

IT CAN BE EASY BEING GREEN

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These days it seems that every time we open a newspaper a headline mentioning global climate change pops out. What used to be the threat of holes in the ozone has now been replaced by global warming. Organisations now have to be environmentally conscious of their impact in order to be relevant. It has become a real challenge especially for associations to become sustainable, efficient, and 'green.' Although it may be an investment of time and finances, being green can have significant appeal to new target markets.

In Europe where the Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS) has been in effect for two years, carbon has become the main focus on

combating climate change. Airlines, taxis, restaurants and other businesses have identified ways to promote themselves as green businesses. In order to be green or emission neutral, organisations must purchase offset credits equal to the amount of emissions by their business functions. For example shipping by trucks, trains and airlines all produces carbon and this must be neutralised by purchasing offset credits. By using market based solutions, groups can minimise their carbon "footprint" while reaching a new market of environmentally conscious professionals.

Airlines like Virgin Atlantic offer passengers the opportunity to purchase offset credits

for their flights. Expedia and Travelocity have also provided this option for customers booking flights and hotels. The Vancouver Tourism Board has recently committed to all-green flights. Both Hilton International and Hyatt Hotels and Resorts have offset their emissions. More and more companies have jumped on board the carbon-neutral bandwagon. Even if vendors are not carbon neutral, associations can offset their carbon footprint by purchasing offset credits through offset companies such as DrivingGreen, The Climate Trust, and AtmosClear Climate Club.

The Environmental Markets Association (EMA) has spent over a decade promoting

these market-based solutions by means of encouraging and facilitating information exchange among environmental professionals. By using market-based solutions to tackle environmental issues and providing programs in education and training, the EMA has expanded public awareness and knowledge of market-based solutions. This open forum has created a vast network bringing together green technology companies, large utilities, emissions brokers and traders, and offset sellers to share ideas that increase the beneficial impact of emissions trading. In the last year alone, the EMA has executed two emission-neutral conferences through the purchasing of offset credits.

By simply using electronic events such as web-based seminars, the EMA has successfully reduced over 100 tons of emissions, and further increased its positive effect on cli-

mate change through conservation of paper often used for programmes, attendance lists, and presentations. These web-based events also reach customers who are restricted by time and budget and decrease additional risks from hotel attrition, and food and beverage expenses and travel expenses.

With the amount of options available to associations, it is hard to believe that more groups haven't jumped on board the green bandwagon. With a little creativity, associations can become more current, efficient, and sustainable in these changing times.

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