

San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau (SFCVB)

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1. Overview

During the summer of 2007, the San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau (SFCVB) signed up with the City of San Francisco's Green Business Program.

Office Practices:

The Bureau has gone from purchasing compostable paper products to using china plates, silverware, plastic tumblers and mugs within the office.

The Bureau has changed its copy paper from 30% post consumer to 100% post consumer.

The Bureau is working with a printer who ensures that its letterhead, envelopes, business cards and other printing utilizes soy based ink and 100% post consumer paper.

To comply with the City of San Francisco's ban on plastic water bottles, the Bureau has removed bottled water from its vending machine.

The Bureau has replaced all of its cleaning supplies with eco-friendly, biodegradable products.

Approximately 72% of staff rides public transportation on a daily basis, utilizing Commuter Checks and Muni passes.

The Bureau purchases only fair trade coffee for staff use.

During the summer of 2008 all suite lights in the office of the SFCVB were replaced with eco-friendly, cost-saving compact fluorescents, electronic ballasts and T-8 lamps.

Convention Sales and Services:

Sales and service staff wear shirts made of bamboo-derived fabric at trade show booths.

The Bureau is giving away recycled shopping bags at major industry conventions such as ASAE and the Motivation Show and has also produced a stainless steel water bottle as part of its client gift inventory.

The Bureau serves Peet's organic coffee in "ecotainers" (cups that can be compostable and made from fully recycled products) with our SFCVB logo at hosted shows.

For the Customer Advisory Council, a group of the CVB's top clients meeting twice a year in San Francisco, the Bureau no longer creates binders for clients and has created a custom Web page they can log onto to access information needed.

Carbon offset units were purchased for air travel for the CVB's most recent sales mission.

The SFCVB recently launched a green micro-site to provide resources for consumers, meeting planners and members; www.onlyinsanfrancisco.com/green

2. Program Establishment

The San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau formed a Green Task Force in July 2007; it includes staff volunteers from all divisions of the bureau and one board member who had pioneered many green initiatives in the community. Prior to that staff had also engaged in recycling measures (paper, aluminum, plastics). To create the SFCVB program staff relied heavily on resources available on the Web site of the Department of Environment for the City and County of San Francisco (www.sfenvironment.org) as well as "best practices" from other DMOs known for their work in this area. An internal contest was held to create a name for our program; the winner was "ecothusiasm."

Among the primary incentives for establishing our programs: customers were asking for more "green" information; measures initiated by the convention center, Moscone Center, and local legislation calling for the ban of plastic bags, etc. The Bureau's President & CEO, Joe D'Alessandro, who joined us in July 2006 from the Portland CVB, was also eager for us to dedicate more staff time and resources to this initiative based on his experiences in Portland.

Promoting San Francisco as a "green" destination was identified as one of our key themes in our 2007/2008 business plan and this is true of 2008/2009 as well.

3. Goals and Benchmarking

The financial return on going green is less of a factor in our decision than feeling that our actions, individually and collectively, have the potential to make a difference in our world.

The change to compostable products and recycled paper, etc. has increased our costs slightly. However, for an outlay of about \$60 to augment our tumblers and silverware, we are saving approximately \$150 a month on the purchase of hot cups, paper plates and bowls, and plastic “potato ware” utensils.

We are also making every effort to “precycle” more materials and are taking measures to reduce, recycle and reuse as much as possible.

4. Outcomes and Environmental Benefit

Staff training continues to be a challenge and some of our recycling efforts are limited by what is available as a tenant of a multi-occupant commercial building. We are optimistic that these challenges will become less so in the future.

5. Relevance to Traveler or Travel Industry

While most of our environmental practices have been focused on office practices and limited customer-involvement, we are now including more information in our publications and Web site (dedicated micro-site) to provide our visitors and customers with environmentally-friendly alternatives. We have also partnered with Greenopia and will be adding their rating system on green businesses and products to our Web site and publications as a guide to readers.

6. Real-World Example

The Bureau offers its staff a low-tech option for high tech waste. Five cardboard boxes are located in the mailroom for the recycling of used batteries, cell phones, CDs, large toner cartridges and small toner cartridges. All of these are recycled or given, as is the case with the cell phones, to a local nonprofit for placement in the community.

Video tapes, used computers, etc. are recycled through a local organization called Green Citizen.

We also try to limit our purchase of new office supplies, etc. and shop in the “store” in our storage area for pre-used file folders, etc.