

Stand Out
October 2010
Circulation: 10,000
Readership: 30,000

Be SMART

Not sure how to manage your waste? Here, Sam Wilson, director of EcoEvents, outlines six simple steps to carry out your own waste audit

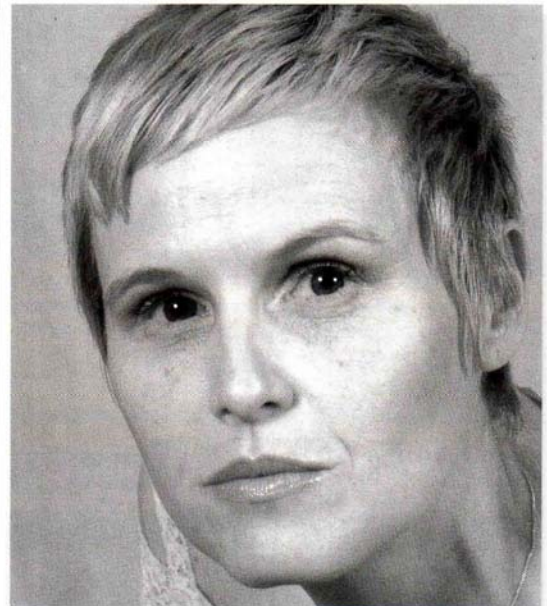
Waste seems like an easy thing to define but if we stop to think about what we really mean by this term, it becomes far more complex. Waste can mean "any output from the activity that is disposed of" and as such includes liquids and chemicals as well as solid waste. It is essential to be aware that waste is the end result of a process. The "output" of waste at any event can only be managed effectively through analysing the "input" and implementing an integrated waste management strategy that encompasses planning, procurement, implementation and debrief.

The most strategic way to begin is by conducting a waste audit, and here are six simple steps to get you started:

- List what you are buying. Only by carefully analysing this can you assess what type of waste you will be dealing with.
- Categorise your waste into different streams and consider what your duty of care is in relation to their respective disposal. The waste hierarchy is well known as being reduce, re-use, recycle, dispose but begins with re-think. You will need to do some research into what opportunities there are for re-use and what materials prohibit recycling. These factors need to be considered at the design stage of the event rather than during production when you will find yourself having to be reactive which can be costly, time-consuming and ineffective. Drpgroup is currently using innovative and free projects such as the National Industrial Symbiosis Programme (NISP) to cleverly divert waste from landfill and also meet its CSR objectives. You then need to

work out what legislation is involved in managing the waste. By law, every company has to process, manage and legally dispose of their waste and ensure that their sub-contractors do the same. This means only using licensed waste carriers and retaining waste transfer notes for as long as three years. In particular, hazardous waste can lead to serious problems if not identified and disposed of in accordance with the law. Hazardous waste includes electrical and electronic waste, plasterboard, lightbulbs, batteries, some paints, oil and solvents.

- Now think about the volumes of waste per waste stream, either in percentage per stream or weight per stream. Only by calculating this can you see what facilities you will require and budget accordingly. Then you can work out how to reduce each stream for maximum environmental and economic benefits, and set objectives and targets to work towards that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART).
- Put in place a management programme, including roles, responsibilities and timeframes, to meet these objectives. For example by achieving joint certification against ISO14001 and BS8901, Brighton and Hove City Council is now taking a partnership approach with its waste management contractors to ensure maximum cost savings and benefits both internally and for agencies holding events in the city.
- Think of waste in terms of a cradle to grave approach. It is easy to think that our responsibility for waste ends when it is removed from site. One plastic cup in landfill can take 200 years to degrade. Now multiply this by the number of attendees at your event



and then multiply that by at least three plastic cups per attendee per event day. It is also essential to get the facts right – biodegradable plastic, for example, needs to be taken to a commercial composter. If taken to landfill it does not degrade any faster than non-biodegradable plastic.

- Finally, training is imperative to ensure that all members of the team are in a position to act responsibly and therefore reduce the risks associated with inefficient resource use and a legal breach. It is vital to measure the effectiveness in terms of incidence reporting and waste output (including costs) and reflect this back into the management process for the next event. What gets measured gets managed, and is the only way to be sure you are able to improve your performance. In this respect, waste cannot be managed centrally. It has to be everyone's responsibility if any plan is to be successful.