



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

TO SUSTAINABLE EVENT PLANNING

Build lasting, Sustainable experiences -
while steering clear of common pitfalls

Elegant sustainable events - without compromise

You've been given a brief for your next event. Everything looks good. But there's one problem, you need to pull off a memorable and impactful event - and do it sustainably.

But planning an event that wows guests while minimising environmental impact can feel like a near impossible task. When traditional event planning often overlooks environmental impact, balancing the wow factor with eco-consciousness can be a precarious tightrope walk. From excessive waste to high energy consumption, events can leave a heavy ecological footprint. And when you've so much to juggle already - venue, catering, logistics - adding sustainability into the equation layers on complexities you weren't prepared for.

Creating exceptional events without compromising the planet is a significant challenge for even the most experienced of event planners. But it can be done in a meaningful way - you just need to know where to focus your efforts.

At veSpace, we've been curating unforgettable experiences for over 35 years and have been at the forefront of introducing sustainable event practices for our clients around the world.

Sustainable event management goes beyond simply reducing waste or lowering emissions; it's about helping clients make conscious, practical choices that align with broader environmental goals (and knock the socks off your guests in the process).

In this ultimate sustainable event guide, we will take you through our learnings, our planning process and our secrets to executing a sustainable event from start to finish.

Let's do this...





WHY SUSTAINABLE EVENT PLANNING MATTERS

The events landscape is changing and there's a clear and compelling call for brands to lead the way in conscious consumption and sustainable practices.

Today's consumers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z (who now make up the lion's share of the market) often value transparency and ethical practices in the brands they support. Sustainability, social responsibility, and accountability are critical factors that shape their purchasing decisions. They expect brands to champion causes aligned with their values and actively work toward positive change, choosing to seek out those that walk the talk.

Think corporate social responsibility is just a buzzword? A box to check but pay no real heed to? You'll be caught out in a heartbeat, with your audience opting to focus their attention on brands that put their money where their mouth is – into the sustainability pot.

This generational shift is transforming how events are planned and executed – and for good reason. With the average conference delegate producing more than 1.89kg of waste a day – and almost 100 times that in the resulting CO2 emissions – sustainable event practices are no longer a nice to have.

But planning goes beyond recycling bins and energy-efficient lighting. It requires a holistic approach that considers all aspects, from venue selection to transportation logistics. By integrating environmental goals into your event planning process, you not only contribute to a greener planet but also enhance the overall experience for attendees.

In the following sections, we will explore key steps and strategies to plan and execute sustainable events. From setting environmental goals to managing waste, reducing carbon footprints, and optimising transportation logistics, this ultimate guide will equip you with the knowledge and tools to create unforgettable events while making a positive impact on the environment.

So to start making your events as responsible as they are remarkable (it is possible!) consider these key areas...

01

SET ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS FOR YOUR EVENT

Before diving head first into the logistical details of planning a sustainable event, it is crucial to first get to grips with the nitty gritty of establishing clear environmental goals. These goals will serve as a compass throughout the planning process and help guide decision-making to ensure your event aligns with your broader sustainability objectives.

Here are three essential steps to get you started:



Define Your Sustainability Objectives

The first step in setting environmental goals for your event is to clearly define what sustainability means to your brand. Is it about minimising waste? Lowering carbon emissions? Supporting local communities? By understanding your core values and priorities, you can establish meaningful sustainability objectives that resonate with your brand identity and mission.



Identify Key Areas for Improvement

Once you've defined your sustainability objectives, it's time to identify the key areas within your event where you can make a significant impact. This could include waste management, energy consumption, transportation, catering, or even attendee engagement. Assess each aspect of your event and determine where improvements can be made to reduce its environmental footprint.





Establish Measurable Objectives

Now you've identified the key environmental issues, it's time to set measurable objectives. Instead of vague aspirations like "reduce waste," which could mean anything, strive for specific targets like "achieve a 50% reduction in single-use plastics" or "source 75% of event materials from sustainable suppliers." Setting measurable objectives allows you to track progress and demonstrate the success of your sustainability initiatives.

By setting clear environmental goals, you lay the foundation for planning a truly sustainable event. With these goals in mind, let's jump into the practical strategies for turning your vision into reality.



Create an Action Plan

Now your objectives are in place you can get started developing an action plan outlining the steps necessary to achieve them. Break down each objective into actionable tasks, assign responsibilities, and set deadlines. A well-defined action plan ensures accountability and provides a roadmap for implementing sustainable practices effectively.



02

CONSIDER VENUE SELECTION AND DESIGN



Choosing the wrong venue for your event can turn your sustainability efforts upside down faster than you can say “carbon footprint.” You might have planned every detail to be as green as possible, but if your venue doesn’t recycle, uses excessive energy, and lacks any real commitment to sustainability, suddenly all those eco-friendly plans are overshadowed by a venue that’s more about convenience than conscience.

Not only does this undermine your brand’s credibility, but it risks attracting criticism from discerning attendees and stakeholders who expect better. Not to mention higher costs for waste management and energy use, and even potential financial penalties if you’re aiming for certifications like ISO 20121.

In short, picking the wrong venue doesn’t just risk your event’s green credentials - it can harm your brand reputation and bottom line. So, let’s make sure your venue choice reflects your commitment to sustainability, ensuring your event shines for all the right reasons. Here’s how:



Evaluate Sustainability Credentials

When evaluating potential venues, ask about their sustainability certifications, eco-friendly practices, and commitment to renewable energy sources. Look for venues that incorporate environmentally-friendly building materials, efficient heating and cooling systems, and natural lighting options. Select venues with strong environmental policies and certifications like BREEAM or Green Tourism. These venues typically have energy-efficient systems, waste reduction programmes, and sustainable practices in place. Ultimately, choosing a venue with strong sustainability credentials sets the stage for an eco-conscious event.



Incorporate Green Building Practices

During the design phase, focus on incorporating green building practices into the event layout. Maximise natural light to reduce the need for artificial lighting, utilise energy-efficient appliances, and optimise space utilisation to minimise wastage. By designing the event space with sustainability in mind, you can create an experience that aligns both organisational and environmental goals.



Optimise Use of Space and Resources

Consider how you can optimise the use of space and resources at the venue. Avoid excessive decorations and unnecessary installations that generate waste. Opt for reusable signage and digital displays instead of paper-based materials. By minimising resource usage, you not only reduce waste but also create a more streamlined and visually appealing event.

By picking a sustainable venue, you're not just hosting an event - you're making a statement. You're showing your attendees and stakeholders that your brand is serious about sustainability and responsible choices. It's a win-win: your event gets to be greener, your brand reputation gets a boost, and you attract attendees who care about the planet just as much as you do.



03

INCORPORATE WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING



Failing to nail the waste management and recycling aspect of your event can leave you in a mess - literally and figuratively! Overflowing rubbish bins, piles of single-use plastics, and heaps of uneaten food headed straight for the landfill not only create eyesores and logistical nightmares, but can seriously undermine your sustainability goals. The environmental impact of mismanaged waste is significant, contributing to pollution and wasted resources. Getting this wrong can harm your brand image, strain your budget, and derail your green initiatives (not to mention cost you money with higher disposal costs after you missed out on savings from recycling and composting programmes!)

To avoid these pitfalls make sure you consider:



Minimising Single-Use Plastics

Single-use plastics pose a severe threat to the environment. Take proactive measures to minimise their presence at your event. Make sure your caterers offer reusable or compostable alternatives for cups, cutlery, and packaging. Encourage guests to bring reusable water bottles and provide water refill stations instead of single-use plastic bottles. Brands like Chilly's Bottles offer elegant, reusable water bottles that can be customised for events. By eliminating or reducing single-use plastics, you actively contribute to creating a cleaner and greener event.



Implementing Effective Recycling Systems

Make recycling accessible and straightforward for attendees by ensuring the venue has strategically placed recycling bins throughout. Check they have labelled the bins clearly to indicate what items can be recycled. Educate event staff and volunteers about proper waste sorting procedures. Check whether your venue partners with local recycling organisations to ensure collected recyclables are properly processed. Effective recycling systems help divert waste from landfills and promote the circular economy.



Donating Leftover Food and Materials

Food waste is another significant issue faced by events. To combat food waste, collaborate with local food banks or charities to donate surplus food. Ensure that caterers prepare the appropriate amount of food based on attendee numbers. You might also want to consider donating any leftover event materials, such as promotional items or decorations, to local community organisations. Through donations, you can make a positive impact on those in need while reducing waste.

By turning waste into a resource and demonstrating responsible practices, you create a positive ripple effect that extends beyond the event itself, contributing to broader environmental goals and inspiring others to follow suit.

PLASTIC

Please
Recycle



GLASS

Please
Recycle



CANS

Please
Recycle



PAPER

Please
Recycle



Embracing Paperless Communication

Going paperless significantly reduces the environmental footprint of your event. Digital agendas, brochures and updates not only save trees but also streamline communication and enhance efficiency.

Digital Invitations and Registration

Use online platforms to send invitations and manage RSVPs. This approach not only cuts down on paper waste but also allows for easier tracking and updates. Platforms like Eventbrite and Paperless Post offer elegant and functional solutions.

Event Apps and Digital Signage

Leverage event apps to provide schedules, maps, and real-time updates to attendees. These apps can also facilitate networking and engagement through interactive features. Additionally, use digital signage to convey information and further reduce paper waste.

Sustainable Print Materials

Choose recycled paper or materials certified by organisations like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) for any necessary printing. This ensures that the paper used comes from responsibly managed forests.

Biodegradable and Reusable Items

Select biodegradable or reusable items for badges, lanyards, and other event materials. These options not only reduce waste but also demonstrate your commitment to sustainability.

Eco-Conscious Decorations

Opt for decorations that are not only visually appealing but also environmentally friendly. Invest in high-quality, reusable decorations that can be stored and used for future events. This will also save money in the long run.

Natural and Biodegradable Elements

Use live plants, which can be replanted or donated after the event, and biodegradable materials for other decorative elements. This approach not only enhances the aesthetic but also reduces waste.

By focusing on these key areas, you can host a sustainable event that not only meets but exceeds expectations, leaving a positive impact on both attendees and the environment.

04

ENSURE ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CARBON FOOTPRINT REDUCTION



Reducing energy consumption and minimising carbon emissions are fundamental aspects of planning a sustainable event. Dropping the ball here can lead to a whirlwind of trouble. Lights blazing all day, electronics humming non-stop, and heating or cooling systems running on overdrive will waste energy and ramps up carbon emissions, effectively wiping out any green gains you've made elsewhere.

To avoid your event guzzling energy like there's no tomorrow here are some strategies you'll want to adopt:



Utilise Renewable Energy Sources

Transitioning to renewable energy sources is an impactful step towards hosting sustainable events. When selecting event vendors and partners, prioritise those who utilise renewable energy options, such as solar or wind power. By opting for clean energy alternatives, you actively contribute to reducing carbon emissions.



Implement Energy-Saving Measures

From lighting to audiovisual equipment, various elements of event production consume energy. Ensure energy-saving measures are implemented throughout the event to reduce electricity usage. Use LED lighting, opt for energy-saving modes on electronic devices and employ motion-sensor lighting in areas with less frequent traffic. By taking small but meaningful actions, you can significantly lower energy consumption.



Offset Carbon Emissions

While you're striving to minimise carbon emissions, it may be challenging to eliminate them entirely. But that doesn't mean you should give up. Offset the remaining emissions by investing in verified carbon offset projects such as reforestation, renewable energy development, or methane capture. By participating in carbon offsetting, you take responsibility for the residual emissions associated with your event.

Integrating energy efficiency measures and carbon offsetting into your event planning demonstrates a genuine commitment to sustainability. Lastly, let's explore strategies for transportation and logistics optimisation.



05

GET TO GRIPS WITH TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS



Attendees stuck in traffic jams, shuttles that run late or not at all, and parking nightmares that make your guests wish they'd stayed home – sound familiar? Not only do these blunders create immediate frustration and stress, setting the stage for a less-than-stellar event experience, but poorly managed transportation logistics can lead to higher emissions, blowing your sustainability goals out of the water.

To get the wheels turning smoothly and ensure every journey to your event is as green as possible try these steps:



Promote Public Transport and Carpooling

Encourage event attendees to utilise public transportation options whenever possible. Make it as easy as you can for them by providing detailed information on bus routes, train schedules, and bike-sharing programmes available near the event venue. You could even offer enticing incentives such as discounted tickets or priority parking for attendees who choose carpooling. Use apps like [Liftshare](#) or [BlaBlaCar](#) to facilitate carpooling among attendees. By promoting alternative transportation methods, you reduce the number of individual vehicles on the road, leading to fewer emissions.



Utilise Electric Vehicles

For logistical purposes, consider utilising electric vehicles (EVs) within the event setup. Use EVs for transport between different event locations or for on-site operations. Where feasible, offer charging stations for attendees arriving in EVs. Embracing electric mobility contributes to lowering carbon emissions associated with transportation.



Optimise Delivery Routes

Work closely with event vendors and suppliers to optimise delivery routes and consolidate shipments. Group deliveries minimise the number of vehicles required and encourage the use of fuel-efficient vehicles. By streamlining logistics, you reduce congestion and unnecessary mileage, resulting in lower emissions and cost savings.

Efficient transportation and logistics practices go hand-in-hand with sustainable event planning. By adopting these strategies, you create an event that takes a responsible stance on transportation-related environmental impacts.



06

OFFER SUSTAINABLE CATERING OPTIONS



Neglecting sustainable catering options is a recipe for disaster. Plates piled high with single-use plastics and ingredients that are neither local, seasonal, nor organic - all while turning a blind eye to the plant-based food craze. This won't win any favours. It's not just about looking good - it's about syncing with the values of today's savvy consumers.

Miss the mark here and you're not just sidelining your sustainability goals - you risk turning your event into a cautionary tale. To keep your menu green consider:



Sourcing Local, Seasonal and Organic Food

Choose caterers who prioritise locally sourced, seasonal, and organic ingredients. Locally grown produce reduces transportation-related emissions, supports local farmers, and ensures fresh flavours - tick, tick tick! Emphasise the importance of these choices to your caterer and work together to design a menu showcasing sustainably-sourced ingredients.



Opting for Plant-Based or Low-Impact Protein Choices

Include plant-based or low-impact protein options in your menu. With veganism on the rise (the UK has seen a whopping 327% surge in veganism in just a few years) there's a growing demand for sustainable, ethical food options at events. Meat production has a high environmental impact due to greenhouse gas emissions and resource-intensive processes.

Offering vegetarian or vegan options allows guests to enjoy delicious meals while reducing the overall carbon footprint of your event (and scoring major points with the eco-conscious foodies).



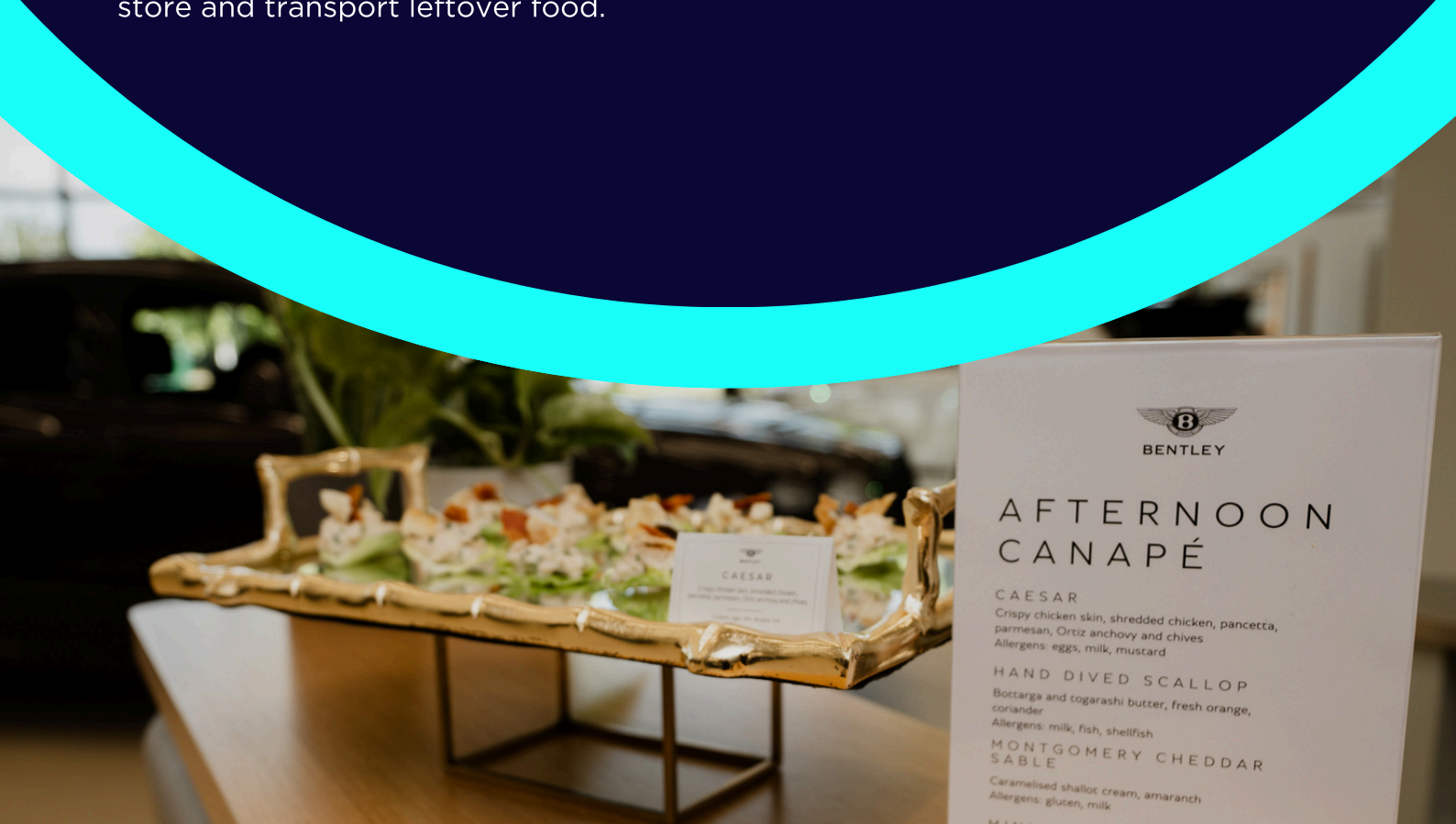
Reducing Food Waste Through Smart Planning

Minimise food waste by accurately estimating quantities and collaborating closely with your caterer. Setting up buffet-style service is a great way to allow guests to choose their own portion sizes, reducing plate waste. Excess food can then be donated to local shelters or food banks, turning waste into a valuable resource. This not only supports your community but aligns with broader sustainability and social responsibility goals. Ensure your caterer is on board with these plans and has the logistics in place to safely store and transport leftover food.



Utilise Technology to Make Better Choices

Apps and platforms that track food consumption and waste in real-time can provide valuable insights, helping you adjust quantities and improve efficiency for future events. These tools can also help identify patterns in guest preferences, allowing for even more precise planning. For instance, apps like [Leanpath](#) enable event organisers to monitor food usage and waste, providing data that can inform better decision-making and reduce overall waste.



EVENTS THAT LOOK GOOD AND DO GOOD

Ignoring the call for more sustainable event planning can tarnish your brand image, hike up costs, and drive away your audience – and that’s certainly not the aim of the game.

At veSpace we understand the immense power and responsibility we have as event planners to shape the way events unfold and impact our planet. By prioritising sustainability and integrating environmental goals into our planning process, we can create transformative, engaging experiences and go easy on the planet. Because hosting exceptional, sustainable events no longer requires compromise.

Meaningful sustainable event management? Here’s how we do it:

- ✔ We integrate client environmental goals into every aspect of their events.
- ✔ We focus on reducing waste, lowering emissions, and ensuring energy efficiency.
- ✔ We help clients make conscious, practical choices with measures in place to understand how their event contributes to broader environmental goals.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Three steps to an inspired event that'll be celebrated long after it's over

1

SHARE

We listen to your needs, taking time to understand your challenges and specific requirements

2

CREATE

We create an inspired tailor-made plan that will give you a clear blueprint for an awesome event. We consider every detail so you can be confident everything has been accounted for.

3

RELAX

We'll take it from here. Meanwhile, you'll have eyes on every element of progress, via our completely transparent project management system. See for yourself that you're working with a partner you can depend on to deliver inspired, world-class events you'll feel proud of.

Don't leave your event's success to chance. Partner with veSpace and let us show you what your event can truly become. We take the stress out of event planning, turning potential headaches into highlights with the right expertise and guidance to support you every step of the way. If you're ready to bring calm to the chaos, avoid the pitfalls and make your next event pop, schedule a call so we can bring your vision to life with flawless execution.

Click here to start a conversation with our team today.

[Start a conversation](#)

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