

# MANAGING EVENT RESOURCES WITH ZERO WASTE PRINCIPLE

## MARKET TREND



ZERO WASTE MANAGEMENT AIMS TO REDESIGN THE RESOURCE'S LIFE CYCLE TO BE REUSED EFFECTIVELY. IT CAN BE APPLIED IN MICE INDUSTRY TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF WASTE GENERATED FROM MICE ACTIVITIES.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Zero waste idea aims to extend the life cycle of material and prevent waste to be sent to landfills. It is one of practices that help achieve sustainability's goal. Zero waste practice can be applied in MICE industry as meetings and events can produce a lot of waste depending on size and type of the event. The application of zero waste practice can be complicated as it requires cooperation among many stakeholders. Therefore, it must be prepared properly at pre-event planning and executed strictly during the event. For example, PGA tournament, the world's largest verified zero waste event, set a clear objective in waste management and was able to achieve 100% waste diversion from land fill with the method of recycling, composting, donation, reuse and waste-to-energy.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR MICE:

- Source reduction is the most favorable method in waste management to achieve zero waste principle because it helps avoid the unnecessary resources to be used, while landfilling is the least favorable method since it causes a pollution around the area.
- Meetings and events industry are the second most wasteful sector in the U.S. behind building and construction because of the huge environmental footprint of food waste, plastic containers and more according to International Association of Conference Centers (IACC).
- PGA tournament, an annual golf competition in the U.S., was able to achieve 100% landfill diversion through recycling, composting, donation, reuse and waste-to-energy.
- Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) aims to reduce the use of plastic bottle in Thai MICE industry by 50% within the first year of Zero Plastic Events campaign from 17 million bottles to 8 million bottles.

## ZERO WASTE APPROACH

Zero waste idea aims to extend the life cycle of material and limit the amount of waste to be sent to landfills, incinerators or oceans by means of avoiding, reducing, reusing and recycling. The idea can be applied in MICE industry to reduce the event's waste since events and meetings are the activity that can generate a lot of waste depending on factors such as event type, event size, duration, activities, etc. According to International Association of Conference Centers (IACC), events and meetings industry are the second most wasteful sector in the U.S. behind building and construction because of the huge environmental footprint of food waste, plastic containers and many more. As today society has more concern about environmental impact and sustainability issue, zero waste principle might become a standard for MICE industry in the future. However, the application of zero waste principle in the event will be complicated as it involves all event processes from waste prevention at pre-event phase to waste management in-event and post-event phase. The organizer needs cooperation from stakeholders as well as attendees and makes them aware of goals and actions through the public relations in order to ensure that the event can satisfy everyone while maintaining the zero waste principle.

## WASTE MANAGEMENT PREPARATION

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF WASTE, DIFFERENT WAYS OF DISPOSAL

Waste that is thrown away from MICE activities comes in many different forms which methods that are used to handle or reduce can vary depending on types of the waste. The most favorable method is source reduction. It helps minimize the unnecessary trash to be produced in the first place which mean lesser waste to deal with, for example, going digital with online document sharing to create paperless event. However, if avoiding is not an option, there are plenty of ways to handle the event's waste, but the type of used material has to be carefully considered. For edible foods and drinks, they can be collected and distributed to people in needs such as local emergency food programs and homeless shelters. For leftover foods and organic materials such as plated-based plastic bags or paper cups, they can be composted to generate a useful soil. For general event's resources such as carpets, signages, cardboard substrate, vinyl banners, etc. They can be either reused or recycled and kept for the future use. For other non-recyclable materials such as plastic wrap, batteries and foam containers, they are usually thrown away in the landfill which contradicts to the goal of zero waste principle. These resources should be avoided at all cost.

### PLANNING IS THE FOUNDATION FOR EVENT WASTE MANAGEMENT

The early planning is the essential part that help pave way toward zero waste event. It concerns about how to prevent excessive use of resources and how to manage waste effectively. There are various best practices that need to be reviewed.

- **Setting a clear objective** to ensure the direction and commitment of the event. It involves all stakeholders to be informed and agree on practices that organizer will implement.
- **Banning some types of materials** such as Styrofoam as well as choosing a venue that has a good waste management system such as green venue. This will make waste management much easier when the event goes live.
- **Identifying the number of attendee** and type of event's activity to estimate the amount of waste that can be generated. It can be done by sending out RSVP email to survey about the number of participants in event's activities or the amount of food that need to be prepared which will help lower leftover food waste.
- **Preparing enough infrastructure and staffs** and making sure that they can cover all the areas. The organizer should consider about how to position bins and staffs. It should be at a place where people will gather. Besides, bins should have a clear signage to indicate different types of waste as well as staffs to stand guard the bin station to ensure all waste will be disposed correctly.

# ZERO WASTE IMPLEMENTATION

## KEYS TO ACHIEVE ZERO WASTE PRINCIPLE

**Understanding your waste** is to know where it come from or how to prevent it. In general, event planner can know the type and amount of waste by estimating internal factors such as the number of vendors, types of activities and the number of registered attendees, but the amount of waste can also vary on external factors such as material that attendee bring from outside which event planner should have a plan to deal with either preparing additional management plan or banning outside material.

**Creating a shared vision** with everyone to make sure that they understand the event waste management goal and clearly know their roles and responsibilities. For example, IMEX America, worldwide exhibition for incentive travel, meetings and events, educated exhibitors and attendees about the issued related to sustainable practices including waste management in the event.

**Designing waste plan** to set the scope of waste management by thinking about what can be done to cut down on waste. A clear example of waste plan is Oracle OpenWorld, an annual Oracle's user conference. The event designed waste plan with 4 Rs approach – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover. It reduced paper with digital and app-based formats such as electronic screen as well as reduced plastic bottle with water refill station. Moreover, a lot of resources including food, signage, vinyl, banner and carpet can be reused, recycled or recovered and was kept for next year event.

**Communicating with stakeholder** and promoting zero waste plan for effective cooperation. It can be done by publicizing the event as zero waste and informing stakeholders about the waste management plan that the event will implement such as material restriction and location of waste station. Moreover, it important to get feedback regarding the waste management plan in order to know what method worked and what did not for the future improvement.

**Measuring and sharing the result** to let everyone know the impact of their actions and increase the awareness for the future event as well as inspire other event planners to do the same. For example, both Oracle OpenWorld and IMEX America revealed statistics about their zero waste effort comparing to previous years. Oracle OpenWorld was able to reduce the waste footprint from 212 metric tons in 2017 to 154 metric tons in 2018. While, IMEX America was able to achieve the highest rate of landfill diversion with 93.63% in 2018, an increasing from 87.41% in 2017.

## PGA TOURNAMENT, THE LARGEST VERIFIED ZERO WASTE EVENT IN THE WORLD

PGA tournament is the major professional golf competition in North America that attracts more than 500,000 spectators annually. It has been considered as the world largest zero waste event since 2012 verified by Council for Responsible Sport and Golf Environment organization. In 2018, the event was able to achieve 100% waste diversion from landfill again – 56% was recycled, 26% was composted, 9% was transformed into energy and 9% was donated. The event implemented various practices including 1) all materials that brought on site must be locally reused, recycled or composted. 2) All paper materials must be certified by Forest Stewardship Council, an international non-profit organization that promotes responsible management of the world's forests. 3) Event badges were made from polypropylene, the fifth type of plastic that can be recycled. Besides, approximately 51,816 square feet of signage or 66% of tournament's signage in event were reused from previous tournament while 87% of them was kept for the future use. In addition, around 12 tons of unused food were donated to local organization. PGA tournament is an excellent showcase of the way that events can spend resources in the most efficient way by minimizing demand on primary sources and maximizing the material's life cycle instead of treating them as a waste.

## ZERO WASTE INITIATIVE IN THAI MICE INDUSTRY

Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has started the campaign of Zero Plastic Events with the collaboration of 5 leading MICE city including Chiang Mai, Phuket, Khon Kaen, Pattaya and Bangkok. The campaign is a part of Meeting Sustainable 2020 initiative to promote sustainability in Thai MICE industry. It aims to decrease the use of plastic bottles with 3 methods. First, substituting plastic bottle with glass bottle which suitable for a few days of meetings and conferences. Second, using a bottle that is easy to carry. It is more suitable for several days of meetings and conferences. And third, preparing water refill station and encouraging attendees to bring their own containers which is suitable for all types of event. The campaign is expected to reduce plastic bottles by 50% within the first year from 17 million bottles to 8 million bottles which could help save up the meetings cost in MICE industry around THB 30 million. The Zero Plastic Events campaign is the starting point that will bring Thai MICE industry one step closer to the zero waste principle.