



BS 8901 Sustainable Event Management

CASE STUDY EARLS COURT AND OLYMPIA

Summary

Needs

- To increase general industry awareness of sustainable event management
- To gain competitive advantage
- To formalise policies and thinking regarding sustainability

Benefits

- Dramatic reduction of waste to landfill by more than 50 per cent
- Financial savings from energy reduction resulting from switching off and changing to low energy lights
- Involvement of staff across all levels of the company

Background

Earls Court & Olympia (EC&O) Venues is one of the UK's premier exhibition and conference venue providers. It hosts more than 1000 events each year, attracting 3.8 million visitors and 30,000 exhibiting companies.

Customer Needs

EC&O Venues faced many sustainability issues, including land pollution from waste generation; air pollution from carbon dioxide generated by heating, cooling and lighting; pollution from diesel and petrol vehicles; noise pollution from events; water pollution from spillages and waste from administration offices. The organisation also

recognised that it had a duty to its staff, its business partners and to society as a whole.

Emma Wellman is the sustainability advisor of EC&O Venues. She realised that the business was already addressing a number of sustainability issues and that working towards implementation of BS 8901 would provide a strategy to work to. The first and most important hurdle to cross was to get buy-in from senior management and the directors of the company, so they could realise the benefits of implementing such a change. The next stage was for EC&O Venues to write a sustainable development policy, which allowed it to clearly identify its stakeholder groups: local residents, suppliers, exhibition organisers



and the local authority. It then sent the policy to its stakeholders in order to gain feedback. Taking this feedback into account EC&O Venues then started to look at all its impacts, assessing their severity and associated risk to help define objectives to work towards.

Benefits

EC&O Venues has been monitoring its annual energy usage and waste streams for some years now. So recycling and energy reduction plans are already in place and are continually re-assessed. Five years ago nearly all waste went to landfill. That figure is now around 50 per cent. "Since implementing BS 8901 we've reassessed where our waste goes, we separate as much as we can and have large grey bins for bottles and plastic," says Wellman. "We also have schemes in place that benefit the local community, such as sending our old office furniture to local charities. We also send rubbish to waste-to-energy plants where they recover the energy through burning. We even recycle food waste, which gets sent to a farm in Bedfordshire. They have an anaerobic digestion system, which recycles both the packaging and the food waste. Recycling waste in this way provided the perfect solution for us. Due to the nature of our business the amount of food waste produced is not consistent, meaning we couldn't house a full time solution on site." The BS 8901 management system standard has broadened EC&O Venues outlook from a largely environmental one to a wider focus on sustainability as a whole, including commercial and social responsibility. The

standard has also enabled EC&O Venues to formalise its policies and thinking on sustainability and has given the organisation a clear set of requirements and provided guidance on a roadmap implementing a sustainable event management system. "Everyone within the organisation has a part to play in improving sustainability in their department," explains Wellman. "The management system, and working towards achieving certification has meant that sustainability is higher up everybody's agenda. We are making sustainability part of the way we operate rather than simply an add-on." EC&O Venues also believes it will gain competitive advantage from implementing the standard as well as being one of the first to achieve certification to BS 8901.

Sustainability is becoming so central to the agenda of big companies. When it comes to signing contracts, if businesses are under pressure to be more sustainable, the easiest thing they can do is choose the venues and suppliers who have already got sustainability plans. Independent certification does the work for them, so they can prove that they are doing what they claim to do. "Financially, we've already seen savings," states Wellman. "We've saved by sending waste for recycling, rather than having to pay hefty landfill taxes. We adopted BS 8901 firstly, because it was the right thing to do for the local community and the environment and secondly for financial saving and commercial gain. There is only so long you can bury your head in the sand when it comes to sustainability, and we didn't want to ignore it any longer."

BSI's Role

BSI established a consultation group which was dedicated to developing a specification for a sustainable event management system. EC&O Venues was extremely keen to be involved with the content of the standard, as it was directly applicable to its business and aspirations regarding sustainability. "We wanted to lead the way in sustainability in our industry sector and were willing to make big changes towards becoming more sustainable," continues Wellman. "Working with BSI to develop both the standard and an assessment and certification procedure gave us a platform to begin achieving this. We wanted to live and breathe the standard and this gave us the head-start we needed." London 2012 was a key driver behind the development of BS 8901 with a view to being able to demonstrate the sustainability performance of the London Olympic Games. BS 8901 was published in November 2007 and BSI is now proud to be one of the first certification bodies to launch a certification scheme to BS 8901.

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