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How to Host a Green Meeting or Conference at your Hotel

By Arden Jobling-Hey in BizEnergy.ca



These days, just about every hotel is implementing energy saving initiatives in an effort to meet a new generation of customers, aware of the impact their travels have on the environment and determined to lessen their footprint by choosing the greener lodging. While a number of these changes can be seen inside the hotel room (who hasn't seen the placards asking customers to kindly reuse their towels?), best practices are slowly creeping into other areas of customer service offered by many of the major hotel and resort chains.

One way hotels are looking to reduce their impact on the environment is by providing businesses with the option to host a "green meeting or conference". This means taking measures to ensure a low-impact conference, workshop or team building event within a green space. After sourcing from tips from some of the biggest names in the hotel business including Starwoods Hotels and Resorts ([Sustainable Meeting Practices](#)) and Fairmont Hotels and Resorts ([Eco-Meet Guidelines](#)), as well as Environment Canada ([Green Meeting Guide](#)) and environmentalist, [David Suzuki](#), we've come up with a list of helpful tips for any hotel seeking to successfully host a green meeting or conference.

Event Administration

- Discourage the use of handouts including brochures, pamphlets, and leaflets. If training tools are absolutely necessary, ensure the use of double side printing on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper, processed chlorine free and made from 100 percent post-consumer recycled content.
- Use printers and photocopiers that are [Energy Star certified](#).
- Encourage recyclable or biodegradable badges or lanyards.
- Provide an impact assessment report to demonstrate the impact of the meeting on the environment.

Event Meeting Space

- Provide Wi-Fi connection, free of charge: This encourages online registration and a paperless sign-in process. This also makes it easier for businesses to refrain from handing

out pens and paper, allowing attendees to use a laptop or tablet instead. Finally, this allows for people out of town to utilize technology in order to tap into the meeting or conference without being present in-person, saving on energy by negating the need to fly-in for a single event. According to Suzuki, organizers may set out to reduce travel-related emissions by 25% by encouraging some participants to use videoconferencing.

- Encourage the use of white boards for presentations and lectures! Honestly, who uses flip charts these days?
- Decorate with organically grown flowers or potted plants.
- Provide meeting rooms with natural or LED lighting.
- Provide adequate recycle facilities throughout the area and ensure your recycle program is up to date.
- Are you [LEED](#) or [BOMA BEST](#) certified? If not, discover the [difference between the two](#) and countless ways to make your building even greener!

Event Catering

- Offer tap water in pitchers at no charge in order to discourage the use of bottled water.
- Serve local and organic food and reduce energy used to transport out of town products.
- Forego table coverings on lunch tables. If covering is necessary, choose a material that can be reused.
- Serve food using real dishware. If portable dishware is necessary, provide your customers with environmentally friendly packaging options.
- Donate leftover food to ensure waste reduction.
- Is your kitchen equipment energy efficient? Take advantage of great [rebates and incentives](#) that will save you both energy, and costs.
- Provide a plated dinner to avoid waste from buffet style meals.

Event Extras

- Keep event giveaways to a minimum or replace them with ones that are eco-friendly!
- Provide attendees with information about green transportation and encourage the use of public transit, carpooling, and shuttles provided by the hotel.
- Suggest that businesses give attendees the option to offset their own carbon emissions. Partner with an organization that plants trees and offer customers the ability to make a small donation, if desired.

Does your hotel provide green meetings or conferences? What works and what doesn't? Leave more tips below in the comments section, we'd love to hear from you!

Image credit: [buzzbuzz](#)