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By Stella Johnson

There was a time when the question was, “What color is your parachute,” asking to what extent individuals promote and market themselves in the workplace and get the most out of life. But that was decades ago and the world has changed. Now the inquiry is more like a national inquisition about the color of your carbon footprint, especially with the meetings industry under fire.

Wikipedia defines carbon footprint as the “total set of GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions caused directly or indirectly by an individual, organization, event or product.” At the elementary level, your carbon footprint simply means the carbon dioxide emissions produced by one person or an entire industry, including the meetings and hospitality industry which, unequivocally, is also one of the fastest to correct the scales of natural balance through carbon offsets and sustainable meetings practices. (Learn about carbon offsets from www.nativeenergy.com; www.carbonfund.org; www.climatetrust.com; and www.sustainabletravel.com to name a few).

But beyond doing the right thing for the greater good, green business practices do the bottom line some good as well: A 2008 PricewaterhouseCoopers analysis of 60 large companies found, “Companies that report sustainability data generally experience higher gross margins and return on sales, higher

“At the end of the day, most green business activity is — or should be — about making companies, and economies, more resilient and competitive. That seems to me to be a recipe for success during good times and bad. Green can make sense when times are tough — and even because times are tough.”

— From “Thinking Green in a Blue Economy” (October 2008) by Joel Makower, noted strategist on corporate environmental practices, clean technology and green marketing

return on assets, and stronger cash flow and rising shareholder return.”

Bad Press Offsets

Then there's the reputational benefits, of which there cannot be too many these days. According to the recent white paper "The Economy and the Environment" from Meeting Strategies Worldwide, a

“While there are so many little things that planners can do to reduce waste in meetings, making eco-friendly choices is ingrained in our way of working.”



Carol Fabbri
Co-founder
Fair Advisors LLC
Denver, CO

conference management and consulting firm specializing in green meetings, "Eighty-four percent of those surveyed in the BSR/Cone 2008 Corporate Responsibility Survey report that 'reputational benefits' are what is driving corporate responsibility in their organizations. ...Meetings, events and certainly incentives are under a microscope. Stakeholders are demanding to know the economic and environmental considerations of meetings, events and incentives in order to maximize investment. ...If the corporate responsibility aspects of programs are not considered, planners run the risk of exposure to press critique."

As such, companies are doing more than paying lip service to sustainability — real numbers support the trend. Vicki Hawarden, vice president of knowledge and events, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) cited this statistic from MPI's 2009 EventView survey: "Sixty-six percent of respondents plan on implementing or have already implemented green initiatives

within the event function — a 32 percent increase from the 2008 results. Of that 66 percent, 44 percent are doing so as a result of a corporate responsibility mandate and report that green initiatives account for 13 percent of their event budgets."

Setting A Good Example

For planners overwhelmed by the green mandate, the advice is to start with the obvious small steps that can be easily accomplished. One example is Fair Advisors LLC, a financial services firm that recently opened in Denver, CO. Founders Carol Fabbri, a former Merrill Lynch financial planner, and Michael Edesess, an economist, mathematician and author, are both graduates of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA, and both profess to be expert managers of long-term investment portfolios that are built on "math, not marketing."

According to Fabbri, Fair Advisors orchestrates 75 to 150 meetings that are attended by a number of clients, prospects and audience members of the firm's "lunch and learn" educational series. "We've been interested and active in green concepts since the inception of our company. In fact, one of our partners is a prior president of the Rocky Mountain Institute, a leading organization which focuses on creating efficient and restorative use of resources to make the world more secure."

Financial advisory firms traditionally need to use lots of paper for reports and presentations. However, Fair Advisors has minimized paper usage significantly through the use of e-mail, e-files, PowerPoint, etc. It considers that move alone as its biggest achievement toward sustainable practices.

"While there are so many little things that planners can do to reduce waste in meetings, making eco-friendly choices is ingrained in our way of working. We have coffee in ceramic mugs, we drink water out of glasses, and so on, but paper is one of our biggest savings. Any minor change helps the environment — and the bottom line."



“We research, incorporate and demonstrate sustainability and green initiatives in our training programs.”

Bill Sherman
President
Intulogy
Henderson, NV

Sustainability Indicators

Intulogy is an outsource training provider to the insurance, banking and financial sectors of the event planning industry, and co-founder Bill Sherman speaks and writes regularly about planning meetings and training programs with sustainability and environmental responsibility in mind. When he addresses sustainable use of ecosystems, he includes human capital, social capital and built capital as well, "all recognized sustainability indicators," he stressed.

Sherman works with Intulogy's clients in the design and delivery of training programs that are built around an organization's internal or proprietary subject matter, such as systems, software, culture and business model. Accordingly, he has led Intulogy's "ADDIE Roundtable" where senior managers and directors from Fortune 500 and global companies gather to discuss issues in instructional design and share best practices in a non-competitive environment.

“Staying organized in e-mail correspondence and creating files online so that we print less is tantamount to our success, as well as asking ‘What is your green policy?’ when selecting



"We arrange 50 to 100 training meetings annually," he said. "Employees and managers of our client companies attend these meetings for both hard skills (customer service, IT, systems training) and soft skills trainings (leadership training, relationship-building classes.) Classes can range from six to 25 attendees."

"As corporate clients focus on sustainability practices to reduce their carbon footprint, they search for vendors that reflect and support their own practices. Consequently, we research, incorporate and demonstrate sustainability and green

initiatives in our training programs. We pay close attention to issues that range from carbon footprinting and how it affects the earth to sustainable use of human capital, social capital and built capital, meaning existing resources and infrastructure. We work with the CRO, HR director, training project managers and implementation project managers to plan all their training rollout sequences.”

Sherman explained that when planning a training rollout, the company addresses the problem geographically: They deploy local trainers or regional base trainers in order to reduce the number of times attendees need to travel cross-country. “This reduces the overall travel pattern and carbon footprint of the company, especially when it’s on a repetitive basis. It’s easier and cheaper to send one person to 20 people than to ask 20 people to travel to a site for training purposes. It also meets the human, social and built capital challenges of sustainability.

“Think about the pre-sustainability days where companies would ship 20 four-inch binders overnight, per class,” Sherman said. “When you think about thousands of employees in an insurance group’s training rollout, that approach requires a lot of paper and ink. Then, in order to ship those manuals, you need jets burning fuel and trucks burning diesel. It’s not only costly; it’s expensive and inefficient.”

Lastly, concludes Sherman, practicing social and environmental responsibility can actually improve a company’s own sustainability. “Foresight and planning in initiating and practicing sustainability measures throughout an organization can lead to more productivity and measurable savings.”

Green Meeting Mission

Working along the same green guidelines is Marcelle McCullough, president of Masterpiece Meetings & Events, an independent meeting planning company specializing in environmentally sound and safety-conscious events, something she takes personally. “I started Masterpiece after I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Developing my business plan while undergoing treatment gave me a passion for wanting to make a positive impact on an industry that I love,” she said. Prior to that, McCullough, who started her professional life as a travel agent more than 25 years ago, was an independent planner representing HelmsBriscoe, and a director of sales for PRA Destination Management, and had roles in hotel sales, marketing and convention services for Registry Resorts, Hyatt and Ojai Valley Inn & Spa.

Accordingly, the enterprising woman is responsible for up to 10 meetings per year that are attended by a global corporate sales force or the incentive winners of an insurance company or financial group. Such events range in size from 40 to 1,500. McCullough “went green” several years ago when she became involved at the community level. “Once you start to get involved more locally, many issues come into focus, such as water conservation in drought areas, recycling programs that need assistance or our own personal carbon footprints. Taking that focus and putting it into the meetings industry gives a unique connection with the clients I represent and the hotels I work with,” she observed. “We each have our challenges that may seem unique to our area or destination but talking about it unites a common passion. Building on that makes for a positive and impactful program.”

Professionally, McCullough employs green measures from the initial concept of a meeting by working diligently to cut down on paper in the planning process. “Staying organized in e-mail correspondence and creating files online so that we print less is tantamount to our success, as well as asking ‘What is your green policy?’ when selecting properties and vendors,” she said.

In addition to using pitchers for water, recyclable cups and online registration which, she said, most hotels now offer for free, McCullough also recommended signage that also is eco-friendly such as SMARTsigns, which have a lifespan of four years, or EcoSMART signs, which are 100 percent recyclable.

While most hotels are doing their part to be green, even if only in small steps, the independent planner said it can be a daunting task. “But, if you begin with that topic upfront, it’s amazing what hotels and resorts can do even at the start-up process.”

‘Walking The Green Walk’

Natalie Pace, who plans about 24 events per year, is CEO and founder of Women’s Investment Network and www.NataliePace.com, which she claims is the largest independently owned and operated financial news organization in the U.S. She said she’s been “adding a splash of green” to Wall Street and transforming lives on Main Street for the past seven years.

Pace said she has staff members who hail from all over the world, many of whom have never met each other except online. “Our policy is paper-free all the way and cyber-based for worldwide connectivity. When we do meet in person at company events, like investor education retreats, we encourage attendees to bring their computers and take notes on Word documents, rather than with paper handouts. We use PowerPoint for most of the presentations and limit any handouts to the most essential materials — typically under five copies and always double-sided. The rest of the content is available online. It’s better that way for all concerned, including the planet.”

“When we do meet in person at company



The pool at The Westin Riverfront Resort & Spa, Avon, CO, uses a saline-based filtration system, which cuts down on chemical use. It’s just one green element being considered by the U.S. Green Building Council in the resort’s LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification process. Photo courtesy of The Westin Riverfront Resort & Spa

With that in mind, it's a sure thing that Pace's organization only works with like-minded individuals, hotels and resorts, vendors and suppliers for her aforementioned financial retreats. One of her favorite green properties, she said, is the Ambrose Hotel in Santa Monica, CA, where the group met for three days last February. "It's one of the best examples of cutting-edge, green hospitality. This is key to my company, and we use the Ambrose regularly for our meetings because we support other businesses that are walking the green walk." The Ambrose, located a short distance from Santa Monica State Beach, is LEED-EB (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-Existing Buildings) Silver Certified and was the first hotel in the U.S. to receive LEED Silver certification. It serves filtered water, recycles wherever possible, and has energy-efficient air-conditioning systems, lighting and appliances, among other eco-friendly practices.

All investment retreats are attended by a mixed crowd, including locals and people flying in from Canada, Germany and even from Africa. "There is a heavy emphasis on investing green. 'Putting your money where your heart is,' which is also the title of my book about green investing, is a winning investment strategy because you are investing in the products and services that people actually want to own and avoiding dying industries. Activities include a tour of a Living Homes solar energy-powered green home in Santa Monica."

Pace concluded, "Green energy was the top performer on Wall Street in 2007, earning almost 60 cents on the dollar, above oil, which earned 32 cents on the dollar. So, it's the right thing to do, and you can get rich on green. The nest egg will always be healthier by investing in emerging green industries rather than dying industries, and green is the wave of the future." **I&FMM**

Partnering With The Eco-Minded

Everyone wants to jump on the green bandwagon, but how can a planner be sure that their meetings, venues and vendors measure up?

New green meetings standards are currently being developed by The Convention Industry Council's Accepted Practices Exchange, in partnership with ASTM International (the American Society for Testing and Materials). Together they have created The Green Meetings and Events Practices Panel, headed by Meeting Strategies Worldwide's Amy Spatrisano, CMP, to develop a baseline of voluntary sustainability standards for the destination itself as well as transportation, accommodations, meeting venues, exhibits, F&B, communications, onsite office and audio-visual production. Information, including how to become involved in live and online discussion groups, is available at apexsolution.org.

In the meantime, Meeting Strategies Worldwide can provide expert guidance and resources for producing sustainable meetings and events (meetingstrategiesworldwide.com). They also recently launched bestplacestomeetgreen.com, which ranks cities according to the green programs implemented by their CVBs, convention centers and hotels.

Green hotel standards are in the works, too. The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA) has launched a Green Task Force to develop a set of environmental guidelines for member hotels.

AH&LA's "Top 10 Green Things Hotels Are Doing Well" include:

1. Offering linen reuse program.
2. Recycling paper.
3. Using compact fluorescents in guest rooms.
4. Using compact fluorescents in public spaces.
5. Offering towel reuse program.
6. Training maintenance staff on conservation and energy procedures.
7. Recycling cardboard.
8. Water conserving retrofits for showers.
9. Recycling program in administrative areas.
10. Tracking energy and water consumption on a monthly basis.

Here are some green meetings options at top hotel brands:

Destination Earth Task Force: Destination Hotels & Resorts reports that the average hotel uses 218 gallons of water per day per occupied room and creates 30 pounds of waste per room per day. In addition, the hospitality industry spends an estimated \$3.7 billion a year on energy, with electricity accounting for up to 70 percent of a hotel's utility costs. DHR's newly designated Destination Earth Task Force has been green-flagged to ensure that all departments and associates are involved and committed to a list of eco-friendly initiatives that "embrace



The Fontainebleau Miami Beach introduced its paperless hotel rooms last fall. A personal iMac in every guest room allows for interactive, actionable guest feedback.
Photo courtesy of Fontainebleau Miami Beach

environmentally responsible products and practices.” In addition to purchasing fresh and locally grown foods whenever possible and utilizing environmentally responsible building materials and strategies for new properties and renovations, some of Destination Earth’s other green measures include retrofitting existing properties with energy-efficient lighting, heating and cooling systems, as well as water-saving devices; the establishment of a property specific “green team” at each Destination property to adopt, implement and monitor earth-friendly practices, and to become better stewards of the natural resources they utilize; sourcing environmentally responsible products and services locally; and purchasing organic, natural and eco-friendly goods and supplies whenever possible.

Gaylord’s Green Team: It was easy for a resort such as the 4 million-square-foot Gaylord Opryland Hotel to see immediate savings in resources and money once it implemented some heavy-duty, sustainable practices. The award-winning Nashville facility, which has almost 3,000 guest rooms and 600,000 square feet of major meeting space, and provides nearly three million meals a year for 1,500 conferences per year, created an in-house Green Team. The team developed automatic eco-friendly initiatives that saved nearly \$40,000 in natural gas and water reduction, and 760 gallons of motor oil through recycling in 2007. The property also saved 75 tons of office paper, and integrated non-chemical pest control practices by using predatory insects and bio-rational pesticides on its lawns.

Harrah’s Code Green: Harrah’s Entertainment now offers its Code Green program, which focuses on reducing natural resource use, conserving energy and promoting the concepts of reuse and recycle. Harrah’s was the first casino company to both join Climate Leaders (an EPA partnership to reduce greenhouse gas emissions) and win the EPA’s Environmental Quality Award. In addition, the brand also provides guests and meeting attendees with a carbon-offset program to help finance and build new clean and renewable energy projects that help increase sustainable economic benefits for Native American communities and American farmers. Over the last five years, 74 energy conservation projects have reduced Harrah’s carbon emissions by the equivalent of 164,440 barrels of oil.

All Las Vegas Meetings by Harrah’s Entertainment properties provide recycling bins in all meeting areas as well as pads and pens made of recyclable and/or biodegradable materials, offer organic/locally grown menu options, and work with the Teacher Exchange to donate leftover conference materials.

Marriott’s Greener Hotel Stays: In partnership with Conservation International, Marriott International Hotels and Resorts challenged its guests to “green their hotel stays” by buying carbon offsets to protect rainforests in the Juma reserve in Amazonas, Brazil. The promotion allows guests who booked their stay through Marriott’s Web site to offset their own carbon footprint, as generated during their hotel stay, for as little as \$10 — or one dollar per day for a 10-day stay.

In addition, Marriott is planning to increase its development of LEED-certified hotels and reduce its fuel and water consumption by 25 percent per room over the next 10 years, as well as introduce solar power to several dozen Marriott properties by 2017. Marriott meetings also include eco-friendly materials — the company bought 47 million pens made of recycled material and offers post-consumer material writing pads, organic F&B options and linen-free tables.

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts’ Eco-Meet program helps planners design meetings based on four sustainability components: Eco-Accommodation, Eco-Cuisine, Eco-Service and Eco-Programming, which encourage waste diversion and environmental awareness.

The Hilton Meetings program allows small meetings of 50 people or fewer to use 3M Digital Easels, laptop-enabled meeting rooms, recycling bins and linen-free tables.



Organic foods are on display as attendees arrive at an eco-friendly event held at The Westin Riverfront Resort & Spa. The Vail Valley, CO, property will receive LEED certification this spring.

Photo courtesy of The Westin Riverfront Resort & Spa



Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, CA, is reducing carbon emissions by using compressed natural gas to fuel its guest trams, and recycled cooking oil to power its Disneyland Railroad steam trains and Mark Twain riverboat.

PRNewsFoto/Disneyland Resort

Groups meeting at **Loews Hotels at Universal Orlando** can customize their food breaks to include organic and locally sourced options, and a water reduction program for meetings provides five-gallon containers or pitchers instead of individual water bottles.

Rosen Green Meetings: Planners considering Rosen properties in the Orlando area should visit the brand's green Web site at rosengreenmeetings.com for tips on how to incorporate eco-friendliness into their meetings. Also, Rosen donates all unused pads of paper, notebooks and binders to a local area grade school. All three Rosen properties — Rosen Centre Hotel, Rosen Plaza Hotel and Rosen Shingle Creek — have been awarded the Two Palm Green Lodging designation from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Walt Disney World Resort's six convention centers are also Two Palm-certified and feature recycling containers in meeting rooms, locally grown floral arrangement setups in recycled glass and plastic containers, automatic lighting and CO2 sensors to regulate energy use. Also, by participating in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Green Lights program, the resort saved enough energy to power Disney's Animal Kingdom in its first year of operation. Walt Disney World Resort has been an Energy Star Partner of the EPA for more than 10 years because of its energy-saving initiatives. — *SJ*



Marriott greens meetings with eco-friendly materials including organic food and beverage options, linen-free tables, and pens and writing pads made of recycled material.

Photo courtesy of Marriott International