

# QUICK WINS AND ACTIONS THAT CAN SAVE THE PLANET

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT HAS BEEN CHANGING RAPIDLY AROUND US AT A PACE NOT EVEN THE MOST PESSIMISTIC SCIENTIST COULD HAVE PREDICTED. ONLY SOMEONE LIVING IN A CAVE IN REMOTEST AFGHANISTAN CAN BE FORGIVEN FOR NOT BEING UP TO DATE ON THE DEBATE RAGING OVER CLIMATE CHANGE.

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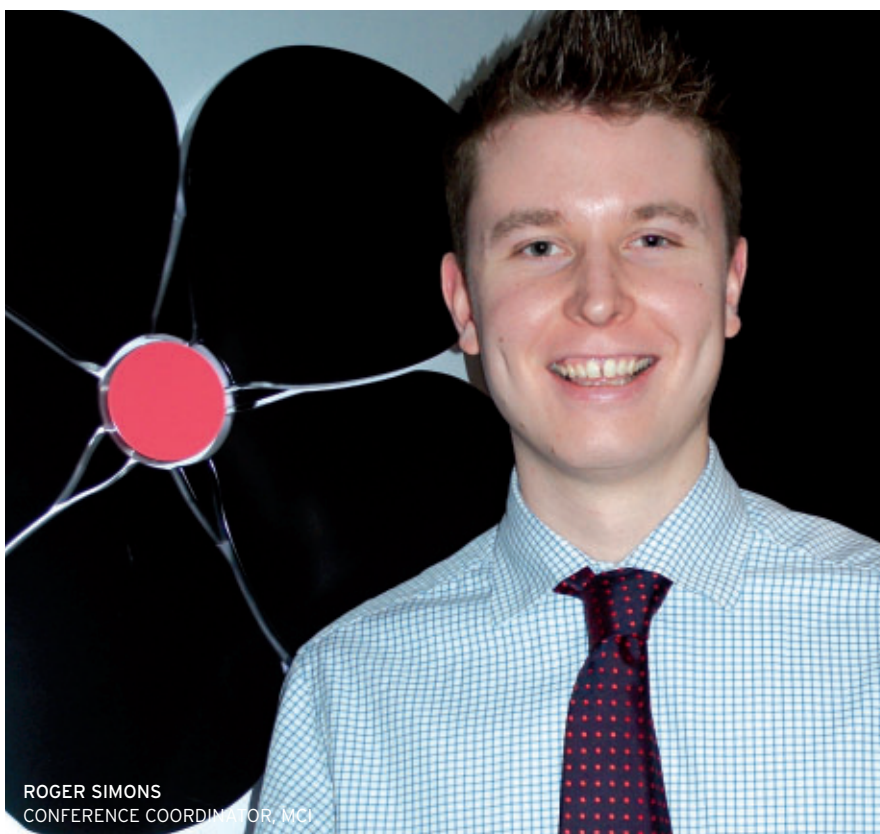
Following the general apathy common over the last decade shown by many national governments towards the issue, the environment is rising up the political agenda quicker than the global thermostat and with this renewed attention comes increasing legislation.

As more and more corporations stand up to be counted, flashing their green credentials and brandishing their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) strategies with pride, we need to ask the question: What can associations do to support the cause?

One of the core activities of an association are its conferences, AGMs and other events and these products are the most obvious starting point for the organisation to think about going green.

## HOW CAN WE BE MORE RESPONSIBLE IN THE EXECUTION OF GREEN EVENTS?

The good news is that you don't need to move your event from the latest high-tech conference center to an oversized tepee. You also don't need to throw mountains of money at the issue - you can move at your own pace starting simply and even saving money! After all the simple creed of 'reduce, re-use and recycle', long the catch-phrase of the urban eco-warrior, can be easily applied to your association's events.



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## WHERE TO START?

The first place many green event producers start is analyzing the carbon footprint of the event. This involves estimating how much carbon dioxide your event and its surrounding needs generate. You must take into account the simpler things - such as the amount of energy consumed through lighting and heating your exhibition, for example - but it would also be a good idea to consider issues like how far your food has travelled. That delicious mango sorbet served at your gala dinner might have used mangos that flew all the way from Peru - so looking at the source of your food and focusing on local, organic and fair-trade products is a good start.

Encouraging the hotels staging your event to enforce green policies during your event is another no-cost effort. Bed sheet and towel change programmes and providing recycling facilities for delegates are good examples. Admittedly, in Europe we are ahead of the US where you can still find huge conference centers using non-biodegradable plastic plates destined to lie in a landfill for eternity. Now you begin to see that in every aspect of your event there are little quick wins in going green and you can proceed at as fast a pace you wish by how deep you think. Once you have analysed where you can reduce the negative impact you can consider having no negative impact at all through CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## YOU CAN EVEN SAVE MONEY BY BEING MORE RESPONSIBLE

Why not organise a carbon neutral event? If you are willing to loosen your association's purse strings for a good cause, you can offset all the CO<sub>2</sub> produced by investing in an environmental project. There are many companies surfing the wave of increasing consumer ethics and these organisations may be willing to re-divert your funds to projects such as planting trees all the way up to investing in hydro power plants in India to producing clean power from wastewater in South Africa.

You have the option to choose to invest in such projects directly from your funds but you could also choose to offer your delegates the option to balance out the carbon dioxide used in their flights and to warm their hotel rooms by paying a little extra along with the registration fee. Either way, your members will leave with a smile, feeling they are contributing to a good cause.

With the increasing number of large companies dedicating time and money to social responsibility, you are likely to find sponsors clambering over themselves to partner with your event and align with their strategy.

By following these simple suggestions, your contribution to the global cause will engage delegates and keep your sponsors happy - which means that your green event is a win-win situation!