

Show Sustainability Guidelines

At Elite Exhibitions we are passionate about the planet. We are regularly trying to come up with ideas to make things more sustainable within our company and that extends to our events. We are challenging all our suppliers and exhibitors to help us create not only a more sustainable event but to work towards a zero waste show. We would ask you to please consider the below to help support our goal.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – at the heart of what we do is this approach.

Reduce - do we need to build it, have it, buy it, make it, show it? Will it impact the show if we don't do it or will anyone notice if we combine something so we make fewer items, graphics for example.

Reuse - if we do need to have it, are we able to reuse it? Can we save it for the next show? Can it have several uses? Can it be offered to someone else to use whilst we don't need it, for example furniture.

Recycle - if we do need it and can't reuse it, can we recycle it? We look throughout our suppliers for options to get it to a good home, whether that's food, flowers, carpet, lanyards, clothing etc.

What are we doing to ensure our events are sustainable?

Venue – we work with the venue to ensure that as much of the show trash as possible is put into a recycle scheme. The venue work with the city to help reduce the overall trash in the local area.

Carpet – this is a debate we have a lot. Do we need to have carpet? Producing carpet is environmentally damaging and it is a huge expense for the show. However, where possible, all of our carpet is recycled and reused. We ask our suppliers to ensure this is possible and to remove, store and clean the carpet so we can get several uses from it. It is stored locally so it doesn't have huge air or road miles moving around the country. It is also used by other organisers when we are not using it so we get maximum use from it before it is eventually dumped.

Graphics and signs – we are using reusable materials wherever possible and challenge our suppliers to always produce our graphics in this manner. We are also challenging ourselves to develop more succinct messages and to combine information so we use fewer boards. Where it is useful, we also send attendees digital communications as well as using digital signs in key areas such as the conference.

Booth build – all our show feature builds (conference, sales lounge, registration, VIP lounge etc) are all built using a hard walled shell scheme panel. This is a time old tradition for event build and therefore by definition is reused to the end of its practicable lifespan.

Power and lighting – booth lighting is now done with LED bulbs to assist with energy saving, all show power is turned off when not in use and within the exhibitor manual, the show ordering process is almost entirely paperless.

Furniture – our furniture is stored locally so it doesn't negatively impact the environment travelling long miles. It is used by other shows and cleaned in between so it gets maximum wear. If possible, the furniture that is no longer needed will be offered to charity shops or those that can get it to where it is needed most.

Catering – throughout our discussions with the official caterer we ask for food to be reduced wherever possible. We purchase what we need and leave food to be consumed after the official close rather than throwing out i.e. breakfast pastries are continued beyond breakfast. We use real plates and cutlery where possible and often provide attendees with water bottles for refilling. In conjunction with the venue, we donate any unused items to local food banks or charities.

Drinks – we encourage all attendees to bring a water bottle and hot drink cup both of which can be filled up (water for free) and reused as many times as necessary. We are all guilty of not hydrating enough while at a show so this is a good reminder of taking care of ourselves as well.

Concession catering – we ask for all outsourced catering to provide a sustainable option for our attendees. This includes the food itself and its delivery to the provider but also extends to the takeaway containers, plates and cutlery which is often made from recycled materials such as bamboo.

Show badges – we no longer print and mail badges as this is both an unnecessary cost and waste of materials when many of the attendees print a second badge when onsite. We do not use plastic wallets but print direct to paper and encourage attendees to drop these in the recycle box on their exit. We have also challenged our supplier to provide the badges on recycled paper.

Lanyards – we are working with sponsors and manufacturers to ensure our lanyards are made using environmentally friendly materials such as bamboo or recycled plastic and where possible recycled after the event.

Shipping – most items we need are small enough that we can put them in our luggage and bring them with us to save on the environmental impact of shipments. If we need something we can't fit in our suitcases we try and source locally for example the popular large show letters we had in 2021.

Exhibitor manual – we have used an online manual for a number of years and with simple changes throughout the supply chain, for example writable pdfs, links to web ordering systems, simplifying the orders etc the exhibition booth management can now be processed entirely paperless.

Onsite materials – we no longer print materials for onsite use such as show guides, conference programmes, fliers etc but display a QR code so that attendees can download any show information or have it available on digital screens. If we do need to print something we work with suppliers to use materials which are possible to recycle.

Fork lift trucks – working with the local freight agents we encourage suppliers to use all electric vehicles onsite. This is better for the environment and also our health within the confined environment of an exhibition hall.

Staff travel – in advance of the meeting we are reviewing whether a visit is needed or can a meeting be held online? When attending the event, where practical our staff would use public transport such as trains, buses etc to reach venues, hotels, airports etc. If this is not possible, we reduce our impact by travelling together, sharing taxis (electric Ubers if available), and are reviewing offsetting carbon emissions with initiatives such as tree planting.

Receptions/accommodation etc – we always recommend an official show hotel which is within walking distance to the venue. Where possible we walk or use public transport to get to venues which we book for receptions, parties, dinner etc.

Plants – which are used on the show floor are given away to local people or sent to nursing homes/charities.

What can exhibitors do to improve their carbon footprint and build a more environmentally friendly booth?

Many of the above practices which we as show organisers have invested in will extend to booths built on a smaller scale for example carpet, wall panels and graphics as well as staff travel. In addition, you might like to consider the following:

Packaging and shipping – this is one of the most challenging parts of an event. Do you ship only what is necessary? Do you use environmental stuffing or packaging i.e. cardboard, compostable plastic or balsa wood chips instead of Styrofoam or plastic wrap? Challenge your suppliers and shipping companies to provide an environmental alternative which you can also reuse to transport something onwards from the show. Is it a requirement to ship something? Can you source something locally to add to items that you must send?

Weight – following on from the shipping options, can the items being sent have their weight decreased? Are booth materials able to be made using lighter or reused materials?

Transport – have you considered using consolidated transport or using advanced warehousing which reduces the number of trucks onsite. Speak to your freight agent and ask for ways to make the transport more environmentally friendly.

Storage – do you need to keep it? If it goes into a warehouse “just in case”, this requires heating, lighting, cooling etc. Is it better to have a clear out and next time look for reusable items?

Labour – whilst we often prefer working with our own team, is it possible to reduce sending national or international booth builders and use some local labour?

Sustainable procurement – have you looked at your supply chain to ensure that all items are made sustainably? This includes not just your product but also includes the booth build, wall panels, fabric, graphics, carpet etc and then on to giveaways such as bottles or pens made from recycled plastic and team clothing including t-shirts and bags made from materials such as bamboo?

Lighting – many booths use lots of lights to enhance the display. Can LED lights be used, solar power might not be possible within halls but perhaps rechargeable batteries to power smaller items such as desk lights, coloured displays etc.

Pop ups - If you use a “pop up” booth do you calculate its life span and when no longer required can you donate it to a charity or non for profit organisation which could make use of it for exhibits or displays?