'Wide open for sustainable meetings': Blu Experience

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When organising an event, it is necessary to see to many aspects of it. Planning, implementation, and coordination all of this has to be synchronised in time. On top of that, there is the issue of how to implement ideas in the spirit of sustainability, budgetary issues, and finding solutions that fit the client perfectly. How does Blu Experience, a Krakow-based event agency, deal with these challenges? Join us for an interview in the series “Wide open for sustainable meetings” with Krzysztof Paradowski, the Creative Director and Vice-President of the Management Board.

What measures have you implemented or will you implement by the end 2023 to achieve sustainability goals?

We endeavour to incorporate ideas of sustainability into all stages of our events - from the design to the responsible management of what remains after the event. When planning a sustainable event, definitely more ingenuity and creativity are needed. At this moment, it is quite a challenge. You have to leave your comfort zone. All the familiar and comfortable solutions are, by definition, hardly sustainable, while the unusual solutions are simply more costly and demanding. We do our best to work with subcontractors who have some level of sustainability awareness and standards. However, the “sustainable” suppliers will often be more expensive than the competition, so here is another challenge - talking the client into increasing the budget. We also endeavour to support the local economy. In opting for local suppliers and services, we support them and make a positive impact on the local economy.

We work in the cloud ourselves, i.e., based on remote servers accessible via the internet. This is a solution we adopted for good once we were forced to work remotely, and so the cloud has remained with us! Not only do we reduce paper consumption, but this makes accessing information much simpler. It is the nature of our business that we sign a lot of contracts and documents. Whenever possible, we try to deal with a matter using an e-signature. We use less paper, streamline procedures, and also reduce the transport-associated carbon footprint. We endeavour to analyse the ventures and projects planned not only business-wise, but also with respect to whether, whom and for how long they will benefit. Often, the client’s interests will not be compatible with the idea of sustainability, and you have to find some common ground.

Our HR policy is also important here. Our employees are fairly free to choose where they want to work from. Many of them come to the office every day, but some are increasingly going for the home office option. Not only does it reduce the transportation-related time and resources, it also reduces the carbon footprint generated. We have decided to move our office closer to the centre of Krakow so that it is easy to reach on foot or by public transport. We invest in our employees: we make efforts to create a friendly working environment, we organise training sessions and offer health benefits. We realise that all of this boosts team satisfaction and encourages a positive working environment.

Do you have or are you interested in obtaining a sustainability certificate for your company?

Obviously, we are interested in this. It is easy to declare sustainability in business, but not so easy to verify it. Certificates are an objective form of confirmation. I think it would be useful for our clients, and it would be a sign for us that we are heading in the right direction in terms of sustainability.

Do your clients expect you to provide sustainable solutions or relevant certificates?
It is not common practice, but we see that an increasing number of enquiries, from both public and private sector clients, include criteria for environmentally friendly solutions. In tenders, additional points are often awarded if the competitor commits to using at least some measures fostering environmental protection and sustainability in working at the event.

What trends in organising events / meetings have you recently observed?
Clearly, clients are increasingly concerned about sustainability and what environmental impact their event will have. Large-format stage banners are gradually giving way to multimedia, and plastic cups to paper or glass equivalents. It is a major simplification and a mental shortcut, but it seems to me that certain rules have become entrenched practice. Quite a few clients, especially corporate ones, think even before the event about what carbon footprint it will leave. It would be great if, when planning an event, measures were planned to offset its adverse effect.
Evidently, therefore an agency’s role is expanding. We now offer know-how in organising events, and advice on sustainable events as well.

What is your source of knowledge and inspirations as regard organising sustainable events?
MICE meetings and learning each other's proven practices is very inspiring. Luckily, it is an area we enjoy and want to share with others. Many useful ideas and methods can be found in the reports of international associations. There is also increasingly more information on the Polish internet.