

Can you Trust the Diversion Rate Supplied for Your Event?

One of the big challenges in making environmentally responsible choices for your meetings is being able to trust that the vendors you work with use the same standards that you do to quantify the results. Our own [Shawna McKinley](#) [blogged](#) one such experience she had with a venue.

The venue used a system of waste diversion calculation for events that included only the recycling numbers and omitted all of the waste that was taken by another waste company. When the venue was questioned about these measurement methods that said they stand by them; end of story. To complicate matters, the venue has since continued to publicly claim these high diversion rates, based on this method.



Shawna has some excellent recommendations for what to look for and ask to make sure your expectations are being met in terms of reported diversion rates:

- **Ask for direct-reported data from the hauler.** Data filtered by a venue can be manipulated. Also be aware the venue may deal with different haulers for different materials and they may only be disclosing partial data in their report.
- **Ask if reported data includes all material hauled, including recyclables, trash, donations and any other streams.** Sometimes venues will not factor in all streams, which can have significant impact on reported diversion trends.
- **Ask if you can isolate your data specifically, or if the data might be impacted by multiple events on-property at the same time as yours.** Most facilities would have to make special accommodations to do this for you. If they haven't it's probable that you're getting more than your own event's weight, although percent diversion could still be accurate, overall.
- **Ask if you can come back of house to visit where waste is marshalled.** Observing staff and how they handle waste in the back of house is a good way to gauge what kind of diversion you might expect. If 2 of every 3 trash bags are being put in the landfill, it's a

About MeetGreen®. MeetGreen® (formerly known as Meeting Strategies Worldwide) works with progressive global organizations to integrate sustainable practices and produce conferences and events that deliver targeted business results. For more information regarding the firm, please call +1 503.252.5458 .

<http://www.meetgreen.com> | <http://tools.meetgreen.com> | blog.meetgreen.com

[Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn Group](#): MeetGreen

MeetGreen® Article

Can you Trust the Diversion Rate Supplied for Your Event? – Cija Huntley
March 9, 2011 | Portland, Oregon



good sign you're likely lower than 40% diversion. Don't be afraid to peer into a dumpster or ask how full it is either. It's important to see these things with your own eyes in order to know if reported waste metrics are accurate.

- **Ask if you can contact or visit their recycling and/or compost facility to see for yourself how waste is sorted.** Any facility that is transparent will be glad to connect you with their hauler to verify practices.
- **If possible refer back to any previous records you might have about landfill or recycling at your event.** Often if you can estimate per participant amounts in previous years you can gauge roughly how much waste you could expect, assuming a similar event format and attendee composition. So if last year you produced 10 lbs of left over material per person and you're expecting 1000 people onsite, you can expect your total waste and recycling to measure about 10,000 lbs.
- **Clarify if the venue includes incineration in their diversion from landfill calculations.** MeetGreen® chooses to not include incinerated waste in diversion from landfill as it often does not provide the highest use option for organic waste which could be used as compost. It can also create significant local air quality issues. Sometimes venues will treat this as recycling of waste-to-energy, so clarify if this is the case.
- **Lastly, if your venue doesn't have composting and they're claiming a diversion from landfill rate of greater than 70%, be suspicious.** Compostable waste tends to account for at least 25% of event waste streams. If your venue doesn't have composting your event likely shouldn't be achieving over 70% diversion.

She does end her post on a high note, “Most venues are doing a good job of reporting waste and when there are questions are more than willing to work to address them. Still, it's important to be clear there are no rules on how to report waste diversion for events. So it pays to be diligent in minimizing your risk of green-washing your good efforts. “

We invite you to share your thoughts with us via email or better yet join the [MeetGreen® Group on LinkedIn](#). Formats like LinkedIn provide a great format for meeting professionals to share their experiences and take away new ideas on how to spot and solve challenges like these. As Shawna encourages, “Don’t be afraid to ask.” And we would like to add, share what you learn, it’s the fastest way for the industry to change and also for the language and expectations we use to become standard modes of thought.

You can see Shawna McKinley’s full blog post at:

<http://greendestinations.blogspot.com/2011/03/bs-check-aisle-12.html> 

About MeetGreen®. MeetGreen® (formerly known as Meeting Strategies Worldwide) works with progressive global organizations to integrate sustainable practices and produce conferences and events that deliver targeted business results. For more information regarding the firm, please call +1 503.252.5458 .

<http://www.meetgreen.com> | <http://tools.meetgreen.com> | blog.meetgreen.com

[Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn Group](#): MeetGreen