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The aim of this UFI *Insight* on Sustainable Development in the Exhibition Industry is to give some “insight” into the contribution the Exhibition industry can make to the three dimensions of sustainable development: its environmental, economic and social impacts.

Globally the exhibition industry contributes to sustainable economic growth and prosperity through trade in goods and services, taxation and job creation. This is mirrored in the impact individual centres have on local development through the use of local resources and the management of the local environment. Sustainable development practices can be implemented in all phases of show management, promotion, build-up, show period and dismantling. This has a spin-off effect on visitors, who are also consumers in their own right, by encouraging sustainable practices and reinforcing consumer demand for more environmentally-friendly shows and venues.

Sustainability planning is essential to good sustainability implementation. A policy must first be defined and an action programme then drawn up setting specific targets, timelines and the action required to achieve them. Whether new builds, existing venues, renovations or restorations a number of issues are systematically addressed: general design, resource management (energy, water, waste, and noise), landscape management, logistics and community outreach.

Successful sustainability implementation requires a strong commitment from management. A supportive board and a committed CEO are essential. A manager solely focused on CSR implementation can play a vital role in coordinating action, motivating staff and ensuring that sustainability plans are not set aside in staff and management’s order of priorities by pressing economic or operational considerations. Equally important is the adoption of the right instruments to frame and support the implementation of a sustainability master plan and to provide the appropriate tools for evaluating progress, reporting and communicating on results.

A number of voluntary standards, certification schemes and reporting processes enable the industry to document and report on their progress towards sustainability. Standards include ISO 14000 and the new British standard BS8901 on Sustainability in Event Management currently proposed for development as an international ISO standard. Certification to LEED, EMAS and Green Globe is often sought, also as a communication and marketing tool. The Global Reporting Initiative’s new GRI G3 reporting framework sets valuable key performance indicators offering measurement comparability.

Waste management means reducing, re-using and re-cycling. Considerable effort by venues and organizers has been put into lowering the levels of waste generation while also improving the sorting and recycling of waste. The development and use of recyclable carpeting is a major way of avoiding diversion of used carpet to landfill. Due to the sheer bulk and chemical makeup of carpeting, this saving has a significant environmental impact.



I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOWARDS A GREENER EXHIBITION INDUSTRY

Undertaking a prior energy audit is essential in order to identify areas where energy efficiency can reduce costs and those where renewable energy solutions are most cost-effective. In the context of global warming and climate change, operators, organizers and exhibitors all have a vested interest in achieving energy reduction, efficiency & self-sufficiency. This means changing consumption patterns via building controls, environmental policies, lighting reviews. It also means defining and setting realistic targets. The ultimate goal of energy self-sufficiency will be achieved via building envelop retrofits/upgrades, the use of tri-generation, geo-thermal and photovoltaic options, as well as via wind turbines and steam-sourced turbines.

Although the contribution of the exhibition industry to CO₂ emissions on site is minimal relative to heavy industry and transport, operators and organisers are starting to measure the CO₂ footprint of their activity. This is obviously the first step towards assessing priorities and monitoring progress. Options to reduce this footprint include offering exhibitors a fully equipped eco-stand and visitors special offers on public transport to the venue. Some venues are offering voluntary carbon offsetting to their organizers as a way of further reducing the footprint.

Faced with increasing demands from inside and outside the industry, a number of exhibition professionals have produced guidelines for Green Meetings. While addressing practical issues such as energy consumption, waste and pollution reduction and human resource management, these guidelines can also have an impact on improving the international image of the sector, raising awareness among local professionals while also encouraging green procurement and green suppliers in the local/national economy.

Defending the business case for sustainability, UFI's role is to achieve "a high level of Member awareness and commitment to promote social and environmental responsibility within the exhibition industry". To do this, it works through its Sustainable Development Committee to harness Members' energies in this area and share successful initiatives, whether via dedicated Focus Meetings, via the UFI on-line collaborative tool or via various communication products (www.ufi.org).

The full report is attached and can be downloaded from the UFI website www.ufi.org