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GREEN  CHAMPIONS

EMPOWERING CHANGE WORKSHOP: KEY TAKEAWAYS

Editor

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INTRODUCTION

The Power 50 Green Champions launch event at Barbican on 10 October 2023 featured a round table workshop session, in partnership with Farnborough International, which aimed to create a platform for knowledge exchange, sharing best practice and industry-wide learning.

With the help of our Power 50 expert judges, we created five key themes:

- Clients
- Suppliers
- Measurement/Certification
- Travel
- People/Social Impact

These were discussed in small groups facilitated by our Power 50 Green Champions, with attendees invited to join a table discussing the theme they were most interested in.

Here are some of the key takeaways from the session:



CLIENTS

In big corporations, there is often lack of communication and a gap between sustainability goals at corporate level and event planner goals. It's not always communicated down to the people on the ground, therefore, the message on sustainability gets lost.

How do you get clients engaged in sustainability?

- The best time to get clients engaged is at the very beginning, even before the planning has started. Look back at what you have done previously and show to your client.
- Sustainability gets lost in the events operation if not planned from the beginning as once the event project kicks off, everything happens very quickly.
- Sustainability needs to be considered in a similar way and as importantly as health and safety.
- If the meeting owner is reluctant to engage, try to gain their support by showing them how small things make a difference and provide proof points / examples.
- Reassure your client that your people can take care of sustainability. This shows value in your service. Try to use the Barbican philosophy, if you hire us, this is what you get, you get a sustainable event.
- All or nothing way of thinking is not helpful. Change is easy to implement in small steps and not overwhelming to the client. Focus on one element. Start with those areas that don't require an economic investment and provide an easy engagement. That's when you are going to get more traction.



CLIENTS

- Make sustainable options more budget-friendly – it starts on the budget but it's one of the first things to be taken off. Focus on quick wins that are not always down to budget. For example, replace red meat. You don't need to get to leadership team for those approvals as there won't be a big change in budget.
- Challenge the norm - don't just do things because they have been done that way before and be creative. Clients like it when it's something new and it hasn't been done before.



- Sell the value of sustainability and communicate that. Work on taglines that you can use with your clients, for example, sustainable is expensive – business class is also expensive. Flying is about choice – get clever comparisons to fight the sustainability case.
- Involve attendees in the engagement and communication. Tell them what you are doing, why and how.
- Data provides proof points. Track your client's emissions anyway, even if they are not interested, then gradually you will gain their buy in.
- Benchmark: clients love to compare themselves to others.

SUPPLY CHAIN

How do you encourage your supply chain to implement changes that are fair and reasonable?

- Hold supplier meetings to knowledge-share and set expectations and find ways to incentivise suppliers to provide data.
- Weave sustainability through your partnership and processes to avoid sustainability feeling like a separate entity. Working in partnership is crucial to ensure you understand the goals and key objectives are in sync and understood by both parties.
- Give practical examples and best practises to work together on a pilot scheme when you first work with a supplier, and record learnings effectively for future collaboration.
- Implement a 'Green Supplier List' i.e., your 'go to' suppliers who have green credentials and will be prioritised in projects. Create this list through responses to audits and questionnaires.
- Use open questions in audits and questionnaires, ensuring suppliers are expanding on their answers to provide greater and more robust data.
- Help suppliers to fill the gaps in any 'amber' responses in audits and/or questionnaires – help them reach the green credentials required to be a sustainable supplier.



SUPPLY CHAIN

- Create frameworks and consistency for suppliers to follow. Provide training, resources and/or a guide to help them on their sustainability journey. For example, appropriate data reporting training for suppliers, such as TRACE and help and support in achieving B Corp status (if this is a relevant goal).
- Measurement is important to build upon from actions taken, not as a one off. The data can help every area.
- When considering sustainability, look at many aspects including locality, certifications, experience in-house, DEI, a Diversity Policy, business size, women-owned etc.
- Key messaging for suppliers: 'You will be left behind if you do not prioritise sustainability. Whether it's through legislation, your clients or the morals of the people in your team, suppliers will be affected and left behind if they do not implement positive change.'
- How far do we go back when assessing the supply chain? Do we look at our initial supply chain and trust they then investigate their own supply chain? Do we ask for proof or credentials? How do you trust your supply chain's supply chain?



MEASUREMENT & CERTIFICATION

There are numerous accreditations, including IACC, Greengage, Green Meeting, and Green Tourism. This variety can be confusing when determining which one is the best. Additionally, not all venues use the same accreditations. We need a more structured guide for assessment.

What do we need to consider?



- Venues are not all at the same point in their sustainability journey. This adds a future challenge when searching for and comparing venues. It's important to consider how this is scored or ranked in an RFP.
- Agents are also on a journey and utilise a matrix based on sustainability policies and accreditations to make recommendations. However, gathering data is challenging due to the wide range of accreditations, policies, and the varying stages venues/suppliers are at in their sustainability journey.
- Knowledge is crucial. We need to educate teams in venues, agencies, and end clients.
- Accreditation is included in proposals and RFPs. But is this enough? How do we communicate it effectively?
- Sustainability is a part of the decision-making process. However, when should you measure the carbon footprint of the event? The focus is on energy, waste, food, and travel. Do we measure this before or after the event, and what actions should be taken based on the measurement?

MEASUREMENT & CERTIFICATION

- Offsetting isn't the sole solution. We need to focus on reducing. Measurement should lead to informed choices, and it requires an action plan and education.
- Before the event, you can measure and then make changes to reduce/offset. However, there's a risk for the venue, as they may not have all the facts about the exact event agenda/plan at this point. Changes that can be made to improve sustainability include offering vegetarian/vegan food options or eliminating certain items, such as beef, and promoting the use of public transport. After the event, you can make more informed decisions for the next one.
- Some specialised agents consider the travel impact and recommend optimal destinations to minimize the carbon footprint, particularly for events with delegates from various destinations/countries.



- Some companies not only have a financial budget but also a carbon budget. This will become a significant consideration, and trade-offs may be necessary to achieve sustainability goals.
- Some companies are still unsure about what they should prioritise or what is essential in terms of sustainability. In some cases, they may simply be ticking the sustainability box. Knowledge is key, and both venues and agents need to collaborate to educate on these matters.
- Having an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) plan is important for recruitment, especially for the younger generation.

TRAVEL

Travel remains one of the biggest contributors to the carbon footprint of events. There is now strategic justification for travel at international events and some clients have carbon footprint budgets.

*How do you address the impact of travel across your event programme?
What does best practice look like in this area?*

- **Carbon offsetting:** When international travel is necessary, it's crucial to mitigate its environmental repercussions. Carbon offsetting is a great starting point. Calculate the emissions stemming from travel related to your events, and counterbalance this by investing in green projects like reforestation or renewable energy initiatives.
- **Tech-Driven Decisions:** Utilise platforms like Troop Travel to centralise and optimise event locations based on where delegates are coming from, thereby minimising travel distances and emissions.
- **Regular Monitoring & Reporting:** Use TMC's who have access to tools such as Thrust Carbon and Trip Kicks to continuously track and report on travel-related carbon outputs, setting tangible reduction goals.
- **Green Transport Partnerships:** Engage with transportation entities that prioritise eco-friendliness or offer carbon-neutral options.
- **Make changes to organised transportation options:** Stop organising transfers for larger international events and provide public transport options and offer free/reduced travel passes. Build in extra time for delegates to travel as part of their programme, re-framing walking to and from different events or to the station as part of their wellbeing offering.



TRAVEL

- Encourage delegates to be proactive: Offer insights, via platforms like Thrust Carbon and Trip Kicks, on the environmental implications of different travel routes and methods. These platforms nudge delegates towards greener choices, with the view in the future delegates will not just be event participants but also, sustainability champions, influencing both peers and event organisers.
- Provide proactive Communication: In pre-event info packs, prominently feature eco-friendly transport options also promote tools such as You Smart Thing (Greengage have a special offer for this) in joining instructions.
- Offer incentives for Green Choices: Integrate with platforms that encourage sustainable travel, offering attendees potential discounts or perks. Reward delegates for making eco-friendly travel decisions, which can be identified and tracked through platforms like Trip Kicks.
- Success Showcases: Use real-world examples, possibly sourced from Trip Kicks' feedback, to demonstrate the benefits and feasibility of sustainable travel.



PEOPLE/SOCIAL IMPACT

With the focus so heavily on the environmental impact of events, the people pillar is sometimes not given the priority it should be.

What does best practice look like in this area and how can we ensure events have a positive social impact?

- Consider social impact assessments at the beginning of a project and how you can implement things from early on. Clients are now starting to prioritise all elements of sustainability especially social for their teams, staff crew and suppliers.
- Silverstone shared how they are doing a few things around social value already such as food donations – in 2023 they have collected 23 tonnes of food.
- Birch community has a pick a perk scheme where event planners can choose to partner with a local charity.
- It's very valuable to local economies to use local suppliers and keep spend local. Silverstone has a camp site at the site and a lot of local campsites get business from the racetrack. 10,000 people work for Silverstone during the Grand Prix - they need to sleep nearby.
- Consider Social Value Portal and B4SI as tools to measure social value.
- Use badges of recognition to know items have had an assessment, e.g., Fair trade as a badge of recognition. Sometimes comes with a price tag but easy to identify what comes with that procurement assessment. Is this benefitting local communities? Or just responsibly sourced?
- What do your delegates care more about? The fair-trade logo or knowing the flowers are grown in the garden.
- Does having a better social impact give you a USP? Balancing the buying power with what you can mandate and apply. Contributing to local communities can help persuade action.
- Some hotels offer crockery to staff for a donation that then give the money to charities or donate staff uniforms for future use.
- Sell lost and found after two months at a car boot sale with profits going to charity.