



Sustainable Event Reporting: Like eating your vegetables?

Posted by Michael Luehrs on April 4, 2011 in General Sustainability, Meetings and Events | 6 Comments

Parents differ on their approach to getting kids to eat vegetables, often falling into 2 camps: 'eat it or else' and 'only take what you want'. Which method produces the healthier eater?

There's a parallel, here, to recent thinking on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Reporting. In **her just published article**, Elaine Cohen recaps the recent **Redefining Value: Integrated Reporting and Measuring Sustainability Conference** which shares, among many great facts and figures, some insights for making sustainability reporting common practice.

Some argue that only government imposed regulation ('eat it or else') can inspire organizations to consistently share

performance data publicly. Others want markets to lead this initiative, leaving individual business to define what and how



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they'll report ('only take what you want'). Which method produces a healthier business?

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Like a kid who squirms and resists € only to later discover that they like it CSR reports for the first time experi saying the process was beneficial to eating your vegetables, the **benefits reporting** are real...and important.. :

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Is it unreasonable, then, that meeting experience a similar sense of enlight sustainable event reporting? And experience the improved stakeholder trust and improvement in business practice which inevitably follows thoughtful reporting?

Can this practice fuel a movement to integrate sustainability into the very design of the event itself (rather than having sustainability be seen as a complicated afterthought)? And bring needed improvements to an industry which struggles with uniform application of sustainable business practice?

Will the meetings industry eat its vegetables?

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Salinger, VP of
Marketing at Oracle
and President of the
GMIC. In this short
video both Paul and I
share some of our...
In "CSR@MCI"

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elaine cohen says:

April 4, 2011 at 22:07

Hi Michael, Great post, and thanks for the mention. Perhaps you will be able to persuade the GRI to produce a Sustainable Event report at the GRI conference in 2012? Vegetable-based inks, of course.

elaine

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Guy Bigwood says:

April 29, 2011 at 17:22

Hi Elaine. MCI is the event management partner for GRI, and yes we will be doing a GRI compliant report. We are just working on the event design and would like to ask you your opinion on somethings later.. take care

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Paul Salinger says:

April 5, 2011 at 17:43

Interesting analogy and question Michael.

This is kind of like the USDA promoting particular food guidelines without really imposing any particular measures or telling people they should cut down on sodas without imposing any specific tax or consequence on the soda industry. We kind of rebel against being told what to do. eat whatever

being told what to do, eat, whatever, regardless of whether it is good for us or not.

I'm not sure it is really feasible (or even remotely possible in the current political and economic climate) to impose sustainability reporting on anyone.

Here's my take though as someone who does produce an annual event sustainability report. It's unconscionable in my thinking that the event industry wants to talk about CSR without the people doing that talking actually backing it up by doing the kind of reporting that would transparently show the real impact of the industry on people, planet and profits.

It's one thing to produce economic reports that purport to show how much the industry contributes to economic activity as kind of self-serving while not pushing the industry to also produce sustainability research that shows the other side of that equation, the negative consequences and impacts that we produce and what we are doing to mitigate them, while also providing positive economic impact.

This can't be something we wait for a regulatory body or government to mandate on us. That will end up costing more and just creating more bureaucracy than necessary. The industry needs to take the lead on this and educate its stakeholders and create simple, meaningful means of reporting that make the vegetable eating side of this more palatable.

Reply



Michael Luehrs says:

April 5, 2011 at 19:26

Wow, Paul, you're so good. I'm a fan of good analogies and you came up with some good ones.

It wasn't so much my intention to foist mandatory reporting on any entity, per se,