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# Why bother with event sustainability?

Shifting the mindset from too hard to measurable success



# A focus on continuous rather than overnight improvement

Sustainability is a broad term. It's one that is often overused, incorrectly applied and unfortunately, drawn on to make green claims that aren't wholly accurate or true.

In fact, from a greenhushing perspective, *South Pole* has found that among companies that have set science-based targets relating to their net zero journeys, one in four do not have plans to communicate them externally.

If you find tackling sustainability overwhelming, know you're not alone. Not only do *figures from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM)* show us that 40% of marketers would like to gain a sustainability related marketing qualification, embedding best practices isn't an overnight exercise, and what feels like making minimal day-to-day progress can be disheartening.

Sledge has been on this journey since becoming employee owned in 2022, and we're the first to admit we've faced our fair share of challenges. Addressing sustainability can be daunting given the scale of the problem, yet having experienced it firsthand, we understand how you're feeling, and have the systems, tools and resources in place as a business to support.

Our teams integrate creative ways to reduce impact, have a deep understanding of material usage, incorporate charitable initiatives where possible in support of the communities in which our events take place, and develop traceable supply chains.

All of these actions form part of our processes as standard. We're constantly looking for ways to improve – on a business, project and industry-wide level, making us well equipped to **help you deliver impactful events, while also reducing your impact.**

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# Myth 1: Sustainability is only about **the environment**

Communications have traditionally grouped sustainability and issues such as climate change, deforestation, pollution and biodiversity loss together.

While these are all pertinent issues that we should aim to address, there's a lot more to it, and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) highlight this.

There's 17 goals in total, and they range from no poverty and clean water and sanitation, to quality education and climate action.

We couldn't find a project tool that approached sustainability in this way, and it led us to develop our own.

The Sledge IMPACT Tool has been created in line with both the UN SDGs and seven environmental, social and governance (ESG) areas, and by measuring pre-event, we're able to identify a project's potential for positive Change (PFPC) ahead of time.

If it's not possible to take environmental related actions due to factors such as budget restrictions, timeline challenges or other, this doesn't mean a project is a failure from a sustainability perspective.



There are many other ways we can leave a positive impact, such as by supporting local suppliers who are aligned with the SDGs, weaving attendee wellbeing into the agenda, and implementing measures that ensure accessibility for all, among many others.



**This is also where we lean on our IMPACT Tool, as it enables us to look beyond analysing environmental factors only, and help our clients leave a lasting legacy in other ways.**

**Sarah Yeats**  
Managing Director, Sledge



# Putting social purpose into action in Miami

## Leveraging measurement to leave a lasting legacy

We were set to deliver a large-scale conference in the city, and by leaning on the IMPACT Tool many months in advance, established we could elicit the most positive change by giving back to the local community.

This is because in addition to producing all aspects of the event, our teams created an expansive suite of content for the experience, some of which we recognised could be given another life.

We went on to donate b-roll drone footage of the city's iconic beaches, striking shorelines, and key landmarks to three organisations, who are either weaving it in their projects or exploring ways to do so.



“

The project supported eight UN SDGs and our client left a positive legacy – the footage is set to support some very worthy causes, and live on across various platforms.

**Ben Heaysman**  
Head of Film & Content, Sledge

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### Debris Free Oceans

Are featuring the footage in a volunteer engagement video, and it may be included in a film they're co-producing with a non-profit partner.

### Miami-Dade Coastal Cleanup Inc.

Is integrating the footage into social media campaigns and educational content, with the aim of highlighting the scale of ocean pollution and inspiring greater action among the local community.

### New York Film Academy South Beach

Was set to weave content into Editing I and II classes, and Intermediate and Thesis Film courses, with the aim of creating hands-on learning opportunities without the cost.

Unfortunately, the Miami campus closed three months following our donation, however the aim is other campuses will be able to leverage the footage in the near future.

# Myth 2: Sustainability is *another* THING TO DEAL WITH

## Budgets, deadlines, brand guardianship, return on investment and experience...

A lot goes into briefing and managing a successful event, and with so many moving parts, plus stakeholders at play – from investors to your audience – it's not uncommon to see sustainability forgotten, or maybe addressed in a token tick box kind of way.

And you know what? We get it. You've got a lot on your plate, and maybe, just maybe, sustainability is a nice to have, not a must have. Or, the project timeline was just too tight this time that there wasn't scope to think about. The limitations could be budget related, or maybe you're just really, really stretched.

We see this happen all the time, and it's our mission to educate and guide our clients every step of the way, across any and every project.

## We do the sustainability related work, so you don't have to, and by this we mean we:

- Weave it into pitches as standard, from both a creative and budgetary perspective.
- Find the partners, ensuring they share our values, and there's a traceable supply chain.
- Implement best practices on the ground, from bump in before the action unfolds to derigging post-event.
- Measure before, during and after, so you're able to make a real difference, communicate this to stakeholders, gain buy-in, and improve ongoing.

**We treat sustainability in the same way the industry treats health and safety: it's a non-negotiable**, and we can help you, your teams and your most important audiences embrace this mindset, too.

## Small changes big impact

You don't need to overhaul your entire event workflows overnight, either. We step in to identify everything that could be done, and consult with you to decipher what is possible, given factors such as budget, deadlines, and stakeholder approvals.

Take our approach at HPE Bootcamp – location and transport were a key focus, and we suggested several easily accessible options with public transport links, and encouraged car sharing for those who opted to drive.

It's incremental shifts like these that, when combined, can make a real difference.



# Myth 3: An event must look sustainable to be sustainable

## Considering what's beyond the green colour palettes and foliage overload

Now don't get us wrong, they can help you communicate the actions you're taking, but there's a lot more involved in producing a sustainable event beyond its appearance. Best practices should be embedded throughout all aspects of the experience, especially those the attendee doesn't see.

## Seven ESG factors to have on your radar

These are the elements we take into account when planning an event, which ensure it doesn't simply look a certain way, it's produced with purpose at its core, supported by examples of each.

### 1. Location

This involves looking to venues or sites that require minimal delegate travel.

### 2. Local event controls

Are about assessing the potential impact of the event, particularly on the natural environment, such as waterways and wildlife.

### 3. Energy

We'll always assess venues to identify if they use REGO backed renewable energy, and LED screens and lighting.

### 4. Transport

Involves seeking out sites that are located nearby public transport, providing car sharing services for crew, and encouraging delegates to travel via train or bus versus car where possible.

### 5. Materials & waste

Relates to practices such as hiring and using existing kit, or if purchasing is a must, ensuring materials are reused and made from recycled or partially recycled material.

### 6. Water

Involves selecting venues that have wastage policies and practices in place, such as the use of water saving devices.

### 7. Inclusivity & access

This one is about capturing all access requirements pre-event, and ensuring measures are taken. Examples include installing ramps, implementing hearing aids, adding live captioning to slides, and ensuring a diverse speaker line up.

*Know that you're not alone, and all of these involve not only looking to, but potentially re-assessing and re-thinking your supply chain so sustainability can be upheld across all touch points.*

# Myth 4: Sustainability is simply too complex

## If teenagers can do it, so can you

As adults we tend to overcomplicate things. Take too deep a dive into a topic, over analyse a matter, or turn a fun creative exercise into an overwhelming challenge.

On the flip side, young people are more exploratory, experimental, and they see the task at hand in more of a black and white way.

In the past we ourselves overcomplicated sustainability related matters. We would often go around in circles, only to realise the most powerful idea or best solution was the one we developed early on in our ideation and planning process.

If we take the emotion away and address the problem for what it is, chances are the solution is closer than you think – sustainability isn't too complex, it just might be time for a change of perspective.

## How Global Teen Leaders (GTLs) tackled the topic in Sweden

We not only had a blast acting as longtime client, We Are Family Foundation's production partner as they shifted their Just Peace Summit – an annual multi-day event that brings GTLs together for connection, learning and mentorship – to Stockholm, witnessing these young talents in action as they addressed sustainability related matters was truly inspiring.



## Developing actionable solutions to real-world problems

From opening and closing ceremonies to morning meditation sessions and workshops, the schedule was incredibly varied, and it's the Hack for Earth initiative that really brings our point home.

Teens were handed real-world peace-building and climate resilience challenges, assessed the problems at hand, and developed actionable solutions within hours, ready for pitching that same evening.

By focusing on specific issues within a wider challenge like sustainability in this way, it's possible to avoid the overwhelm, as we come to realise that every small change can contribute to a better future for both people and planet.

# Purpose-driven with a passion for helping you

Sledge's mission is to embed sustainability into our entire business model, our culture and our events

This means we're deeply passionate about helping you deliver meaningful and measurable positive change through your projects.

It's about putting purpose alongside profits, and sustainability centre stage to create *experiences that impact people, not the planet.*

Want to find out more? Let's chat!

## SLEDGE

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# 100%

of employees  
engage in ongoing  
sustainability training

# 9+ years

we're united by our  
shared values, and  
Sledge's median  
tenure reflects this

# 17

our activity is  
aligned with the  
UN's Sustainable  
Development Goals