

Practicing What They Preach

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BITAC embraces the trend toward greener meetings by implementing sustainable solutions and providing eco-education from Pineapple Hospitality.

Seeing its growth in stature among hoteliers, organizers of the Buyer Interactive Trade Alliance & Conference (BITAC) considered creating a future BITAC event focused solely on sustainability. It didn't happen - but not because going green wasn't big enough of a topic, or wouldn't generate enough interest. No, the idea for an all-green BITAC was scrapped because it was too important.

'Green is not an isolated situation. It needs to be part of every hotel's strategy and planning, and in all facets of operations,' says Rich Viola, President of Hotel Interactive, the organization that produces BITAC. 'We decided we need to look at green and sustainability at each event, which cover a range of topics, including Food & Beverage, Tech & Ops, Purchasing & Design, Luxury and Supplier Diversity.'

'We're making a huge commitment to green, and it's going to be a key part of everything we do in 2010,' he adds.

In 2010, BITAC will again partner with Pineapple Hospitality - the premier distributor of Green Products and Marketing Programs for the Hospitality Industry - to present green-themed presentations, panel discussions and round-table sessions at each event. With 10-plus years of experience, Pineapple Hospitality has become one of the most-trusted names in green, providing products, programs and services to the lodging industry that are known to conserve resources, leave a lighter footprint on Earth and enhance your bottom line.

'One of the great myths out there is that green has to automatically be more expensive,' says Viola. 'Yes, there are some green products or hotel designs that have a large initial cost, but there are a lot of things you can do to be sustainable and keep your costs the same, or in some cases reduce them. Dispelling these kinds of myths is one of the reasons we need to keep green as a focus at our events.'

Pineapple Hospitality President Ray Burger will continue to lead the greening of BITAC, tailoring presentations to each BITAC event's main theme. Upcoming events focus on keeping your Food & Beverage operations green, and how green and luxury can coincide.

'We had a tremendous response to our presentations in 2009 and hope to continue the momentum through next year,' says Burger. 'Going green is about more than a few isolated activities. It's a mindset. It should be a part of everything you do. At BITAC, we're able to tailor our presentations for each event and demonstrate green's cost savings and benefits directly to key decision makers.'

'BITAC is just a tremendous event and the enthusiasm from the attendees demonstrates how important this topic is to the hospitality industry,' Burger adds.

About BITAC

BITAC is not your typical trade show. It's not about walking around a show floor collecting trinkets or amassing paperwork that probably won't make it home with you. Instead, BITAC brings together top decision makers from both sides of the table for prequalified one-on-one meetings. The meetings are focused on the buyers' needs and the suppliers' solutions, allowing you to accomplish more in two-plus days than you could in months worth of crisscrossing the U.S. to attend trade shows or individual meetings.

'Green has really become the hot topic for all hoteliers, and BITAC is a great forum for buyers and suppliers to collaborate on current solutions, as well as partner to create sustainable solutions for the future,' says Viola.

Buyers are scheduled time with suppliers they might be familiar with as well as suppliers they might not have thought to visit at a typical trade show, so they can learn about solutions they might not have known existed. The BITAC experience, coupled with controlled attendance, truly provides 'Relationship-Building Opportunities,' helping forge powerful, strategic partnerships that cannot be achieved anywhere else.

'At BITAC, we learned just how many companies have taken the call to sustainability seriously. Most hotel owners now have multiple choices for practicing sustainability in design, products and processes at the same or lower costs than ever,' says William G. Langmade, President of Purchasing Management International. 'We met with numerous vendors that are practicing sustainability in their products, packaging and/or in their factories, which is a welcome sight to me.'

'Also, the presentation by Ray Burger was very informative describing the wealth of talent at BITAC that practice sustainability,' Langmade adds. 'Ray produced a listing of vendors, architects, designers and purchasing people who are either LEED Certified or have had their products certified by multiple 'green' organizations.'

This event has earned a reputation for bringing together the top echelon of both purchasing decision makers and suppliers while controlling the number of attendees to maximize everyone's productivity and overall experience. It's annually rated as 'The Best' or 'One of the Best' industry events by 92% of attendees.

There are several benefits to attending BITAC:

1. Gain knowledge from educational sessions;
2. Interact with your peers (the top people and companies in our industry);
3. Forge new vendor relationships;
4. Stimulate ideas to improve the guest experience;
5. Improve efficiency and reduce costs; and
6. BITAC suppliers have the luxury of face-to-face meetings with top-level buyers at their private meeting tables without the expense and hassle of trade show booths.

'I just attended my first BITAC event and really came away from it impressed,' says Ray Hobbs, Senior Vice President of Kelco Management & Development, and a member of Pineapple Hospitality's EcoRooms Board of Advisors. 'It's a great format - it keeps you on-point. You can really focus in on what your company needs, instead of wading through 400-500 vendors who want a piece of your time.'

2010 BITAC Events

BITAC Food & Beverage 2010

February 28-March 2

The Bellagio Resort

Las Vegas, Nevada

BITAC International Luxury 2010

March 21-23

Fairmont Mayakoba

Playa del Carmen, Mexico

Choice Hotel Owners Summit 2010

March 21-March 22

Renaissance St. Louis Grand & Suites Hotel

St. Louis, Missouri

BITAC Tech & Operations 2010

May 2-May 4

El Conquistador Resort

Fajardo, Puerto Rico

BITAC Supplier Diversity 2010

June 6-June 8

ARIA Resort & Casino

Las Vegas, NV

BITAC Purchasing & Design East 2010

July 18-July 20

Disney's Grand Floridian

Orlando, Florida

BITAC Purchasing & Design West 2010

October 17-October 19

Red Rock Casino, Resort & Spa

Las Vegas, Nevada

Greener Meetings

When the U.N. Climate Change Conference, called COP15, recently convened in Copenhagen, the conference organizers knew the eyes of the world would be on them. So they made sure to make the landmark meeting as green as possible.

That meant selecting a location found to be the greenest among 30 major European cities in terms of CO2 emissions, energy, buildings, transportation, water, air quality, waste, land use, and environmental governance. It meant investing in carbon offsets. It even meant green office supplies. For example, the roughly nine million sheets of copy paper used at the conference carried the EU Eco-label, the official EU mark awarded to greener products. Plus, the copiers were ENERGY STAR-rated to reduce energy use by 60 percent, and toner cartridges were all recycled.

The lesson here is that if a global conference as large as this can think green, certainly hotels and other meeting planners can do the same on a smaller scale.

BITAC is taking that approach to heart. In 2010 - Beyond the educational sessions and networking opportunities - BITAC is also demonstrating its commitment to going green by practicing what it preaches.

'When we're putting together the logistics of the event, we're always thinking about things like conserving paper and consolidating information to use as little paper as possible,' explains Rebecca LeMoine, VP Operations & Quality Assurance of Hotel Interactive. 'We are unable to go completely paperless, due to the personalized nature of BITAC. Even the suppliers are able to keep their materials to a minimum vs. wasting marketing dollars by having brochures thrown away like with a typical trade show.'

To cut down paper, printing and shipping costs, BITAC directories are now split up so buyers only get a list of suppliers, and suppliers only get a list of buyers. BITAC discontinued the use of traditional zipper-bound portfolios, instead designing the directories with a pocket to hold each attendee's individualized schedule.

'Some of our attendees had been to multiple events, and we were finding they already had a number of portfolios and these were going to waste,' LeMoine says. 'By eliminating the binders, we are reducing our carbon footprint by not shipping these binders around North America. And by not producing these, it also reduces the amount of natural resources required to manufacture the binders, which is a big part of being green.'

Viola also said that for the upcoming BITAC Food & Beverage 2010, they will be looking at greening the food & beverage portion of the conference, and as always will give attendees the option of water pitchers instead of bottled water. Even the pens at BITAC will be biodegradable, courtesy of Concept Amenities, maker of the Biopen. The Biopen was designed to reduce the carbon footprint by using a cornstarch-based degradable material for its outer casing and includes other significant environmental benefits.

It's steps like these that lead to greener meetings, and offer concrete ideas for attendees to take home with them.

This is important because, over the past few years, many businesses, non-profit organizations and government entities have been increasingly considering environmental standards when organizing events and meetings.

According to a September 2009 survey by PKF Hospitality Research, environmentally friendly meetings are growing in importance, though their growth has been tempered by the economy. According to the survey, 'Green Certified Venues' finished thirteenth in importance.

'For business with conventions centers, or hotels in major metropolitan areas, greener meetings are going to be the way you do business,' says Hobbs. 'Companies are asking questions about what you are doing to go green, how are you going green, and if you are green certified.'

'Companies are looking to do business with people who share their values,' Hobbs adds. 'With corporate responsibility becoming more open to the public, and local government pushing for greater environmental awareness, you're just going to see this movement continue to increase.'

According to Meeting Solutions, green meetings don't have to be a hassle and can actually save both the hotel and meeting organizers money. Meeting Solutions offers advice on green meetings, such as:

Provide water in pitchers, which can save hundreds to thousands of dollars for each meeting. And by not pre-filling water glasses at banquets, hundreds more gallons can be saved.

Consider a five-day event serving 2,200 people breaks, breakfasts, lunches and receptions. If china is used instead of plastic disposables, it prevents 1,890 lbs. of plastic from going into a landfill.

Serve condiments in bulk rather than individual serving packages. For example, bulk cream is 2% less expensive and bulk sugar is 50% less expensive than single-serving sachets.

Eliminate shuttle bus transportation. Instead, select hotels and meeting facilities within walking distance or near mass transit services.

Collect name badge holders after the meeting. Reusing holders can save \$1 per person.

Suppliers

The final component to the greening of BITAC comes through its supplier exhibitors.

Because of the commitment to sustainability education at each event, BITAC has been able to attract some of the 'greenest' minds and groundbreaking green technologies to the show.

A few of the most sustainable suppliers who have made a splash at BITAC include: CynerGreen,

The Refinishing Touch, Cypress, InterFaceFLOR, Simmons Bedding Company, and Concept Amenities.

CynerGreen

CynerGreen is a manufacturer and supplier of stainless steel reusable water bottles, hydration stations and green meeting products sold to the event and hospitality industries. Its signature Bottle Free(TM) programs have been adopted by hotels, resorts, conventions and organizations across the country dramatically reducing each of their carbon footprints by thousands of tons of plastic per year.

The company offers a complete line of hydration products and services including: adult and children's reusable, stainless steel water bottles, HealthyTap(TM) natural portable water filters, reusable shopping bags, high-volume hydration stations, and certification programs - all exclusively offered by CynerGreen and tailored to the hospitality and meetings industry.

The Refinishing Touch

Founded in 1977 by company President, R. Mario Insenga, The Refinishing Touch is a world leader in providing on-site, environmentally safe furniture refinishing and reupholstery to hotels and resorts nationwide. To date, the company has transformed over 1.5 million rooms of furniture, preventing the destruction of the equivalent of 500,000 hardwood trees for fabrication of new furniture - not to mention the renewed life of the customers' existing furniture, saving it from landfills.

LeMoine says The Refinishing Touch's presentation at a recent BITAC event was a big hit, showing how to reduce landfill and costs in the hospitality sector through on-site and environmentally friendly refurbishing and re-upholstery. To date the company has converted more than 4,000 armoires into alternate functional furniture as hotels switch to flat-screen TVs.

'Rather than throwing out their old furniture, hotels can save on expenses and environmental impact by refinishing existing furniture,' she says.

Cypress Bath, Bed & Spa

Cypress Bath, Bed & Spa is a true innovator in sustainable linens for the global hospitality market. Their exclusive line includes Green Earth(R) towels, which have been proven to reduce the consumption of chemicals, water, and energy in the laundry operation.

Made from Extra Long Staple (ELS) cotton, Green Earth towels are engineered to feel plush (soft, white and fluffy), provide superior performance (faster moisture absorption and release) and enhance the bottom line (reduced operational cost). The products are manufactured using agri-waste and wind energy. All chemicals used are Control Union-certified and subsequently recovered prior to any effluent discharge back into the water table. All packaging is made from recycled materials.

Utilizing 'Product Life Cycle' concepts, these towels help hotels and resorts to minimize their carbon footprints. Green Earth towels also contribute to accumulation of LEED certification points for existing buildings.

InterFaceFLOR

InterfaceFLOR, LLC is a subsidiary of Interface, Inc., the world's largest manufacturer of commercial modular carpet. For 33 years, the company has consistently led the industry through innovation and now leads the industry in environmental sustainability. InterfaceFLOR is setting the pace for development of modular carpet using materials and processes that take less from the environment, and is well along the path to 'Mission Zero(TM),' the company's promise to eliminate any negative impact it has on the environment by the year 2020.

InterfaceFLOR has a number of styles that lend themselves to creative installation in pattern by tile designs. Standard 50 cm tiles can be cut in half, on a diagonal, or in any number of sizes and shapes to enhance the look of the floor. InterfaceFLOR has designs, patterns and colors created specifically for use in a wide variety of hospitality applications, including corridors, guestrooms, public spaces and back of house. InterfaceFLOR's one meter size tile works especially well in large scale applications such as exhibit halls, meeting rooms and lobbies. InterfaceFLOR's glue-free TacTiles installation system means that design innovation does not have to be an installation headache for facilities managers.

The company now has more than 60 styles within the Convert design platform, each with a minimum 32 percent post-consumer carpet content and a minimum 64 percent total recycled content.

Simmons Hospitality Group

Simmons Bedding Company's Hospitality Group is offering hotels one more way to generate less waste by helping to keep mattresses out of landfills for longer. Select Simmons mattresses feature the EverNu(R) top, a zip-off top that replaces a mattress' top upholstery layers. On average, hotels typically replace a mattress every seven years largely because comfort layers have become compressed over time, resulting in the loss of original feel and support. Replacing the EverNU(R) top

after six years helps to restore the mattress' original comfort and gives a hotelier the flexibility to upgrade a bed to a plusher model, extending its life for up to 12 years.

A recent survey showed that almost 90 percent of travelers would be more likely to stay overnight at a 'green' hotel. Simmons understands that the challenge for hoteliers is creating a green lodging experience that delivers value to the guest but won't hurt the budget. One way to do that is by using less resources and therefore generating less waste.

'Our product innovation and development team is constantly looking at sustainable options to meet the growing demand for eco-friendly products in the industry,' says Steve Tipton, vice president, Simmons Hospitality Group. 'With the EverNu(R) top, a hotel can double or triple the life cycle of a mattress and box spring, which can not only result in significant cost-savings, but it can also help to keep materials from ending up in a landfill.

'It might not be a tsunami yet, but there is a huge opportunity to drive sustainability in the market today,' he says. 'BITAC is one of the strongest events to do this. We're seeing buyers really focused on doing what they can to go green and BITAC gives us the opportunity to meet with them and really show them what we can do.'

Concept Amenities

Makers of the Biopen, Concept Amenities offers a comprehensive array of exclusive branded collections in hotel guest amenities, retail and spa products. Each range is sophisticated in its design and quality for products that truly nourish the skin, body and soul. The company also offers a number of accessories, including pens, slippers, trays and coat hangers to complete your amenity collection.

According to the company, Concept Amenities is continually searching for the latest in innovative materials and manufacturing processes that seek to minimize harm against our environment. The commitment to environmental research stems from the belief that they can make a solid contribution to the improvement toward environmentally friendly consumer products.

About Pineapple Hospitality

Headquartered in Saint Charles, Missouri, Pineapple Hospitality(TM) is an EPA ENERGY STAR(TM) partner bringing fresh ideas to hospitality guests' doors and owner/operators' bottom lines - including FreshStay(R) (www.freshstay.com), EcoRooms(R) & EcoSuites(TM) (www.EcoRooms.com) Environmentally Sensitive Amenities(TM), EO(R), Neutrogena(R), Earth Perfect, Earth Simple, ecossential elements and greenSPA(TM) amenities, AVIVA and WAVE dispensers, Energy Efficient Lighting and Controls, Custom Linen & Towel Re-Use Programs, Green Earth Key Cards, Sleeves and Folders, Energy Management Systems and Controls, High Performance showerheads, the Nature's Mist(TM) deodorization system, Zero Odor, and dozens of other products and programs. For more information, please visit www.pineapplehospitality.net, or call us at 636-922-2285.

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