



A Green Approach

Carbon neutrality is one of many concepts that have been proposed to solve the world's environmental problems. It is usually achieved by determining total carbon emissions, reducing output where possible and then offsetting the remainder through carbon credits. Shanghai-based HLD Event Services recently began applying the idea of carbon neutrality to its corporate events planning business in China, combining the company's core environmental values with the desire of a client looking to highlight a recent trend of green investments.


The company's private equity client was planning an anniversary celebration event, and after examining the firm's line of business and recent activities in China, HLD proposed creating a green event with an overall zero carbon footprint, says HLD Director Stefano Ritella. In addition to simply finding a way to offset the carbon emissions generated by the event, as is often done in other parts of the world, HLD set off to create a completely green experience for the client and its guests, using everything from recycled paper for event invitations and table place cards, to ivy and other plants for decoration, in addition to orchids in recycled bags as take-home gifts for the guests.

To offset CO₂ emissions, three partner organizations were selected for the client to choose from: carbonfund.org, EmissionZero and Shanghai Roots & Shoots. Each option presented a different initiative and method to reduce and offset the event's carbon footprint. In the end, HLD purchased 50 tons of carbon credits on behalf of the client through carbonfund.org, taking into consideration not just the event itself, but all the required logistics, including air travel for guests from the U.S. and even hotel stays. Although the client ultimately chose to pursue a different option, Ritella was particularly enamored with the approach of Roots & Shoots, who plants trees to offset carbon emissions instead of funding global environment projects. Based on



the total carbon emissions calculation, Roots & Shoots determines the number of new trees needed to offset the pollution. Trees are planted locally in China, and companies can plant and name entire sections of forests.

While environmentally conscious events have yet to become mainstream in China, they are clearly now possible. HLD's first environmentally friendly event was a resounding success and Ritella is adamant that going green is affordable. "[Greening the event] came out to less than one percent of the total bill," he says.

Stefano Ritella: "We designed a strong green concept that was consistent in each portion and added an interesting spin that the client could use. Besides the math that goes behind calculating emissions and the money to offset the event, you also need to blend in other elements to make it engaging; you don't just buy credits. You need to think in terms of the overall theme – gifts, decorations, all components, even the water that is served – so that it makes sense and every little element comes together in front of the guests. You can call it a win-win situation. It's a bit of a cliché, but you can refer to it as everybody gaining something." 

– Henry Skelsey

Environmentally friendly corporate events could soon become the norm in China.

HLD Event Services

www.hldevents.com

- **Specialties:** Corporate events and exhibition services
- **Launched:** 2006
- **Locations:** HQ in Shanghai, operations throughout Mainland China