



CSR & Building Meetings that Leave a Positive Legacy

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Leaving a legacy is great. It is something that lasts, that brings emotion and improves lives. With increased globalization, our society faces a dramatic increase in population, demographic changes and a growing social divide. The pace of technological innovation, climate change, and natural resource decline all result in a number of negative consequences to our every day lives, but also to our events. One reaction is to stick our heads in the sand. But whether we ignore these changes or not, they will affect us personally and professionally – and they will have a profound effect on how business is done around the world.

The good news is that we have the collective knowledge to grapple with these developments and to establish proactive responses and practices that will help us advance towards a more sustainable future. Our industry has the power to bring change outside our own industry and outside just one event. Here are some tips that are easy to apply in order to leave positive legacies from our events.

Understanding the basics

Start with a clear understanding of what CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) is and how you can translate it into your every-day work. CSR best translates as: “how companies manage business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society”. There are a variety of CSR approaches but we have to consider these main drivers:

- **The consumer who cares:** consumers are increasingly showing consumer social responsibility for their behaviour and for the conditions under which goods and services are produced and provided;
- **Social awareness and outreach:** in order to have an overall positive impact on society.

Awareness building and creating a CSR strategy

If you embark on the sustainability path, don't go it alone. Build awareness within your stakeholder circles and make your efforts known.

- **Attract and retain participants for this and future events:** sustainability and CSR strategies increase the value and relevance of events by meeting the sustainability needs of the participants – a highly important topic for the up and coming Generation Y.

- **Build positive government and non-governmental organization relations:** Events that deal with regulatory initiatives can contribute positively to regulatory activities undertaken now and in the future.
- **Build industry reputation and brand:** a good CSR strategy builds positive stakeholder relationships with customers, communities, NGOs and suppliers. In so doing, it enhances the sector's social license to operate and grow.
- **Raise sector standards:** develop, promote and share best practices and set targets for sector advancement.
- **Promote accountability of the industry:** enhance the sector's accountability and transparency to the public and in so doing build legitimacy.

Focusing Your CSR Choices

All organizations have to balance limited resources and effort, so the challenge is how best to deploy your energy to maximize the benefits of your business as well as society. So instead of asking yourself who can we help, try to analyse who can be helped the most. Instead of asking how – ask how the organization and event can help more. Instead of asking what can be done – focus on what you can do best and how this can help the local community.

Engaging local communities when organising an event

There are some critical factors for a successful CSR strategy and planning a long-term legacy is one of them. There might be risks and opportunities for the different legacy impacts and deliveries, so a governance mechanism should be developed to manage these. Working with the local community, including local suppliers provides opportunities to secure the long term success and legacy of an event. Remember a real dialogue can only be developed if it is based on trust, transparency and accountability.

Having a positive impact on societal issues such as living standards is not a “quick fix” project. Therefore long-term projects are strongly recommended especially when backed up by solid promises and measurable commitments and actions.

In Conclusion

CSR is generally presented in the form of concrete actions. However CSR is essentially a process. A process that aims to create value, and what better process to use when creating an event than leaving a lasting positive legacy.

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