Zero Waste Events
Who am I?

• City of Santa Barbara Environmental Specialist

• GreenProject Consultants Co-founder
Events are great but...

- They produce a lot of waste!
  - Events are the second largest waste producing industry!
  - Often, little thought goes into where the waste is actually going after the event.
What exactly *is* the problem with waste?
Waste Goes to Landfills

- Limited landfill space
- Limited resources
- Energy use
- Pollution
Organics in the Landfill...

- Food and other organics slowly break down in the landfill
- Methane is the result
- Methane is 70x more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO2!
Waste 101

- Types of event waste
  - Trash (landfill)
  - Recycling
  - Compost/foodscraps
  - E-waste
  - C&D waste???
  - Clean waste stream???
Steps to a successful waste-free event

• Waste management isn’t only a factor *during* the event...
  • Pre-event
  • During event
  • Post-event
Pre-event:

• Waste minimization starts here
  – Think about NEEDs not WANTs
    • What NEEDS to be there?
    • What can you compromise on to make your vendors happy?
Pre-event

• Event planning charrette
  – Establish a waste goal

• Available waste services
  – Foodscraps?
  – Recycling?

• Vendor contact list – introduce yourself and the idea of zero waste
  – Understand where they’re coming from – what’s they’re waste background?
Pre-event: Set the Rules

• This is the time to establish limits

• Policies:
  – Pack it in, pack it out
  – Single-use ban
  – Event-provided materials, take it out of the vendors’ hands
  – Waste fees
Event Time

• If possible, have waste staff present during the event
  – This will maximize your diversion
• Get back with the vendors
  – Remind them of the goals
  – Be a resource
  – Enforce the pre-established rules
Event time:
Talkin’ Trash

• Opportunity to educate event-goers
  – Building a zero waste legacy

• Make it interactive
  – Pictures
  – Skits
  – Education kiosk

• Talk, talk, talk
Post-event

Time to get dirty: Sorting is a must

– Mistakes will happen
– Classify waste
– Added value – your board/stakeholders/clients will love this
  • More bang for their buck
  • Added credibility
Post-event: Measurements are King

- Data collection
  - Baseline for subsequent year
  - Way to grade your event
  - Raise waste awareness
  - Something to brag about
Post-event:
Prepare for Next Year

• Use data to set goals for next year
• Supply suggestions based on this year
  – Replace Styrofoam cup with reusable
  – Reusable vs Single Use
  – Etc.
• After event wrap up
  – Lessons learned
  – What worked, what didn’t
Obstacles

- Vendor buy in
  - Might have to win their love...
- Perceived cost
- Lack of:
  - Knowledge
  - Interest
  - Organization
Solutions!

• Event-specific signage
• Tips
  – Dos and don’ts
• Always take the time to explain
  – People are scared of what they don’t know
  – Be the hero!