

# PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



April 1, 2009

CONTACT: Nancy J. Wilson, CMP  
+1.503.252.5458  
nancy@meetingstrategiesworldwide.com

## Meeting Strategies Worldwide Shares Lessons Learned in Event Certification

PORTLAND, OREGON— Want to certify your event or company for sustainability? Know what you're getting into! This advice comes from Meeting Strategies Worldwide, who recently helped to facilitate BS 8901:2007 certification for the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). BS 8901 is the first certifiable sustainability management system standard for the events industry.

Meeting Strategies Worldwide shares the following lessons to help other meeting professionals consider if BS 8901 might be the approach for them.

**Know your goal.** Many event organizers want to know how 'green' their event is compared to others. If you are looking to validate your checklist of best practices or recycling achievements tread cautiously: you might not be ready for BS 8901 certification. You may, however, be ready to expand your event management system using a BS 8901 approach. On the other hand, if you are looking to verify if you have implemented the elements of event management that support sustainable business practices in a holistic way, BS 8901 may be the way for you.

**Be prepared!** BS 8901 provides a management framework that considers not only green guidelines, but all of your event management systems: your vision, values, goals and business/event plan objectives – including the social, environment and economic aspects, as well as 'green' issues. In addition it considers how you identify and engage stakeholders, prioritize management issues, solve problems, document processes and measure and audit your event management practices. If you are interested in certifying for BS 8901 you may first want to assess preparedness by listing the elements verified under the standard and checking off which you have in place. Also consider the depth of

issues your systems presently consider. If you are already considering environmental, social and economic aspects in your decisions you might be ready.

**Integration is key.** Many event managers today are including green as an ‘add-on’ option. They have separate checklists, contracts, RFP requirements and measurements they tack on or ask for when ‘green’ is important. BS 8901 considers and evaluates how well your event management practices integrate sustainability as a fundamental concept. This is because successful sustainability programs are not typically dealt with as a department of an organization or a ‘special project’ for an event. They are systematically engrained in all aspects of management. They become cultural. Before you pursue BS 8901 certification you may want to consider how well sustainability is integrated throughout your meeting company.

**Consider scope.** Events and organizations can be certified BS 8901 complaint. In addition, events and organizations may be certified as Phase I, II or III complaint. It is critically important to be clear on the scope of your sustainable event management system when implementing or certifying BS 8901. Do you want to certify one event? Do you want to certify your staff and how they manage all of your events? There are pros and cons to your choice. You might also feel prepared to certify for a part of the standard, or an individual Phase. Phase I, or the planning phase, includes policy development, stakeholder identification and engagement and issues identification. Phase II would involve actual implementation of sustainable practices and systems, including supply chain management, communication initiatives and documentation of systems. Phase III involves monitoring and controlling the outcomes of the system – measuring actual outcomes, evaluating and auditing them and working at improving practice.

**Know the value.** USGBC chose to certify their organization through Phase III. This decision was made after considering the pros and cons of alternate scopes. USGBC could have chosen to certify Greenbuild, their flagship conference and tradeshow – a decision akin to deciding to certify a building under their LEED® standard. They instead decided there was more value in certifying their entire event management division to ensure all events planned during the next 3 years meet the BS 8901 standard. To continue the metaphor, they opted to certify the architects of all the buildings they will construct moving forward. BS 8901 can provide value in terms of improved event management systems, expansion of existing systems to include sustainability considerations, external

validation of practices, and promoting continuous improvement. You need to consider what – if any of these – have value to you. One thing to be aware of is once your event is certified, it is historical. Certification of an organization, however, can validate future actions up to 3 years.

The main lesson: know what you are getting into before you decide to certify. BS 8901 presents a roadmap for event sustainability. Like any map: know where you want to go and how far you want to travel on the journey. And before you take the car out of park, check the tires to make sure they're pumped and ready to survive the trip!

Meeting Strategies Worldwide is an award-winning, meeting management company specializing in sustainable meetings. For more information regarding Meeting Strategies Worldwide please call +1 503.252.5458 or visit [www.meetingstrategiesworldwide.com](http://www.meetingstrategiesworldwide.com).

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