WEBINAR INSIGHTS

Closing the Loop: **The Path to Sustainable Events**

DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABILITY IN EVENTS

- Meeting today's needs without limiting future generations.
- For events: "Leave no footprints behind" by considering the entire life cycle of materials, from design to teardown.

SUSTAINABLE TIPS

AT YOUR OFFICE

- Form a cross-functional office sustainability team
- Engage with your suppliers on more sustainable products and services
- Set up recycling and composting programs with proper signage and clear instructions as needed
- Remove individual waste baskets
- Use reusable utensils, dishes, water bottles, and cups to avoid single-use
- Set up water bottle filling stations
- Go paperless or print double-sided
- Send links, not attachments
- Switch to motion-sensored LEDs
- Turn off lights and equipment when not in use
- Donate unused equipment, office supplies, and furniture
- Engage with your utilities for energy and waste audits
- Encourage green commuting
- Plant a garden

AT YOUR EVENTS

- Form a cross-functional event sustainability team
- Plan to pack out whatever you pack in
- Engage with your suppliers for more sustainable products and services
- Rent or use reusable items wherever possible
- Choose standard carpet colors that can be reused
- Transition from plastic-based (e.g., PVC, foam, vinyl) to paper-based (e.g., paperboard, honeycomb, Reboard)
- Choose fabric over panels to save on transportation
- Offer experience and content over tchotchkes
- Set up recycling and composting programs with proper signage and clear instructions as needed
- Use reusable utensils, dishes, water bottles, and cups to avoid single-use
- Set up water bottle filling stations
- Go paperless or print double-sided
- Encourage green commuting

SUMMARY MESSAGE OF HOPE

- Sustainability is becoming **table stakes**, expected, not optional.
- Collaboration and passion across the industry will continue to drive progress.
- Every small step builds momentum toward greener events. The great thing about "low-hanging fruit" is that it grows back!

SPEAKERS

Elizabeth Fretheim, VP of Sustainability Freeman
Will Estes, Manager of Sustainability Emerald Carpets

KEY TAKEAWAYS

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PLAN WITH THE END IN MIND

- Sustainability begins long before the show opens.
- Proactive planning for removal, reuse, or donation avoids last-minute waste.
- Quote: “Begin with the end in mind.”

ZERO WASTE IS ASPIRATIONAL

- The industry aims for 90% landfill diversion—true zero is not yet feasible in most cases.
- Using simpler, mono-material products, such as 100% polyester fabrics or all-metal chairs, makes waste easier to recycle.

QUICK WINS & LOW-HANGING FRUIT

- Reduce single-use plastics by swapping bottled water for refillable options.
- Choose standard carpet colors and booth panels that can be reused.
- Rethink giveaways—offer experiences or meaningful items instead of throwaways.
- Engage suppliers for recyclable, paper-based alternatives.
- Quote: “Start with the low-hanging fruit—the good thing is, it always grows back.”

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY = SUSTAINABILITY

- Optimizing forklift traffic, running equipment efficiently, and adopting LED lighting all cut costs while reducing impact.
- Efficiency is both an environmental and financial win.

INDUSTRY SHIFTS & CHALLENGES

- Advances: new recycling technologies, innovative materials, and reuse partnerships.
- Challenges: limited teardown time, sorting by material type, separating complex materials, and scaling donation programs.
- Collaboration across organizers, contractors, venues, and exhibitors is essential.

SKILLS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION: THE FOUR I’S

- **Impact**: Understand where your operations affect the environment (energy, water, waste).
- **Influence**: Identify what you can realistically control or shape.
- **Inspiration**: Focus on areas meaningful to you, your company, and your stakeholders.
- **Innovation**: Seek out new solutions, technologies, and collaborations that push the industry forward.