

Green Procurement

Taking Green Practices Beyond Your Four Walls

In 2006, The Carbon Trust, a global authority on the low carbon economy, issued a report identifying the most carbon intensive products and services in the U.K. According to the report, the hotel industry was one of the top three most carbon intensive industries. Since the supply chain makes up the largest part of an organization's environmental footprint, one of the most effective ways for a hotel to reduce its footprint is by driving green practices beyond its own four walls and getting suppliers to go green.

The supply chain of each hotel is different and unique. It includes the procurement of raw materials, manufacturing processes, packaging, transportation and distributor sites. Sourcing impacts the environment, people's well being and local economies. In this article, we are using the term "green" as a descriptor of responsible and sustainable practices. To understand your supply chain, you need to understand your vendors and the products they supply. An effective and efficient way of doing this is to use a formal questionnaire to survey your vendors on their practices, policies and achievements related to environmental and social issues. You can gauge your vendors' green practices through questions like:

- Do you measure your greenhouse gas emissions?
- Do you have green purchasing guidelines?
- Do you monitor your suppliers' conduct with respect to ethical labour practices?
- What are you doing to reduce packaging and impacts from transportation?
- What are you doing in your facilities and fleets in terms of energy, carbon emissions, water and waste?

The vendor evaluation process will provide you with valuable insight for your green procurement strategy. It will allow you to identify the green leaders versus those who are not currently addressing their footprint at all.

Being associated with vendors who are environmentally progressive will strengthen your hotel's overall image and extend your own green practices.

As for vendors who are not yet meeting best practices, take this as an opportunity to help and inspire them to make improvements. Share your strategies and experiences to benefit both companies.

For example, if you can help a vendor reduce packaging, you will reduce the amount of waste your facility generates. This will not only create a greener community, it will also produce labour and waste management cost savings.

Following evaluation, you may consider issuing green purchasing guidelines or a supplier code of conduct to your vendors and employees. These documents will explain your expectations to current and new vendors, as well as to employees involved in the procurement process. You can also display this policy to hotel guests to show your comprehensive commitment to green practices.

As a final consideration, keep in mind that green procurement standards are constantly changing. What is critical today may not even be on the radar five years from now. To ensure your procurement questionnaire and purchasing guidelines continue to be relevant, make sure to build in a periodic review process. While new vendors should be required to go through this "green screen" before being added to your supplier list, current vendors should also be surveyed, at least every other year.

By driving green practices among your suppliers, you will inspire environmental responsibility among them, set an example for other hoteliers, strengthen your commitment and image as a green leader, and most importantly, help create a greener industry and community.

By Francisca Quinn

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