

Going Green

GUIDEBOOK

Show managers will soon be getting a big boost in their planning for "green" events with the release of a landmark set of guidelines at the end of the Summer from the Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX) an initiative of the Convention Industry Council (CIC).

The steps managers can take to reduce waste, cut carbon and otherwise promote sustainability are largely the product of the imaginations of show organizers, venue managers and service contractors. The APEX standards that will come out sometime in September will include ideas that are already fixtures for many shows, and others that will act as a roadmap for taking individual events to an even higher level of greenness.

"This document will allow people to benchmark where they are now and help them figure out where they want to go," said Amy Spatrisano, principal of the consulting firm MeetGreen. "These guidelines give them a way to get there."

Spatrisano is chair of the APEX Green Meetings Committee that was putting the finishing touches on the guidelines this year. The process has been a relatively long one, and in an interview with *Trade Show Executive (TSE)*, Spatrisano noted that the final product will be a thick manual with some technical terminology in ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) format. But the good news is that each of the nine sections boils down to a two-or-three page checklist," she said.

Catching a Green Wave

In the comfortable years leading up to the sharp recession of 2008-2009, Going Green was a hot topic among all segments of the exhibition industry. The history of the green trade show movement is that of a groundswell that

caught on across a wide scale. Convention centers and show organizers early on offered environmentally friendly ideas that focused mainly on simple ideas, such as offering digital press releases and show guides; donating excess food to organizations that feed the homeless; and recycling more of the huge amount of trash generated by events.

The momentum spread as attendees and exhibitors began asking for such features. General service contractors launched their own comprehensive menus of green steps, and convention centers left no stone unturned in making their buildings as eco-friendly as possible.

Convention Centers across the U.S. have been in the forefront of alternative energy production. Their large flat roofs are perfect sites for solar panels, a technology that continues to improve and produce higher levels of electricity.

The Atlantic City Convention Center boasts the largest rooftop solar array in the U.S. In 2009, the center produced nearly 2.8 million kilowatts of electricity despite the unusually high rainfall. That equaled 28% of the building's total power requirement for the year, or enough to supply nearly 300 homes.

Still other centers, such as Milwaukee's Frontier Airlines Center, incorporate the eco-friendly environs of their entire city into their meetings package. Energy-efficient lighting, heating and air-conditioning and waste recycling systems have also been implemented.

Portland prides itself on its commitment as a city to the environment. The Oregon Convention Center is right in line with that commitment. The venue has actually been able to improve its LEED®-EB rating to the Silver level.

The Virginia Beach Convention Center includes indoor air quality in its extensive green initiatives. Maintenance staff used "Green Label" cleaning products and vacuum cleaners along with minimal use of pesticides.

It is the first convention center in the nation to achieve LEED® Gold certification for existing buildings.

The GWCC tallied an impressive 36 tons of recycled waste and donated leftovers at the *Microsoft Dynamics* conference in April, which equals 64% of the 57 tons of refuse generated at the four-day event. "We hope numbers like this will be the norm. We are constantly working to improve and expand our sustainable practices," said Patrick Skaggs, assistant general manager of the Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) in Atlanta.

The effort in Atlanta is one example of what is going on in all corners of the exhibition industry. Big ideas and small steps are being taken by show organizers and their partners that result in an overall positive impact.

Big Ideas Developed by Big Shows

Management of some of the largest shows on the *TSE Gold 100* rankings have been hard at work diverting tons of material from landfills and contributing to the growth of sustainability in the industries they serve.

Green Pavilions: Areas dedicated to new products that are environmentally friendly put the show's spotlight -- and brand image -- on sustainability. The *International Construction and Utility Equipment Exposition* (No. 2 on the *TSE Gold 100*) opened space sales for its Sustainable Energy Pavilion in June

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and reported brisk business more than a year ahead of its October 4-6, 2011 show. "We decided to organize a product-specific pavilion on the show floor in response to comments on our attendee survey, which indicated they wanted to see more sustainable products at *ICUEE*," said Show Director Melissa Magestro.

"There were many sustainable products and technologies at *ICUEE 2009*, but a pavilion is a good way to highlight all the newest technologies in one place and make them easier for attendees to locate."

Pavilions draw attendees who are looking specifically for green products, which stand out better than they might if

they were spread out on the overall show floor. The *New York International Gift Fair* (No. 29) took it a step further and restricted exhibits show-wide of certain products featuring lead, volatile organic compounds and other controversial ingredients.

Conference Tracks: Offering conference sessions dedicated to green topics that are specific to the show's industry sector can be a godsend for attendees. Bringing attendees up to speed on best practices and trends can lift the collective knowledge of the entire industry in a day.

PACK EXPO (No. 27) announced in June it had scheduled a session titled "Fast Tracking Sustainable Innovation" that would outline the most promising new ideas for the packaging industry. "It's a great way to give knowledgeable buyers a look at exciting new packaging solutions," said Charles Yuska, president and CEO of the Packaging Machinery Manufacturers Institute (PMMI).

PACK EXPO will also feature *PAC Green Den*, an event during the show where a select group of exhibitors will have seven minutes to present their products to a panel of experts who have experience in the packaging, sustainability and regulatory arenas. The panel will select a "Best in Show" winner.

Specialized Recycling Projects:

Some shows generate waste that goes well beyond paper cups, catalogs and carpeting.

World of Concrete (No. 5) is famous for the concrete walls and slabs that are built in the exhibit area and then must be broken up and hauled away when the show closes. Organizer Hanley Wood LLC and Freeman teamed up with a Las Vegas recycling company to keep more than 90% of the show's waste out of the local landfills.

The *National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show* (No. 31) teamed up with the Greater Chicago Food

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Changes in the Air? Carbon Offsets and VOCs Present Planning Challenges

By Hil Anderson, senior editor

Recycling bins, digital catalogs and biodegradable name badge holders are standard operating procedure at your show. The next challenge in staging a sustainable trade show revolves around the bigger issues of global warming and the air we breathe.

Trade show managers can do their part to address climate change and the quality of the air inside convention centers where exhibitors and attendees will often be spending the better part of a week.

Volatile Organic Compounds

New carpeting and freshly finished booths are the bedrock of any exhibit floor. But chemicals used in these products can release gas levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that some individuals may be sensitive to.

Low-VOC paints, cleaning products and carpet are available from most general service contractors. Joe Pestka, senior national sales manager for Freeman, said carpet manufacturers have gone to great lengths to reduce VOCs from floor coverings. The "Green Label" and "Green Label Plus" certification ensure low-VOC content.

Carbon Emissions

Reducing the carbon footprint is achieved through planning and budgeting:

1. Seek out venues that include solar and wind power in their overall electricity supply.
2. Hold shows near the attendee pool if possible. Less travel means less gasoline or jet fuel burned per attendee.
3. Take advantage of carbon offsets. Simply put, a carbon offset represents a reduction in emissions somewhere else to balance out the emissions you cannot reduce. For example, your show can make a donation to a not-for-profit group that uses it to fund carbon-reduction programs. In theory, it cuts the world's overall carbon dioxide burden. Several events and venues around the world have been able to declare themselves carbon neutral with enough carbon credits.



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Depository to donate enough surplus food from the June event to provide nearly 52,000 meals to the needy.

Is it Green or Really Green?

The innovative ideas popping up at trade shows of all sizes provided raw material for the pending APEX guidelines. APEX is not

meant to stifle continued creativity, but will instead act as a baseline definition of a green meeting for the exhibition industry in North America and worldwide.

Joseph Petska, senior national sales manager for Freeman and a member of the APEX Green Committee, said a set of standards that have been vetted and accepted

across the industry was a major development in green meetings. "Having one set of standards that are industry reviewed and supported will allow Freeman and all parties in the trade show industry to qualify what a green event really means," he told *TSE*. "We'll all be on the same page."

Teamwork Required

The APEX guidelines cover nine distinct areas:

- Accommodations
- Audio-visual production
- Food and beverage
- Destinations
- Venues
- Exhibits
- Transportation
- Communication
- On-site offices

Show organizers and venue managers will have four levels of achievement in each area to shoot for. The steps are voluntary and don't include a formal certification process, such as the demanding process connected to LEED certification for buildings.

In order to say a particular show is in line with APEX standards, the organizer and the venue must both follow the guidelines for the particular category and level. "For example, if a hotel is doing its part according to the standards, but a planner comes in and isn't holding up their end, then the hotel can say they were following the standards, but the organizer can't say their meetings were green," Spatrisano explained.

"The two parties have to work together," she said. "We didn't want to put the full onus on the suppliers. For sustainability to really work, both parties need to do their part."

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Steps to Take for a Greener Meeting

The APEX standards will provide trade show organizers with a universally accepted platform for ensuring that their events are as green as they can make them. But the industry has already blazed the trail and established some practical steps that can be taken.

- **Get it in Writing:** Inserting green goals into a formal contract puts organizers and vendors on the same path. It has the added benefit of putting your team on notice that "Going Green" is not just a concept, it is part of the business plan for the event. Measure performance, such as how much waste was recycled and how much electricity was used. Such measurements provide a benchmark for future shows.
- **Reduce paper consumption:** Placing as much material as possible into digital format pays off in several ways. It cuts down on waste and also reduces printing costs. When you must use print copies, specify recycled paper whenever possible. Use vegetable-based inks and print on both sides of the paper.
- **Make Recycling Work:** Before selecting a venue, check to see what material is recycled in that particular city. Alert attendees that recycling bins are available on the show floor. Clearly mark the containers and make sure the cleaning crews follow recycling collection procedures. Look for name badges and lanyards made from recycled or biodegradable materials.
- **Take Care of the Leftovers:** Scout out soup kitchens and other charities in the venue city that can pick up and safely transport large volumes of leftover food. A lot of food waste can be shipped off to a commercial composter, if one is available in the area.
- **Water Worries:** Eliminating bottled water in favor of old-fashioned pitchers and glasses cuts down on throw-away plastic and also conserves water in cities where supplies can be tight.
- **In the Restroom:** Convention centers should use organic fair-trade soaps, recycled paper products and low-flow faucets and toilets.
- **HVAC Coordination:** Most convention centers and hotels have become adept at turning off lights and air-conditioning in unoccupied rooms. That trims power consumption and utility costs.

