

How to be a green exhibitor?

There are different areas that you can tackle, when trying to green your participation in the event. Below you will find list of areas that are worth looking into.

Even if you are thinking about tackling only one area from the list below, it will make a difference!

1. Your stand

Your stand represents your company, your brand. It's a platform where you present your services and products. It is a meeting place for your colleagues and your clients. It also shows your company values. For exhibitors preparing to the event an impressive stand is one of the goals.

What we can do to keep the quality we want, but in the same time be more sustainable?

- Choose your stand contractor wisely – check references, ask for certifications, enquire details about how they can help you deliver sustainable stand.
- Design your stand with reusability in mind.
Event if you are going from show to show and your stand surface is not the same, a well-designed stand can have some flexibility here. Make sure that you include that request in your RFP, when you select your stand contractor. An honest discussion with your stand designer at the beginning of the process can help you not only save money, but also find even more ways of creating a greener stand.
- What's your construction? Try to use solutions that are modular, easy to re-use and re-configure. If you want to use wood, ask for certified lumber. If you use aluminum and steel for your construction - will your stand contractor recycle it after? Look for alternatives – maybe certified, sustainable bamboo can be used as a support frame? Try to use recycled and recyclable materials.
- When you consider shipment of your stand avoid airfreight, if possible, as it has a highest CO2 impact, comparing to truck, ocean freight or train.
- If you are participating many shows with the same stand - think if show-to-show shipment is not better, rather than out& back option, where your stand always comes back to the warehouse before next exhibition.

2. Graphics

We cannot avoid graphics on the stand. We all use graphics for messaging, to announce new products or just to 'refresh' visuals that we are using on the stand.

What would be the best way to tackle branding and various artwork on the stand in sustainable way?

- Avoid plastic, or where you cannot avoid it – try to use less of it. Acrylic and PVC are the most common plastics in exhibition. If your graphic panels are mounted to a sheet of PVC – try to use them as long as possible. You can try to use the same design or mount new graphics to old PVC panels.
- Think if / where you can reuse the graphics substrates.

- Consider the material. You can replace plywood and hardboard substrates with FSC-certified equivalents. For fabric banners – use recycled PET which allows vibrant colours. Organic cotton cloth could also be an option, but keep in mind wrinkles and less intensive colour outcome.
- Can you use AV for content that is likely to change, and print only the general branding items? It will allow you to accommodate more messages in your content and last-minute changes while reducing the amount of printed graphics.

3. Flooring:

- Consider rapidly renewable and recycled materials, such as bamboo, cork, non-petroleum linoleum
- If you go for the carpet – use recycled PET carpet. We do that, with our gangway carpet!

4. Lighting:

- Use LED bulbs. They are energy efficient, they do not get hot as regular bulbs and come in all the shapes and sizes you might need.

5. Electronics and appliances:

- Choose certified energy-efficient options.
- Switch off your screens and any electricity consuming devices in the end of the day. Do you really need to keep it all up and running all night?
- Select equipment that is energy efficient. It's worth sometimes to replace older appliances with new models which consume less energy.

6. Waste:

It is the best place to start any considerations about 'going green'. The idea is simple: create less waste.

- See with your stand builder how to design the stand to avoid waste from construction.
- Look at the giveaways, leaflets and other items that you are producing for the event. Is all that really needed? Are you using a sustainable material and your gadgets / publications are easy to recycle?
- Avoid extensive packaging whenever possible.
- Follow advice from the organizer and the venue on the waste management when onsite. Waste management systems will be different, depending on the venue and waste management system of the city.

7. Paper:

How many times you came back to your hotel room, went through all the brochures you collected during the show and just to trash them all? It's too heavy to carry in your carry-on bag, or there is not enough space in your bag, as you still need to fit there this extra pair of shoes you always take to exhibitions ... And how many times you actually dragged the bag with brochures with you, just to put it somewhere in the office and in the end, when needed, you just emailed the contact person asking for the same materials in digital form, as you couldn't find the brochure anymore?

- Here my advice will be simple – go paperless, go digital.

Save money and share always updated materials with your clients. Scan visitors that come to your stand, so you can keep the track of their requests and send them all materials that are interesting by email. They will appreciate the email and come back with more questions!

8. Giveaways, gifts, gadgets:

We all love them. At least in our first years in the exhibition industry. After a while, when we accumulate a collection of hundreds of pens, stress balls and USBs the novelty of the giveaway is lost.

If you have fans of Marie Kondo in the office, with their support you can decide not to have giveaways in general. However, if you still want to have something for your clients, here are some ideas:

- Local food – see if you can find some typical, local snacks that you can share with your clients or give them away. Choose food that is easy to share and rather avoid beverages as gifts (think about carry-on luggage liquid limits!) . Personally, I would vote for chocolate. Always works.
- Choose gifts that are sustainable and practical. Select gifts that will be useful to your contacts even after the event. Notepad that has discreet logo will go places with your client, as well as wooden name tag...

9. Travel:

- Rethink your staffing strategy, to make sure that everybody that travels and attends the event is adding the value to your presence at the event.
- If the travel to the event is a short-distance one – see if people can carpool or take train, as these options are better than taking a flight.

10. Accommodation:

- Chose a hotel that is a walking distance from the venue or has an easy connection to public transport.

Want to get involved?

Share with us your story, your efforts and all actions you are already taking to be a green exhibitor!

We will share it with other exhibitors and visitors in the exhibition section of the event website!

We can all learn from each other and support sustainable business practices. And while we might be competitors in business, if it goes to sustainability, we are playing for the same team!

Are you ready to share?

Please contact:

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Resources and useful links

1. To read more about sustainable exhibiting - read 'The Green Edge' by Tom Bowman,
2. Greenhouse Gas Equivalent calculator: <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator>