

Going Green – why you should consider independent certification for your venue

In this short article Helene Møgelhøj discusses 'greening' your hotel or conference venue

Perhaps you have already taken steps towards greening your venue. However, if sustainability is not already on your agenda here are some of the reasons why it definitely should be:

- Being green is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for venues. Meeting planners and the supply chain expect properties to have such initiatives in place and indeed the Government demands it.
- A more sustainable operation means improved resource efficiency resulting in cost savings and in turn increased profitability.
- Enhanced profile and reputation through reduced environmental and social impacts as well as increased client satisfaction.
- Opting for an independent internationally-recognised sustainability system is the best way to verify and communicate achievements credibly thus boosting your venue's competitive edge.

Failing to factor sustainability into your operation could mean your business facing a number of legislative and supply chain risks in the not too distant future. The growing awareness of the environment and climate change combined with the intrinsic relationship with hospitality and tourism means that now is good time to get your business in order.

For example London 2012 will be the first summer Olympic Games to embed sustainability. For corporate hospitality and venue providers this means complying with London 2012's sustainability guidelines for corporate and public events. The Olympic Games themselves will be subject to a full sustainability management system developed by the London 2012 Organising Committee for compliance with BS8901. This British Standard for a Sustainability Management System for Events was inspired by the London

2012 Games and is the basis for the draft International Standard 'Sustainability in Event Management' ISO 20121 due to be launched in 2012 which provides guidance for planning and managing sustainable events of all sizes and types.

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It can be difficult to assess which type of sustainability certification system is most suitable for your venue, location, type of operation as well as recognisable by your target clients. Deciding on the most appropriate system will depend on these and other factors.

It is worth noting that certification schemes designed specifically for the tourism and hospitality industry tend to go further than just environmental sustainability, typically embracing the social and cultural aspects as well. Typically the certification process will cover the following areas:

- Appropriate sustainability policy and management system in place
- Socio economic – local employment, equality and diversity, community and stakeholder engagement
- Environmental – energy and water consumption, waste and recycling, and conservation
- Local sourcing and sustainable procurement
- Ethical supply chain
- External communications and transparency
- Transport

In order to achieve certification a business must meet a set of mandatory criteria as well as commit itself to continuous improvement through monitoring, measuring and providing feedback on its performance.

A good way to look at certification is as an enabler to drive positive change and achieve improvements through a range of actions. At first glance certification may appear expensive, but usually the benefits and cost savings achieved as a result of certification far outweigh the costs.

A good example is The Leipzig Messe which launched a transparent and measurable sustainability management process entitled 'Growth in Balance' which illustrates the Messe's commitment to sustainable and responsible business management. The starting-point for the Messe was the so-called '2-Degree Office' – a model office featuring information on how Messe employees can save resources and energy in their everyday working lives. The name '2-Degree Office' was derived from the global objective to reduce global warming to 2 degrees.



Beyond promoting car pools among employees, the Messe sponsors free travel on public transport for all trade show visitors and exhibitors within the greater Leipzig area. Delegates are encouraged to use public transport not only for their journeys between the airport, the venue and the hotels, but also when they explore the charms of the city during their leisurely hours thereby encouraging more spending in the wider destination.

This year the leading players in the German Venue Industry have signed an international agreement for dedicated Green Globe certification within the meeting, exhibition, convention & event sector

In January 2011 the German Messe Institut, the European Association of Event Centers and the German Convention Bureau signed an international agreement with Green Globe launching a dedicated certification for Corporate Social Responsibility within the meeting, exhibition, convention and event industry highlighting how going green is becoming mainstream.

Helene Møgelhøj

Helene Møgelhøj is an independent consultant and the UK's only Green Globe certified auditor. Green Globe Certification is the worldwide sustainability system based on internationally accepted criteria for sustainable operation and management of travel and tourism businesses. It offers the world's most recognised and longest running programme allowing green leaders in the travel and tourism industry to confidently promote their environmental credentials along with their commitment to the people and prosperity of their destination



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