention facilities, transportation providers, lodging, and food and beverage providers, and others. Virtually every facet of the industry is covered in the document, outlining minimum and recommended best practices in each category.

Procedures include sourcing local and organic foods, providing recycle bins, composting food waste, reducing printing, water conservation (e.g. refraining from pre-pouring water glasses at a banquet), and dozens of other suggestions.

While these recommendations have been in place for several years, only recently has the effort gained real momentum. The energy force behind that push, of course, is the customer. If our clients want to reduce their carbon "footprint," we need to respond.

The trade show industry alone is said to be number two, after construction, in creating waste. The average conference delegate produces 61 pounds of solid waste, uses 846 gallons of water and produces 1419 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions. One five-day conference for 2500 delegates will use 90,000 cans or bottles and 162,500 cups and napkins. When you take into account that it takes an average of 450 years for a plastic water bottle to decompose, the numbers add up.

Add to those figures the number of street festivals and concerts, weddings, sporting events and meetings that occur annually, and you can imagine the carbon emissions that are generated from special events.

Events aren't going away—they are a critical factor in the make-up of our social and corporate society—but they are changing. Brides are going green. Companies are donating to carbon offset programs to minimize the impact of their meetings and corporate travel. Hotels are initiating towel and linen re-use programs to conserve water. Caterers are composting food waste.



In Charlotte, we've established a "Green Team," to address environmental issues with regard to Charlotte's events, facilities and related industries. Comprised of individuals who represent organizations related to the hospitality industry, our goal is to reduce the carbon footprint of the events that

take place in our city.

What can you do?

If you're part of the hospitality industry, start paying attention to the events or meetings that you plan. Begin to initiate steps to reduce, reuse and recycle. Even one step can make a huge difference in the amount of waste that's produced at an event.

Even if you don't plan events, notice the ones you attend. Make helpful suggestions to organizers or sponsors when you see "greening" opportunities. If you attend an event that exhibits a commitment to going green, thank the organizers or sponsors by doing business with them.

Taking small steps can produce large results. When you think of the amount of waste you can save with a simple recycling program, it's well-worth the effort you make.

When it comes to the environment, imagine what *one party* can do.