



the event industry
faces up to its
sustainable future

insights from industry experts

bnetwork

accommodation
specialist

the event industry faces up to its sustainable future

insights from industry experts

sustainability is no longer a mere buzzword but a critical concern reshaping the large events industry. As the sector grapples with its environmental impact, key stakeholders are driving significant changes. bnetwork has curated insights from key industry leaders that shed light on the progress, challenges, and future of sustainable large events, with a particular focus on event accommodation.

the imperative of sustainable events

the consensus among industry experts is clear: sustainability is an urgent priority. **Marc Rodríguez, Director of the CCIB**, succinctly captures this sentiment:

"sustainability is a very real concern for the large events sector, no question about it. It's more than just a concern, it's become a key focus. Over the past decade, we've seen more and more sustainability criteria being integrated into the industry. What started as good intentions has become an absolute necessity."

this sentiment is echoed across the board, highlighting the industry's collective commitment to reducing its environmental footprint. **Christoph Tessmar, Director of the Barcelona Convention Bureau** adds:

"more and more people and organizations are looking for events and services that demonstrate a real commitment to sustainability... This change in customer preference is leading companies in the sector to adopt greener and more transparent strategies, as the demand for sustainable events is increasing."

driving change: the role of industry leaders

key players are not just acknowledging the importance of sustainability but actively driving change. **Helen Sheppard, Global Sustainability Director at RX**, emphasizes their proactive stance:

"sustainability is a priority for RX which organizes 400 events in 22 countries across 42 industry sectors. In 2021, RX became a founding member of the Net Zero Carbon Events initiative which now has more than 400 signatories from across the events industry. As an organizer, we are therefore committed to reducing carbon emissions and minimizing the environmental impacts of our events."

the event industry faces up to its sustainable future

insights from industry experts

Louise Palmer, Sustainability Officer at Strata sees a similar trend among the main players in the UK market who are driving changes.

“12 of the leading agencies in 2020 came together and founded industry body Isla, a non-profit organization working to help the whole industry become more sustainable. They work with the whole supply chain to help drive more sustainable policies and choices at every stage of an event design.”

this proactive approach is mirrored by the efforts of the Vienna Convention Bureau with their Green Meetings initiative. **Stephanie Rosenitsch, Association Manager, and Simon Kromer, Manager Corporate**, note:

“there is a growing shift in thinking. However, when we think about hotels or even event locations, there is certainly still a lot of (educational) work to be done and a lot of potential to make Vienna a sustainable tourist destination.”



the event industry faces up to its sustainable future

insights from industry experts

client expectations and sustainable policies

while not always the deciding factor, sustainability is increasingly influencing client decisions. **Rosenitsch and Kromer**, who expect an even stronger demand for Green Meetings in the future, observe:

"sustainability is a key topic for the industry. We are receiving an increasing number of RFPs & applications in all segments, explicitly asking about sustainability initiatives in the destination."

this shift in client expectations is driving suppliers to adopt more rigorous sustainable practices. As **Guy Bigwood, CEO of the Global Destination Sustainability Movement**, explains:

"suppliers who prioritize sustainability are better positioned to meet the changing needs and preferences of environmentally conscious clients, driving demand for sustainable events in the industry."

bnetwork's initiative: spotlighting sustainable choices

bnetwork's effort to highlight establishments with robust sustainability policies is a significant step forward. The "**sustainable**" filter on event accommodation booking sites, which displays the percentage of responsible bookings in real time, is particularly commendable. As **Marc Rodriguez** notes:

"this will encourage those (hotels) who haven't yet adopted such practices to get on board, even if it's just to keep up with the competition."

Christoph Tessmar states that bnetwork's initiative is raising awareness in the sector and encouraging other players to follow suit.

"this not only benefits the environment by reducing the environmental impact of events, but also creates a competitive advantage for those establishments that adopt these policies, as more and more clients value and prefer sustainable options."

the event industry faces up to its sustainable future

insights from industry experts

Louise Palmer adds:

“highlighting the more sustainable choices when booking things like hotel rooms is really vital, especially when giving end users the control over this.”

future challenges and opportunities

despite the progress, significant challenges remain. **Guy Bigwood** outlines:

“one significant challenge is fostering behavioural change among all involved parties... Resource constraints pose another challenge... Establishing robust metrics, reporting frameworks, and traceability measures is essential... Engaging diverse stakeholders, fostering collaboration, and building resilience to external factors such as climate change impacts are also critical.”



the event industry faces up to its sustainable future

insights from industry experts

Louise Palmer echoes this sentiment:

"it's all about education. There is a lot of myth busting to do around sustainability. Ensuring everyone understands it's not necessarily more expensive, and it also needs to be a priority for everyone because of the incoming legislation, and of course drive from consumers in general to see brands adopting sustainable practices."

Christoph Tessmar emphasizes the need for collective action:

"it is very important that events are sustainable, but it is also very important to communicate it and be an example for others. Leading companies in sustainability sharing their experience show the way to others and make it easier for the laggards to take the first steps."

Helen Sheppard adds:

"I think the challenge at the moment is all events want a good sustainable story to tell. So, identifying which events are truly sustainable and helping amplify those above the marketing and greenwash will be important."

conclusion

experts agree - customers are becoming increasingly conscious of sustainability and expect companies to take concrete action. It is no longer enough to simply talk about sustainability; customers demand tangible results that can be measured and quantified.

the large events industry has a powerful story to tell about its sustainability journey. At bnetwork, we want to amplify the voices of key industry experts and actively communicate our joint commitment to a sustainable future. By highlighting best practices, celebrating successes, and inspiring others, we can collectively minimize our environmental impact and set a powerful example for other sectors to follow.