

CSR: Where We Stand

February 2009



What is Corporate Social Responsibility?

For decades, the prevailing economic theory has been that companies' primary role in society was to maximize profit and shareholders' return. By doing so, they were ensuring the right allocation of resources, the efficiency of markets and the greater good. Over the last few years, companies, governments and the general public have come to the conclusion that the role of companies was actually much larger: they ought to contribute to society and prosperity by focusing on their roles as economically, environmentally and ethically/socially sustainable entities.

Some Definitions

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is when organizations consider the long-term interests of the communities in which they operate, and take responsibility for the impact of their actions on stakeholders such as employees, customers/members, the community and the environment (the "triple bottom line").

The Triple Bottom Line is referred to as People, Planet and Profit, those elements of social, environmental and economic sustainability referred to above.

Sustainability is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

A sustainable meeting or event incorporates economic, environmental and societal considerations. It simultaneously supports the host organization's prosperity, minimizes its environmental footprint, and has a positive and lasting human impact on its stakeholders and host community.

A sustainable event strategy is global in nature and powerfully shaped by local factors including culture, infrastructure, and environment.

Green Meetings incorporate environmental considerations to minimize their negative impact on the environment.

What You Told Us

In December 2007 we conducted our first survey on CSR practices in the industry. We replicated that study in November 2008 to see what change, if any, has occurred in the community. We found an increased awareness of CSR, of industry initiatives around CSR, an increase in customer queries about CSR and a corresponding rise in policies from organizations responding to this demand.

Factor	2007	2008
Good to high awareness of meeting and event industry initiatives to provide education and awareness on CSR	27%	34% ▲
Comprehensive CSR environmental and/or social support policies in place	21%	27% ▲
Increased customer demand for CSR policies is a key driver	42%	59% ▲
Increased marketing/business opportunities is a key driver	31%	38% ▲
Reduced operating costs is a key driver	32%	38% ▲
A CSR education program would help me do my job better for my clients and my business	23%	36% ▲
A challenge in implementing a CSR program is non-supportive leadership or stakeholders	24%	20% ▼
Disagree that CSR is less important for the meetings industry than for other industries	82%	86% ▲

What is MPI Doing?

Sustainability is a journey. Meeting Professionals International's (MPI) approach to social responsibility recognizes and prioritizes the "triple bottom line" of people, planet and profit. MPI strives to balance these three pillars as we plan and implement our global events. Our actions support our commitment to the UN Global Compact. We try to make good decisions that benefit our stakeholders, our environment and our bottom line. Along the way, we want to inspire and unite our global community in a common vision of a sustainable, just and profitable future. We have taken some significant steps in the last twelve months to bring a vibrant CSR program alive within our global community of over 24,000 individuals. Some of those steps included:

Thought Leadership

UN Global Compact. MPI was the first association in the meetings and events arena to sign the Compact. Our first official report, the Communication on Progress, will be due in July 2009.

Task Force. MPI created a CSR Task force, comprised of sustainability professionals both within and without the industry, to act as a sounding board for our activities.

Practice Leadership

Certification. With The European Meetings and Events Conference 2008 in London, England, MPI became the first organization in the world to become third-party certified under the new British Standard for Sustainable Events, BS 8901. We achieved all three phases in a three-phase process. The British Standard was

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developed to help guide the implementation of the 2012 Olympic Games in London, one of the largest and certainly the most prestigious events in the world. We plan on attempting BS 8901 certification for The European Meetings and Events Conference 2009 in Torino, Italy.

Event Measurement and Reporting. We measure sustainability factors for all of our major events. Beginning with the World Education Congress 2009 in Salt Lake City, we plan to strive for BS 8901 certification for all North American and European conferences.

Community Activity. Our conferences are excellent opportunities to give back to the communities in which we do business. We have begun to integrate community service projects in our major events. Some of the wonderful experiences have included:

- **Newham Farm.** This project, in conjunction with The European Meetings and Events Conference 2008, saw the group give 54 hours of community service. In addition, each participant was given guidelines on how to effectively implement community service projects into their own events.
- **Opportunity Village.** One of Las Vegas' longest-serving not-for-profit community groups helps intellectually disabled adults integrate successfully into their communities. Our group of over 30 volunteers donated 100 hours to paint their working area and make it a brighter, cleaner place to work.

Organizational Architecture. We added a full-time Director of CSR to our organization to insure thought, practice and resource leadership in CSR, actively integrating the principles of people, planet and profit within our organization.

Resource Leadership

Case Studies. Beginning with the World Education Congress in 2007, we have created sustainability case studies of each of our major events including MeetDif-



ferent in Houston, The European Meetings and Events Conference 2008 and the World Education Congress 2008. These are available on our website to those in the community wanting a guide to create their own sustainable events.

Sustain-ability Webinar Series. In the fall of 2008 we offered a series of four CSR webinars free of charge to our members. They are archived on our website for members to access free of charge.

Website. We created a CSR-focused web page that catalogues resources on CSR and hosts the CSR GroupSpace, where an active global community of meeting professionals exchange information on CSR. www.mpiweb.org/sustainability

Events. Our global education events, including MeetDifferent, the World Education Congress and The European Meetings and Events Conference, include sessions on sustainability so members of our community can learn practical strategies to use in their own organizations and with their clients.

Why Should You Care?

Professionals in the meeting and event community should care because their future jobs may depend upon being able to enact sustainable practices that reinforce

their organization's mission, vision and overall CSR activities through their meetings and events. Our industry may survive only by becoming more sustainable.

Since sustainability is rapidly becoming a top issue for buying customers and for the general public, being sustainable has become, at a minimum, a business imperative, which, if successfully implemented, provides an important strategic advantage. In some cases, being sustainable may be more than an advantage but the key to business survival.

There is a strengthening business trend around CSR as a strategic business component. Currently, 86 of the top 100 largest publically traded companies have CSR websites. That is an increase of 48% from 2005, when only 58 companies did. An increasing number are also completing sustainability reports, covering the areas of environment, society and governance.

The compelling reason for us to focus on proactive solutions that combine business imperatives with good corporate social responsibility practices is to ensure the survival of meetings and events as relevant business tools in light of an environment increasingly focused on environmental, social and economic sustainability. We can do this not only by reducing our

environmental footprint in our events, but also by evaluating alternative models and ensuring that our actions have positive influences on the environment and in the communities in which we operate.

On an individual level, as these external factors influence the internal actions of organizations, they begin to influence us personally, since those professionals with well-defined and relevant sustainability strategies will be better positioned to survive than those that do not.

Moving Forward

MPI will continue its journey to sustainability. Our plans include specific steps to provide leadership in CSR thought, practice and the provision of resources to our community. These may include:

- On-line resource library
- On-line learning opportunities
- Education at conferences
- Case studies
- Measurement guidelines and tools
- Industry collaboration

All of our activities are targeted to inspire our community to action, while providing resources to assist in that activation and tools to help you measure and celebrate your success.

Stakeholder	Success Factors/Value
Planners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources (research, tools, community of peers) to help anticipate, contribute to and survive change in business practices and expectations resulting from a CSR enterprise-wide program implementation
Suppliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater strategic importance within your organization • Learning from community experience to better meetings and events • Opportunity to give back to the community
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipping, best practices, skills and knowledge transfer • Research opportunities
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction with a community of practitioners • Resources for learning and interaction • Employability through an up-to-date understanding of issues and practices
Partners/Sponsors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New opportunities for partnership and increased profile in the market place • Building goodwill and increased economic sustainability through enhancing sustainability of communities
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipping members to anticipate and survive change in business practices and expectations • Equip the community to position the strategic value of meetings as a solution to increasingly complex social, economic and environmental challenges of a global business environment • Increased ability to attract and retain staff through demonstrated thought and practice leadership • Increased brand reputation • Risk reduction • Provision of a healthier workplace, both environmentally and socially • Opportunity to give back to the community
Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the meetings industry does not suffer setbacks in public perception or actual meeting spend due to a negative CSR footprint • Enhanced strategic importance and profile

www.mpiweb.org/sustainability