









## RFPs

Given the strengthening of the greener meetings lobby it is hardly a surprise that significantly more buyers now confirm that they have edited their bid manual/RFP to insist that suppliers demonstrate their environmental values. Whereas the proportion acknowledging this practice in 2007 totalled just 20%, only 12 months later the figure (international buyers) has reached 42% (though 32% for Germany). Characteristic views include: *'there is a need for venues to demonstrate that their sustainable practices are not just theory, but are also actioned'*, and *'it is essential to obtain a copy of the environmental policy of the suppliers'*. One buyer now uses a *'green meetings checklist that specifically asks about left-over food, the hotel's recycling programme, the laundry programme, if lights are left on when meeting rooms are not in use, and whether staff are trained in green initiatives'*. Probably pointing the way forward are remarks like, *'we now include a contractual clause insisting that green practices are implemented'*, and *'we make it clear to suppliers that our decision-making on where to go and which suppliers to use increasingly expects accreditation for environmental and corporate social responsibility initiatives and we now request evidence of five of their green/CSR initiatives that they wish us to take into account'*.

Finally, IMEX again sought buyers' advice identifying a ranking in importance of those green initiatives that it is felt suppliers attending exhibitions ought to introduce.

**Table 5** provides a summary:

	<b>International</b>		<b>German</b>	
	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>
* <i>Print brochures on recycled paper</i>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
* <i>Plan to create little waste on the stand</i>	1 <sup>st</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
* <i>Focus particularly on green opportunities at the destination</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
* <i>Take firm action to support environmental initiatives (e.g. offset carbon emissions)</i>	4 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
* <i>Display strong commitment to</i>				

<i>electronic communication</i>	5 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
* <i>Offset support for wider green initiatives being undertaken by industry and environmental organisations</i>	6 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>

A summing up of this research suggests that a growing proportion of MICE specialists (especially in North America) adopt the view that environmental considerations must now inform their planning: for instance, typical comments include: *'how can it not'*; and *'we must all do something for the climate, for the planet*. Another notes that *'fuel as a major cost factor now affects all aspects of the meetings industry and therefore helps drive the sustainability argument'*. Such standpoints prompt one commentator to call for *'a meetings mechanism to help us to connect both with planners who have already staged events in particular destinations and can share their green lessons, and also with others who now incorporate credible technology that reduces the carbon impact of their meetings.'*

Clearly there is a widening perception that more must be done in the cause of greener business tourism. As one buyer succinctly puts it, *'there is no finishing line to improving our effects on the environment ...'*

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