



INOVENT

STARTING TO BECOME A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

WHEN DID YOU START LOOKING AT SUSTAINABILITY AS A BUSINESS?

Inovent started looking at sustainability about 5 years ago when I began to look at it at home. I started making changes and I then realised how much of what I was doing at home could be applied in a business environment.

WHERE DID YOU BEGIN?

The quick wins:

- Identifying catering waste
- Single use plastics
- FSC approved paper
- Better recycling
- Charitable involvement

WERE DECISIONS MADE INFLUENCED BY THE CROSS ASSOCIATION SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS?

To be completely honest no, this predated the Sustainability Commitments, however, since then they have been useful to highlight other areas to consider if you are trying to be a sustainable business.

People often think that the goal is solely to eliminate waste and reduce your carbon footprint, and whilst these are a priority, there is so much more to ESG than these two things.

You need to be thinking about:

- Social responsibility
- Involvement with your local community
- Equality
- Diversity

The Commitments really brought this home to me.

HOW HAVE YOU USED THE COMMITMENTS?

We decided to look at venue waste in particular and the touchpoints between stakeholders – namely the organisers, venues and exhibitors.

Having as much transparency as possible and bringing partners on the journey with you on what you are trying to achieve is fundamental to making progress.

We also started to look at carbon offsetting visitor & exhibitor travel to the event and saw real success in working with a peat regeneration project in Scotland.

WHAT DID YOU UNCOVER?

When thinking specifically about the issues we are trying to tackle, I found that there is a huge part of the sustainability process that is run and managed by the venues.

Some are further along in their journey and able to provide you with a wealth of information, Olympia – for example - produce a fantastic report which you can see [here](#).

Others have a bit of a way to go, but most venues measure key integers such as water, electricity, waste tonnage and recycling. Availability of this data is key in order to measure and run a more sustainable event.



WHAT HAVE BEEN THE WINS / LOSSES?

We have done the following at different events and seen success:

- Partnered with a coffee bean recycling company
- Worked with a supplier to reduce our electricity usage.
- Worked with exhibitors on print material, and ran a measurement exercise by asking a sample of 30 whether they had followed our suggestion of using FSC paper rather than regular paper. We then estimated the weight of paper used on their promotional material based on their responses, and measured how this converted to the amount of trees saved.
- Worked with venue caterers to go single use plastic free.
- We have also worked with venue caterers to give any daily leftover food waste to a food bank and homeless shelter.

We have to refine the process on carbon offsetting and getting our customers to buy into it. On our last show we did an opt in with our ticket sales and had a very disappointing take up! Next time we will do an opt out offer to ensure a higher uptake.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS WILL YOU MAKE IN FUTURE EVENTS?

This year we are aiming to expand our carbon offsetting initiative to include international participants and exhibitors as well.

We are also developing a form for our exhibitor manuals to build data on the exhibitor's carbon footprint, with a plan to build a year-on-year comparison, enabling us to measure what our customers are doing to be more sustainable and areas that they need support with. We will be able to share this with members once complete.

DID BEING A MEMBER OF THE CROSS ASSOCIATION SUSTAINABILITY GROUP ENCOURAGE YOU TO SHINE A LIGHT ON YOUR INTERNAL PROCESS?

That is a tricky one for me to answer due to the nature of my business being a consultancy. The answer would be yes, but as work on behalf of many organiser clients, it is about starting a conversation with them about where they are up to on their sustainability journey, and then highlight areas that they could be looking at, followed by support on how to achieve that.

It tends to be pushing an open door as lot's of my clients are interested in being more sustainable, but in most cases, they don't know where to start! It can be quite a daunting subject, especially when confronted with the complexities of scope three, so giving them the confidence to "start somewhere" is a regular occurrence.

However, encouraging people to adopt the commitments as a starter for ten and listening to the work that Lucille - Chair of the Sustainability Group - has led, would be invaluable to any member, it has been for me and I would encourage people to join.

DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS OR TOOLS TO FELLOW MEMBERS GOING THROUGH THIS PROCESS?

- 1 Don't give up!
- 2 ESG is a complex subject with a lot of moving parts and can often feel quite overwhelming as you are starting out.
- 3 Score yourself on the commitments and just pick one to focus on.
- 4 Break things down into manageable bite size chunks and then prioritise what is most important to you and your business, giving yourself a to do list with a selection of subheadings.
- 5 Approach everyone you know for information! No question is too obvious and some people will be struggling in areas that you might be seeing success in, so reach out.
- 6 Sign up for TED talks and connect with others on platforms like LinkedIn.

