



Green hospitality steals the show

Economy blamed for attendance drop at annual hospitality event

Despite an overall decline in the numbers of exhibitors and attendees at this year's International Hotel/Motel & Restaurant Show (IHM&RS), green hospitality products and services were showcased in record numbers. Attendees were treated to demos and information about everything from [biodegradable water bottles](#) to [eco-luxurious bamboo towels](#) to [recycling bins](#) pretty enough for the most upscale property.

As usual, the IHM&RS – held November 7-10 at the Javits Convention Center in New York City – provided the year's best opportunity for industry insiders to catch up on all the latest trends, especially those related to sustainable hospitality.

"Having fewer exhibitors and lower attendance at the show was clearly a reflection of these difficult economic times, but the Green Hospitality Market was alive and thriving," said [EcoGreenHotel](#) president Scott Parisi. "It was really encouraging to see such a strong showing among sustainable products and support services at the show. People are finally recognizing that going green is not only the right thing to do, but it is also a great way to save money."

Total attendance was 26,801, down markedly from last year's 34,050. According to show manager Lynn White of GLM Shows, the 21% drop in attendance was a reflection of the recession.

"In a trying year for the hospitality industry, the 2009 Show was a success," White said. "Industry suppliers recognized the need to stay in front of decision-makers for the business opportunities it will afford as the industry continues to rebound, while buyers were compelled to attend for the latest products, services and education geared towards the economic times."

In addition, exhibit space was down 8% from last year, according to GLM spokesperson Melissa Gray.

Green lodging pioneer Glenn Hasek, editor and publisher of [Green Lodging News](#), said he was encouraged by the show despite the downturn in attendance and exhibits.

"Given the very difficult year the lodging industry has had, it was refreshing to see so many companies still willing to invest in marketing their innovations," Hasek said. "They will be the winners as the economy recovers. It was also encouraging to see so many exhibitors introducing greener, more sustainable versions of their products – in almost all product categories."

One of those exhibitors was EcoGreenHotel. Parisi and his team were at the show to announce the grand opening of their new [EcoGreenHotel Store](#), which offers one of the most comprehensive selections of green hospitality products and services on the web. Another was [PURE Solutions](#), whose patented room purification systems are helping make things more comfortable for travelers with allergies worldwide. PURE spokesperson Haley Payne said that she was pleased with the attention her company's exhibit received in the Green Hospitality Market.

"The show was not as busy as in years past, but we did establish some really good contacts interested in PURE Allergy Friendly rooms. These hoteliers understand the benefit of a new room type in their hotel for guests that have a real issue with travel due to allergies," Payne said. "Monday was our best day of the show. We talked with several hoteliers wanting to know more information and looking for something new and innovative for their hotels. With over half of the show dedicated to 'green' standards, our program fit right in."

Another exhibitor was [Green Key Global](#), which offers a graduated rating system designed to recognize hotels, motels, and resorts that are committed to improving their environmental and fiscal performance. Green Key Global's vice president of sales and marketing, Zach Conen, agreed that Monday was a terrific day for exhibitors.

"We had lots of good traffic that day," Conen said. "It was clear that green is top of mind for everyone in the industry. People were clearly looking for tools and guidance on that front. We had lots of good conversations with folks who are already engaged in sustainable hospitality and also those who are just finding their way."

Ray Burger is president of [Pineapple Hospitality](#), which is a premier distributor of green hotel products and marketing programs for the hospitality industry. He is also a trade show veteran. Burger says that events like IH/M&RS are not what they used to be.

"Trade shows - including IHM&RS - are shrinking. Both attendee and exhibitor numbers are down significantly this year versus last, and last year versus previous years," Burger explained. "What are not shrinking are more interactive and interpersonal events like [BITAC](#) (Buyer Interactive Trade Alliance & Conference). Events like those are greener. Fewer resources are required to ship samples and booths, and less energy is required at the venue. Essentially, these types of events are more productive and produce greater results in a more sustainable fashion, and I think they are the wave of the future."

Whether Burger's prediction comes to pass or not, many attendees believe the biggest story of the 2009 IHM&RS was the strength of the exhibits geared toward eco hospitality.

"Trade shows are much like hotels. How many people they attract can often be a true barometer of the economy at any given time. So it was not surprising that the IHM&RS show would be somewhat smaller this year, as 2009 has been a challenge for most business owners," said Bob Ryan, VP of sales and marketing for EcoGreenHotel. "However, it was impressive to see the ever increasing number of innovative green products shown this year, and the fact is that green benefits seem to be seeping into the sales pitch of almost every vendor I talked to on the show floor. The prestigious Editors Choice Awards have even recently created a separate category reviewing green products. This bodes well for the future of eco-friendly and sustainable products in hospitality, as more and more companies recognize the value that green brings. At EcoGreenHotel this current economic climate has afforded us a great opportunity to speak with hotel ownership about how we can help them save energy and money, all while improving their overall efficiencies and helping the planet."

Readers, what do you think? Are traditional trade shows about to become a thing of the past? Cast your vote here.

About EcoGreenHotel

A valuable resource for hoteliers, EcoGreenHotel is dedicated to helping lodging facilities address environmental issues and implement environmentally sound initiatives.

The company's online presence at www.EcoGreenHotel.com and www.EcoGreenHotelStore.com offers a marketplace for green products and services and provides a one-stop venue for green hospitality industry news, basic environmental overviews and other tools like green hotel checklists, project ideas, book lists, and valuable links designed to promote a more sustainable hospitality industry.

EcoGreenHotel's consulting services guide owners, operators and developers through the journey of developing and/or maintaining a sustainable operation or project.

For more information about EcoGreenHotel, please visit www.EcoGreenHotel.com or send an email to info@EcoGreenHotel.com.