

UFI Sustainable Development Award Entry - IGES

Company name and title (theme) of the entry -

- Emerald X, Show: IGES, International Gift Exposition in the Smokies
- Sustainability in Retail Professional Program (SRPP)

Contact person(s) details -

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Quick background, nature, and general objectives of the program -

As the largest industry in the world, Retail can improve lives, help ecosystems, and impact economies. IGES has 5,000 buyers from Zoos, Aquariums, Amusement Parks, Water Parks, Campgrounds, National & State Parks, Museums, and other souvenir resort store attend our annual event. Not only are major retailers shifting to a more sustainable future, but our consumers are also demanding it. By informing these tourism buyers on how to buy Sustainable products and make changes to their stores, we can make a broader impact across the industry.

Detailed description, including stakeholders involved, actions taken, and results achieved -

The Sustainability in Retail Profession Program (SRPP) emerged as an opportunity for buyers to expand their knowledge of Sustainability through the key elements of Environmental, Social, and Economic Impact. By the end of the program, they are equipped to make confident, informed decisions when purchasing sustainable products and have a go-to-market strategy to incorporate into their stores and brand going forward. Our panel of speakers included Tommy Brown, Conservation Buyer for Saint Louis Zoo & ZAG (Zoo, Aquarium and Garden Buyers Group) Board Member, Nicole Leinbach, Retail Expert and Dr. Ed Spevak, Environmentalist who did a 4-hour lecture + 1-hour hands-on tour broken into two groups.

After the course, the buyers were able to do the following:

- ✓ Understand a clear definition of sustainability
- ✓ Define the 3 key elements of sustainability - Social, Environmental, & Economic
- ✓ Look for strains on natural resources (water, land, air, and biodiversity)
- ✓ View products through the lens of Anthropological Conservation (economics, people, culture, and conservation in one paradigm)
- ✓ Research a product's life cycle
- ✓ Re-examine the sustainability of their store(s), warehouse(s) and workforce
- ✓ Put a "green" value on the cost of their product lines
- ✓ Develop a plan of action for their own retail sustainability
- ✓ Question purchases and product production according to their sustainability plan
- ✓ Know how to strive for a state of homeostasis within their retail operation

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- ✓ Strive for ethical sustainable/measurable retail goals, not just financial ones.

At the conclusion of the course the participants received a window cling, SRPP logo to add to their signature, and a certificate of completion given out at our Annual Opening Night Party.

Not only does this course give the tools and resources to make sustainable buying decisions, but the buyers are also up and close and personal with the exhibitors during the tour so that they are able to gather feedback to further enhance their product lines. In addition to the buyers that attended the program, IGES selected the top 22 brands that follow sustainable practices as a resource for all buyer that are looking for products that have a positive impact on humanity, our earth, and beyond - [Sustainable Vendors @ IGES | IGES](#).

Conclusion: lessons learnt, next steps (if any).

We had 35 buyers complete this inaugural SRPP and had glowing reviews. We achieved the goal of all buyers walking away equipped to purchase sustainable merchandise confidently. Ann Henderson, the Virginia Parks buyer responsible for 41 parks said that she will be recommending to every single park buyer due to the value she found with the content. The immediate question was when we were going to have another course so they could have their staff and friends attend.

The only challenge was for buyers to get to the event a day early for the lecture program, which we will improve with a webinar for the lecture portion with breakout rooms to facilitate the valuable peer discussion we had during the course. We will continue the hands-on portion on the first day of the show and have time for in person Q&A onsite after the tour. We have launched a Sustainability Pavilion for our 2023 event including many new and returning brands from the Fair-Trade Federation.