

A SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE

FOR MEETINGS & EVENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 INTRODUCTION

5 EVENT SUSTAINABILITY TODAY

8 INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT: Who's Getting it Right, Now

13 REDUCING OUR IMPACT FOR TOMORROW

17 FOR CONSIDERATION: Where to Start

21 CONCLUSION





For decades, corporate sustainability has been a growing concern among industries across the world as we've faced the environmental effects of our impact on the planet. But over the last several years, that concern has quickly elevated to a top priority among businesses as we find ourselves contending with the stark reality of climate change. Human influence is disproportionately contributing to increased carbon emissions, rising sea levels, shrinking forests, and continued paper and plastic pollution around the globe, resulting in increased frequency and intensity of adverse events including flooding, droughts and famine. Now more than ever, organizations must be intentional about incorporating sustainability into their business strategy to ensure a better future for all.

Combatting this reality means starting at home as well as reviewing the impact of our own industry's footprint. The meetings and events and travel industries are two of the primary contributors to global climate change because of the nature of our work. We are in the business of bringing people together. While that allows us to create connection and foster change, it also means we are significant contributors to climate challenges we are facing today. Traveling longer distances means leaving a larger CO2 footprint. Planning for large meetings and/or events means feeding more people and increased food waste, not to mention the consumption of more single-use plastics and paper for items from event signage to water bottles. The pandemic sparked a fundamental change with a forced preference toward sustainability.

COVID-19 changed our industry, the way we work, and the way we plan meetings and events. Virtual events rapidly became the norm and, although we're making our way back to face-to-face, they continue to be a key solution for our industry globally. Although this massive shift to virtual was unexpected, what's more surprising is what we've learned through our adaptability, particularly when considering sustainably planning and executing meetings and/or events.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this piece is to provide our professional perspective on sustainability within the meetings and events industry. This is not a comprehensive guide to sustainable event planning, but our hope is that it will spark more conversation and innovation around crafting greener meetings.

Throughout this guide we'll not only provide context on where we are today but give practical insight into the fundamental role sustainability plays in the meetings and events of the future. We'll also offer tangible ways to incorporate sustainable thinking and practices into the planning and execution of meetings and events. Our goal: to create a more sustainable future that is accessible to everyone, together.

At BCD, we take the role collaboration has to play in sustainability to heart. We work across BCD Meetings & Events, BCD Travel and Advito to drive our shared commitment to build a better future. Sustainability is a core, foundational focus for us--one that we must work toward together.

A Word from Kathy Jackson

From the start, our business has been driven by a commitment to connecting people through travel, meetings and events. Amidst the backdrop of the last two years, how we have accomplished this has changed but the commitment has not. Recent events have forced us to adapt, but we've continued to innovate fearlessly, live our values purposefully and remain strategically aligned to continue serving our people, clients and community.

In upholding the wellbeing of our people, our clients and the global community in which we all live and work, sustainability is at the forefront of BCD's strategic initiatives. In a year of unparalleled disruption, we moved forward on projects, initiatives and solutions that represent our firm commitment to sustainability. Our EcoVadis Platinum rating validated our outstanding sustainability performance, confirming our position in the top 1 percent of all companies assessed.

As an organization, we would be remiss not to acknowledge the impact that climate change is having on our planet and our industries' role in that impact. By working together with our industry partners, we can attack this complex challenge with intention, discipline and cautious optimism to build a better future for us all.



Kathy

JACKSON
VP & Executive Chair, Sustainability
BCD Travel

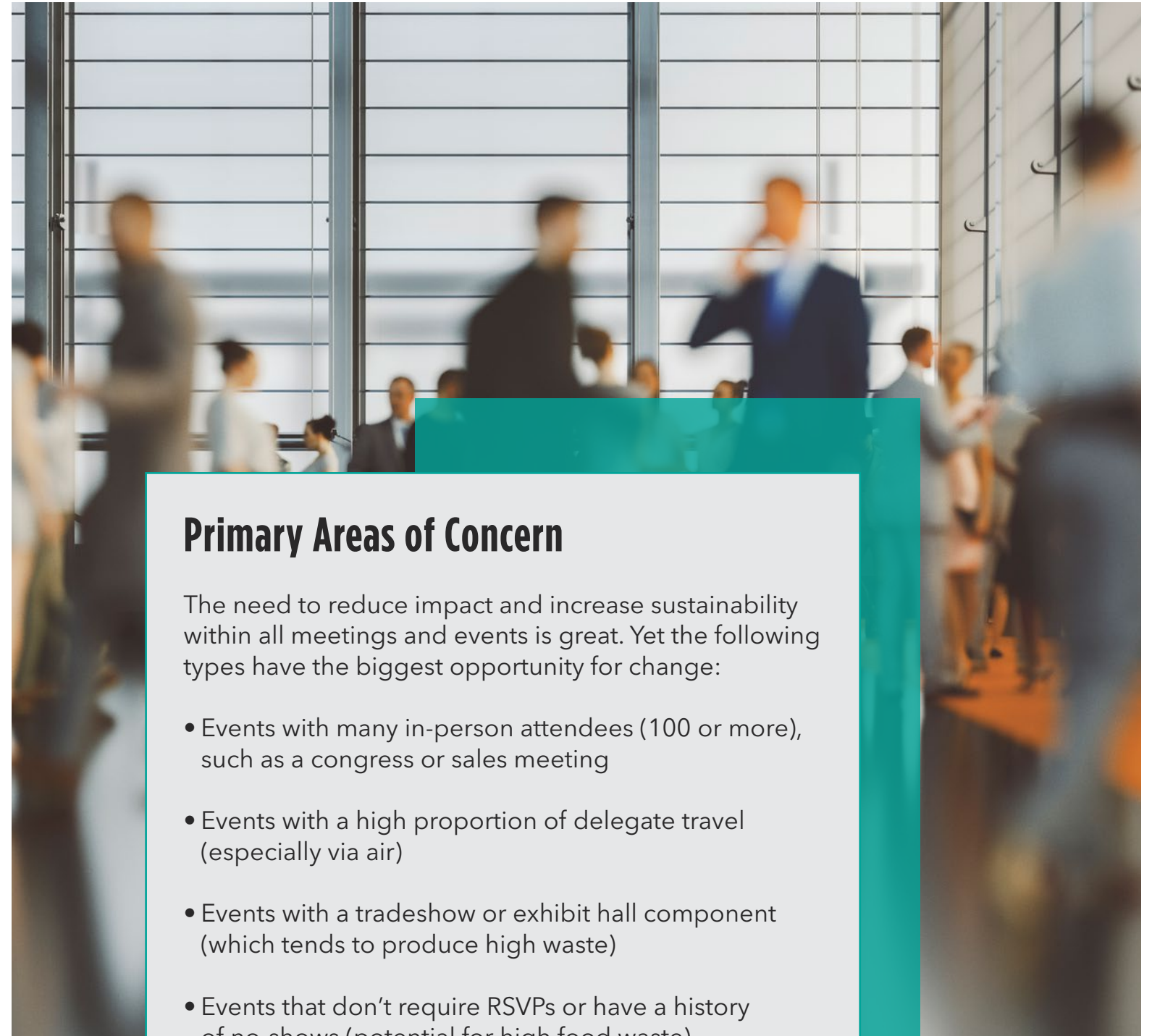
EVENT SUSTAINABILITY TODAY

While it's clear that strong awareness around sustainability is critical toward taking action in the events industry, the challenge is finding the resources to put adequate focus behind it. With staff stretched thin, few companies have team members dedicated to this topic within events. People know that sustainability is important yet struggle to find the time necessary to push things forward. It's on everyone's agenda, yet not as high as other deliverables on the list of must-haves.

Another challenge is that budget still ranks higher than sustainability for most companies, meaning people aren't (yet) making decisions based solely on environmental concerns. We are not to a point where all organizations are comfortable with an event that's greener but more expensive. In 2022, cost and availability will still be the biggest drivers of event decisions, but increasing awareness on how events impact the environment will add sustainability to more of those conversations.

Not having readily available data to demonstrate the environmental impact of events is a third challenge for the industry in shifting to a greener mindset. It's difficult to accurately benchmark environmental impact year-over-year without 12 months of consistent data on events – something that no company has currently due to the pandemic pause.

The good news is that taking a step back from in-person events has enabled greater awareness of the possibilities to increase sustainability in events going forward. Even better is the sentiment that there is no such thing as a small step. Seemingly little actions, such as opting to serve a vegetarian entrée over steak or choosing shared transportation over a private charter, add up. Together, those collective actions by event professionals around the globe can result in progress toward a more sustainable events industry and world.



Primary Areas of Concern

The need to reduce impact and increase sustainability within all meetings and events is great. Yet the following types have the biggest opportunity for change:

- Events with many in-person attendees (100 or more), such as a congress or sales meeting
- Events with a high proportion of delegate travel (especially via air)
- Events with a tradeshow or exhibit hall component (which tends to produce high waste)
- Events that don't require RSVPs or have a history of no-shows (potential for high food waste)
- Events that take place in venues, regions or countries that don't prioritize sustainability

Here are the three areas to prioritize:

1 CO2 EMISSIONS

According to the **World Travel & Tourism Council**, travel accounts for approximately 8-11 percent of global emissions. Over the past two years, when business travel came to a halt, we were able to examine just how detrimental travel for events has been for the environment. This has the industry rethinking event transportation and how we can reduce overall impact through travel.

It's not an exaggeration to assert that reducing CO2 emissions is critical to the survival of humanity. We must take action to curb global warming, prevent extreme weather events that are increasing around the world and work together on a global scale to combat climate change.

The pandemic has shown the events industry that we can work, learn and connect with one another without being together face-to-face. Virtual formats have been improved immensely and are now highly efficient for many types of events. They won't be the only delivery mode for events going forward, however. Experts predict hybrid events (a combination of virtual and in-person attendees) are the future, enabling an ideal mix of positive interactions between attendees and a lower impact on the environment. **While we and our customers recognize the complexity that accompanies hybrid events—most notably the cost—we are working to strategize and innovate to find solutions to the challenges that accompany this unique event type.**

Simultaneously, COVID-19 also revealed the weaknesses of globalization. People began to realize how much we relied on overseas production, and supply chain issues kicked off a shift back to more local suppliers. We're now traveling less often and sourcing closer to home, both of which are better for the sustainability of events.



Get more insight into creating more customer confidence in hybrid events.



See how we strengthened collaboration with a virtual event for the scientific community.

2 FOOD AND WASTE

In the United States, between 30-40 percent of the food supply is wasted, according to the **USDA**. That equates to more than \$161 billion USD worth of food each year. Globally, about one-third of all food is thrown away, with nearly half of that being fresh fruits and vegetables. This has great negative impact on food security (from a moral perspective, it's not acceptable to waste food when people around the globe do not have enough), as well as on the environment. New data from the **United Nations Environment Programme** shows that food waste contributes up to 10 percent of global emissions. When we throw away uneaten food, we also waste the land, water, labor, energy and other factors that go into the process of getting meals from field to plate. These figures demonstrate that it's counterintuitive to consider sustainability of events without rethinking our food and beverage programs.

Event professionals must think not about how to offset the impact of food waste, but about reducing food waste in the first place. This means redesigning how we plan and serve food and beverage in the early planning stages. The industry has an opportunity to approach food waste reduction from a fresh perspective as live events resume, and with it, F&B programs for events.



3 PAPER AND PLASTIC

As much as the pandemic helped to improve emissions from travel, it swung the opposite way for single-use plastics and paper usage. In 2020, the world saw **large increases** in plastic utilization as people grew concerned about spreading COVID-19 through shared materials. Now that we know more about how the virus is spread (primarily through breathing, not touching, according to the **CDC**), it's more feasible to resume cutting back on these materials.

The reason for reducing is two-fold: Plastic production requires oil, contributing to increased emissions. Second, no plastic can be recycled properly – it can take more than **1,000 years** to decompose in a landfill. Our oceans are filled with plastic, as well, creating toxic environments for animals. A **2019 study** showed humans ingest the equivalent of a credit card's worth of microplastics each week.

In the events industry, many items are made from plastic, from name badges to water bottles to pens, and we must make great strides to reduce using these. One way to avoid plastic is to opt instead for items made of recycled, sustainable materials. We can also eliminate single-use plastics such as straws, offering paper straws or avoiding them altogether.

As we shifted to virtual events during the pandemic, printed materials (that were already on their way out) nearly disappeared. With the advent of sophisticated event management platforms and event apps, the industry has greatly reduced reliance on paper. Even with a return to in-person and hybrid events, paper usage can be minimized using these tools along with digital signage and registration kiosks.

When you're focused on reducing paper and plastic usage in your events, communicate with your venue and event partners to ensure you're all on the same page. Be sure to ask about the logistics of recycling, as well, to make sure all venue staff understand the process and will recycle paper and plastics appropriately.



INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT:

Who's Getting it Right, Now?

RADISSON HOTEL GROUP: PARTNERS TO YOU AND THE PLANET

As a preferred, trusted partner to BCD Meetings & Events, we asked Radisson Hotel Group to tell us how they are incorporating sustainability into their business. Here's what they had to say.

Since the start of the pandemic, customers have continued to look for sustainable and safe travel and meeting options. Sustainability is a top priority for our world and our industry. At Radisson Hotel Group, we continue to work on our roadmap to Net Zero and are proud of the milestones we have achieved in another challenging year for our industry. These responsible business milestones include the launch of our “Carbon Negative, Planet Positive” meetings in EMEA, the ongoing reduction of our environmental footprint, keeping guests and team members safe with the Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol, and signing electrical mobility partnerships in Europe and India.

To ensure that our industry comes back stronger and safer and to create transparent and easy-to-adopt solutions for clients, non-competitive collaboration is essential to engage all companies large and small in sustainability.

What You Should Know

Radisson Hotel Group is one of the world’s largest and most dynamic hotel groups with more than 1,600 hotels in operation and under development and an industry pioneer in sustainability.

Caring for the planet and its people extends beyond the walls of our hotels, Radisson Hotel Group remains committed to our corporate responsibility targets as outlined in the **2020 Responsible Business Report**, including the **reduction of our carbon and water footprint by 30% by 2025**, aligning with science-based emissions reduction targets, removing single use plastics and continuing to drive best practices in responsible consumption behavior.

To help achieve this target, we have implemented:

- **Sustainable practices to reduce the footprint of each hotel:** this includes moving away from single-use plastics, reducing food waste and implementing technology to curb energy and water use.
- **Use of renewable energy:** including working with suppliers of green electricity and generating energy on-site via solar panels.
- **Green new-builds:** new hotels offer the largest chance for emission reduction through modern construction techniques and design. Some of the newest additions to Radisson Hotel Group’s portfolio like the Radisson Collection Hotel, Magdalena Plaza Sevilla, are certified green hotels.



Tsinandali Estate, A Radisson Collection Hotel

Carbon Neutral Meetings

Radisson Meetings automatically offsets the carbon footprint of every single meeting and event taking place at any of our hotels worldwide, at no cost to our clients. We do this in partnership with First Climate, one of the world's largest carbon offset organizations as well as through projects that help reduce emissions, combat climate change and have a positive social impact.

Since the launch of the program in 2019, we have offset over 30,300 tons of CO2, which is the equivalent to removing more than 6,500 fuel driven cars off the road.

All carbon offsetting projects we support are VCS or Gold Standard and are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Acting Now For the Future

In 2021, we joined the Basic Sustainability Framework, along with our parent company Jin Jiang International (Holdings) Co., Ltd. and other industry players, an initiative to set common definition of hotel sustainability to drive responsible travel & tourism and contribute to the Pathway to Net Positive Hospitality with the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance.



Radisson Blu Royal Viking Hotel, Stockholm

Q&A WITH BOSTJAN HORJAK, CEO, LIBERTY ADRIATIC



We spoke with Bostjan Horjak, CEO of Liberty Adriatic for Liberty International, one of our trusted partners. He pulled back the curtain on his and Liberty's passion for sustainability.

Q: Tell us about Liberty International's approach to sustainability

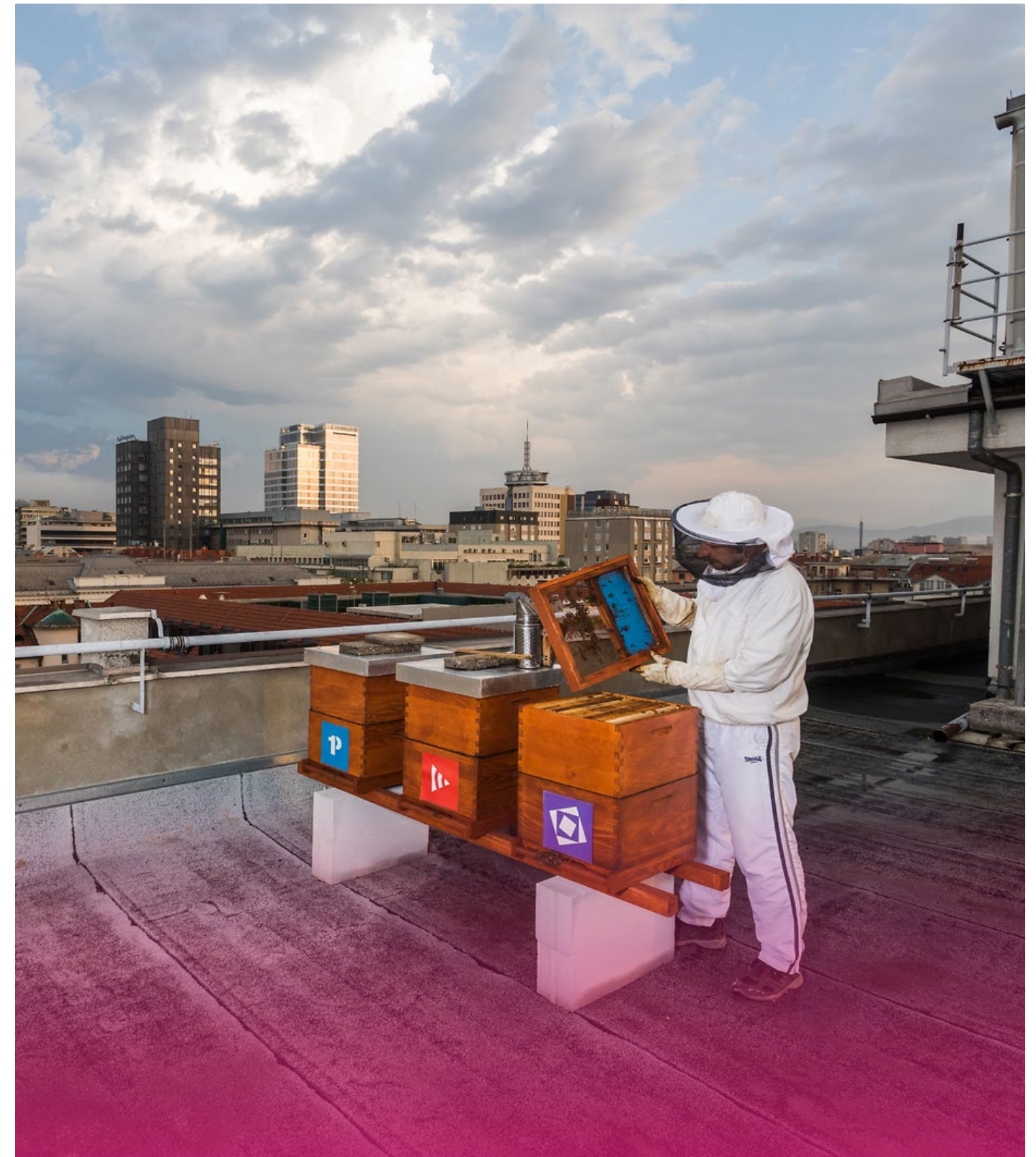
Bostjan: Liberty operates in 50+ countries around the globe and sustainable practices have been developed and adapted in a number of our offices. Although Liberty Adriatic was the first to be certified by the **Green Globe** in 2013, many of our global offices had historically been conducting sustainable work in the execution of experiences and events.

But what we were missing, and what became our main priority beginning in 2019, was streamlining our sustainable practices underneath one roof. We conducted an assessment on where we stood with sustainability across our global offices, created a sustainability team and began preparing a sustainability strategy and action plan to put into place globally. We decided that by spring of 2022 we would introduce it to the market.

Q: What are some of the challenges of sustainability initiatives for DMCs and the industry?

Bostjan: One of the challenges we face is around measuring CO2 impact and the total carbon footprint of an entire event beyond just travel. We want to be able to create a carbon footprint for the entire event that accounts for not just transportation but also food and beverage, venues and other areas of impact to be able to see how much of the footprint we have created and how we can mitigate it. When I say mitigate, I don't mean greenwashing or offsetting, but rather taking actions to really minimize the carbon footprint and maximize choices that create a smaller impact for other events in the future.

When Liberty began integrating sustainable ideas into our business back in 2014/2015, clients were willing to listen about implementing greener practices into their experiences; however, they were hesitant to take direct action on sustainable event planning. While still a challenge, the conversation is beginning to shift. Before, people were maybe willing to plant a few trees to say they'd taken a sustainable action. Now, people are looking for a more meaningful way to foster sustainability in ways that are fun, relevant and fulfilling for participants. That's where we as a DMC come into play because we're in close contact with the local communities. We know the country, the cities, the people. Which means we understand what's needed to support our clients and the surrounding community.



Q&A WITH BOSTJAN HORJAK, CEO, LIBERTY ADRIATIC



Q: Where have you seen successful partnerships that make the most out of prioritizing sustainability?

Bostjan: When discussions about sustainability began years ago, there was an interest, but it was very difficult to convince suppliers and clients to invest in projects that had sustainable components or priorities.

Today, we're happy to say that we can talk to suppliers from across the meeting spectrum that are looking to take a net 0 approach to waste and sustainability. For example, catering companies create menus that feature locally sourced food from the surrounding community. You won't find shrimp from New Zealand on the menu in Slovenia.

But you will find locally sourced beef, vegetables and Adriatic foods that are easier and more sustainably sourced from just 20-30 miles away.

Ultimately, it's about fostering a conversation with partners and suppliers to develop sustainable solutions. When we consider the design of our programs, we always think about how we would put the wellbeing of the local community and environment first and support the preservation of culture and tradition in the area.

Q: What are some ways to implement sustainable practices into experiences?

Bostjan: Partnering with local suppliers who are familiar with the local needs is a great start. Our conservancy project, **Secluded Africa** in Kenya, provides approximately 250,000 litres of water to wildlife and 70,000 litres of water to the community through the CSR activities. In Morocco, another country where water can be hard to access, we've developed water wells. But in Slovenia, for example, we would look to create a different opportunity to tackle local needs through our **Impact Tourism** initiative which we are developing with our partners.

Another idea is the concept of slow travel. As a part of our new strategy, we are trying to avoid supporting groups that are traveling large distances to only stay for short periods of time, like one day or half a day, before continuing to the next place.

The depth of sustainable activity is part of the reason why we wanted to set streamlining those activities underneath one team or group to better understand all of the impact that is being made in our business across the globe.

Q: How do you envision the future of sustainability within meetings and events?

Bostjan: I would say that as destinations around the world slowly begin to re-open, there is going to be a growing awareness among consumers, businesses and governments to prioritize not only profit but also the people of the planet. This change is going to be about taking positive actions to make tourism more sustainable for everyone. It really is about what we do. Everyone should be thinking about what they can contribute together to create a greener future.

In addition to collaboration, we need to emphasize transparency. We need to be clear about what exactly we are doing to support sustainability and what the impact is. Every element of the event process needs to be considered when thinking sustainably whether that is doing something for social support, the local environment or the local community.





**REDUCING OUR IMPACT
FOR TOMORROW**

Virtual events have provided much food for thought about sustainable practices in events as well as insights on steps we can take to reduce impact moving forward.

When in-person events shifted online during the pandemic, we learned there’s a much greater audience we can reach through virtual, and through this lens, companies are taking a hard look at ROI. For instance, an event that previously traveled across a few cities to reach a few hundred people could be taken online, condensed into a few hours’ worth of content and reach 1,000 people.


A major travel slowdown proved beneficial to the environment. During the pandemic, overall global emissions decreased by **4.6 percent**, the largest drop in world history, largely due to reduced airline operations. Through this time, we learned that not everyone needs to be on-site to find value in an event. After two years of staying at home, people are much more selective about where they choose to travel and for what. Fewer people traveling equates to fewer emissions and less negative environmental impact.


The expectation is that virtual events will continue, greatly increasing sustainability for the industry. Some live events will return while others shift into a hybrid format with both digital and on-site components.

While virtual events have a lower carbon footprint than on-site events – as well as less waste across the board, including food, paper and plastics – they are not carbon neutral. A one-hour video call emits between 150 and 1,000 grams of carbon dioxide, depending on the service, according to a recent **MIT study**. Using that data, another study assessed that a single-day Zoom conference with 200 participants equates to about the same emissions as driving a car 3,300 miles (or 5311 km). These emissions from virtual events come from network data transfer, pre-planning meetings and computer use, so it’s important to keep this in mind as you’re planning events and considering the subsequent environmental impact of each.

As we transition back to face-to-face events, the key takeaway for 2022 is that we must be aware of each event’s negative environmental impact and strive to reduce it. That takes the form of measurement and education. If you don’t measure the impact of virtual, hybrid and in-person events, you can’t plan more sustainable events in the future. Post-event, consider developing a report to show how your event has been handled from an environmental standpoint, and understand the correct areas in which you can take action to prioritize sustainability.



 *Learn about how we successfully pivoted a live annual event to a virtual format.*

 *Get more ideas on how to easily incorporate sustainable practices into virtual events [here](#).*

Here's what to consider among the top three areas of concern.

1 CO2 EMISSIONS

REDUCTION

For live events, the first step toward reducing carbon emissions is to review its location. This is known as destination mindfulness. **It's behavioral changes that will ultimately make the most impact in this area, and we're encouraging our customers to consider emissions avoidance versus offsetting in the planning process.** The fewer delegates who are traveling to your event, especially via air, the better it is for the environment. Consider shifting your event to an area that's centrally located to their home base, as a start. You can review **Green Destinations' Top 100 list** to view cities around the world recognized as having the most sustainable practices and policies.

To prioritize sustainability also means seeking out venues with green certification, such as the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) and APEX/ASTM. These certifications take into account building design, recycling programs, waste management, food composting, cleaning procedures and more. Before signing a contract, examine the venue's location within a city, as well. For instance, a convention center that's closer to an airport or a train station from which delegates will arrive will contribute fewer emissions than one farther away.

You can also reduce emissions through agenda design. You may consider starting a three-day meeting in the afternoon on the first day to enable delegates to travel to the location the same day and avoid an extra hotel night. The format is important in reducing carbon emissions, as well. Evaluate your events program and determine which pieces could be successful as virtual or hybrid events, with lower emissions, keeping only those that are necessary to achieve your goals in person as live events. Hybrid events can be especially effective for attendees who live further away.

2 FOOD AND WASTE

REDUCTION

You can eliminate food waste for virtual events, yet meals typically are part of any event with an in-person component. Careful planning from the onset can help to reduce food waste, thinking in a circular way. The goal is to reduce food waste in the first place through strategies such as rethinking portion sizes per participant, building menus incorporating seasonal foods and choosing sustainable suppliers. You should also be thinking about the end of an event. While minimizing leftovers, have a plan for any food remaining post-event. This involves having awareness of rules and guidelines around food donation (such as, only cold food can be donated), planning your menus accordingly and partnering with local nonprofits. The way food is served also comes into play. For instance, you may ask staff to put out food that will be immediately consumed and replenish only when it's gone to avoid rendering any leftovers unable to be donated.

To effectively reduce food waste, look to create synergy between all the players in an event, including hotels, venues and meeting agencies and their respective teams. Don't be afraid to ask them targeted questions about menu development or certifications around sustainability when it comes to food.



Click here to see more tips on reducing food waste at events.

3 PAPER AND PLASTIC USE

REDUCTION

The easiest way to reduce paper use is to turn to digital alternatives wherever possible. It's easy to do this in both virtual and live events. For instance, you can replace printed badges with QR codes scannable from attendees' phones that they can use to check into sessions, or skip pricey printed signage and use digital signage available through your venue. For plastic reduction, think about recycled alternatives or eliminating certain items, such as plastic water bottles, altogether.

Gifting is another area that was less sustainable in events previously. You don't have to eliminate the swag bag, but try doing it in a smarter way. Explain to delegates what you're planning to give them and ask if they want it first so it doesn't end up as waste if they don't. If it's an item that requires a particular fit, ask their size to be sure it will work for them.

Communication is of utmost importance. Not only **what** you share with attendees, but **how**, is critical toward making a more global difference in event sustainability. Rather than forcing green initiatives, giving people options – such as going paperless or getting a printed agenda, explaining **why** you're providing this choice and what good they're doing for the planet by choosing the former – is highly effective. When they're educated and know the cost of their decisions, it makes a difference.



Carbon Emissions Calculators

You can use these online tools to calculate the total estimated carbon footprint of your events, then use the results to determine where you can reduce your impact. Simply answer questions about your event prompted by the calculator, such as:

- **Meeting location**
- **Number of participants**
- **Where participants are traveling to/from**
- **Their mode of transportation (flight, train, car, etc.)**
- **Event format (live, virtual or hybrid)**
- **Physical meeting space required**
- **Types of food you'll be serving (meat vs. vegetarian)**
- **Gifts offered to participants**
- **Plastic and water consumed**

Based on that data, these calculators can estimate your event's emissions. In 2022 and beyond, we'll see a transition to emissions calculators as best practice over carbon offsetting. While doing things like planting trees, a common offsetting action, are inherently good, the problem with offsetting is that it doesn't do what is necessary for the planet, which is to reduce carbon emissions entering the atmosphere in the first place. Often, carbon offsetting is also greenwashing – a marketing ploy designed to make a company or event seem more sustainable than it really is.

Using calculators makes it easier to see which decisions for an event have the highest impact on carbon emissions. This ultimately gives meeting planners greater control over the outcome of events. For instance, being able to recognize that flights to New York City have the greatest impact on your event's emissions may lead you to move it to Frankfurt instead, if most of your attendees are based in Europe. Emissions calculators provide one figure per category within an event, as well as a total, showing what you can prioritize and how you can improve your event to make it more sustainable.

BCD Meetings & Events and Advito offer a carbon emissions calculator for events that can accurately measure your emissions from travel and other event activities. This tool presents emissions for each segment of your event, in both total emissions and emissions per participant, putting the power in your hands to determine what actions you can take to reduce them – or provide insight on whether cutting down your event size is a smarter choice. It also includes emissions from videoconferencing, an important component to consider if you're planning virtual or hybrid events. Following analysis of the data presented through the calculator, you can shift your focus to how to effectively communicate those changes to your event attendees and equip them to make smart decisions that are also good for the environment. Indeed, there is no small step.

FOR CONSIDERATION: Where to Start

Planning Sustainably across the Event Lifecycle

CHOOSE PARTNERS WISELY:

Event stakeholders have an opportunity to make an impact and influence green and sustainable practices across the entire attendee journey. From sourcing venues and hotels with strong green initiatives to planning activities that minimize their carbon footprint, there are strategies we can all adopt to reduce an event impact.

THINK LOCAL:

People don't want to celebrate their successes or meet with their attendees at the cost of the planet. Today's travelers and business owners are increasingly looking for accommodations and attractions that limit their impact on the environment and make a positive difference for local communities.

SET SUSTAINABILITY GOALS:

Set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly as part of *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the 17 **Sustainable Development Goals** serve as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. Turn to this roadmap for insights and considerations to set your own sustainability goals as you source, travel, plan, staff, design and execute events around the world.





Preventing Food Waste

HAVE A GAME PLAN:

According to industry research, about a third of event professionals admit to throwing away **15-20 percent** of food at meetings and events. When planning, increase awareness of food waste among all participants of the event and carefully plan menus and portions to avoid creating waste at all. In the case where waste is created, implement a system that provides methods for managing it in the most sustainable way possible (e.g., composting or donation).

LEVERAGE LOCAL RESOURCES:

Be thoughtful about planning your menus. You can help reduce CO2 emissions and waste by sourcing locally from sustainable vendors and suppliers where possible and designing menus with correct portions for each guest.

PLAN FOR LEFTOVERS:

Understand the rules of efficient food management including its proper disposal and donation options for surpluses. Look to partner with charities, food banks and innovative companies designed to sustainably process leftovers.

Sustainable Meeting Planning

GET ATTENDEES INVOLVED:

It's beneficial to provide attendees with insights on how they can reduce their impact as individuals. Encouraging sustainable practices like using public transit, considering vegetarian meal options, being mindful of water usage in hotels, and opting out of daily hotel laundry services are small steps that can make big collective differences.

CONSIDER USING A CARBON EMISSIONS CALCULATOR:

Carbon Emissions Calculators are excellent tools for getting an accurate view of the environmental impact of an event. These tools allow you to see the impact of different choices in the planning process. From the type of travel used getting to an event, to an event type itself. Understanding an event's potential impact is crucial to planning greener meetings.

BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT INVITATIONS:

One item that can positively impact all three sustainability concern areas is carefully crafting invitation lists for meetings. Only invite those truly necessary, and consider a virtual attendance option for those that do not need to be in person. This reduces CO2, food waste, and paper/plastic usage, and has the potential to reduce costs as well.



Partnering Responsibly

BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS:

Sustainability goes beyond eliminating plastic water bottles and straws. Creating systemic, sustainable change within this industry requires buy-in from other players in the ecosystem, including industry suppliers and partners. Vet potential partners' commitments to sustainability and choose suppliers whose sustainability goals align with those of your event.

WEAVE SUSTAINABILITY INTO NEGOTIATING CONTRACTING:

You can negotiate more than hotel rates and dates for venues in your contracts. Food donation, purchasing local, composting and post-event reporting are among a larger list of negotiable items. After negotiating with your suppliers about sustainability terms, make sure they are in your contract as well. Having a contractual obligation reduces the potential for lack of follow-through on greener initiatives.

MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS:

Ask your vendors, suppliers and partners to provide post-event data on sustainable initiatives as outlined in the contract. Then, meet with them to debrief, measure your results, and talk through what worked and what needs improvement. Use those insights to improve sustainability in your next meeting or event.



BCD M&E's venue scorecard and contracting guide have suggested sustainability contract terms for venues. Reach out to your account manager to learn more.

The background of the image is a complex geometric pattern composed of numerous triangles in various shades of green, ranging from light lime green to dark forest green. These triangles are arranged in a way that creates a three-dimensional, isometric effect, resembling a honeycomb or a crystalline structure. The pattern is most prominent in the upper two-thirds of the image. In the bottom right corner, the word "CONCLUSION" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, standing out against the darker green background.

CONCLUSION



Climate change is a global problem that doesn't have a one-size-fits-all solution. By focusing on primary areas of concern like reducing CO2 emissions, paper and plastic usage and food waste, we have the potential to drastically scale back our impact and create beneficial changes for ourselves, our industry and the environment.

When we look at where sustainability sits today, there are plenty of steps—large and small—that we can take with attendees, partners and suppliers to work toward a greener tomorrow. Over the last few years, we've recognized the pros and cons of executing virtual events. Although we're working towards meeting face-to-face again, we've gained an abundance of insight on thinking sustainably without sacrificing the power of human connection.

As an industry, we've become more aware of our environmental impact, learned to weave sustainable practices into the attendee journey, involved our partners in thinking critically about greener planning and set goals around our initiatives to measure our efforts.

We can't undo the impact we've already made on the environment. However, as an industry, we can focus on changing the kind of footprint that we leave going forward. Working together to innovate, collaborate and commit to building a greener and brighter future for our industry and our world is our only option.

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