

Important changes to BS8901

And how they affect www.eventberry.com

BSI have now published the revised version of BS8901, officially titled BS8901:2009. This replaces BS8901:2007 which has now been withdrawn. The new standard is more streamlined, clearer, and introduces some key changes to tighten up claims of conformance to the standard.

This brief summary is intended to highlight the key changes to the standard and should be read in conjunction with the official BS8901:2009 document. We have laid this out in the format of a "Frequently Asked Questions" document and will add questions to it as they arise in discussions with clients.

Q: I already have BS8901:2007. Do I really need to buy the new standard?

A: In order to conform to the new version of BS8901 you will need to buy a copy of the new standard. We feel it is unfortunate that BSI are charging so much for this document, but we have no control over that. We will continue to offer Eventberry and our advice and assistance at the same rate in order to try to compensate for this.

Q: Why are you saying "conform" instead of "comply?"

A: The previous version of the standard used the wording "claim compliance." This has now been replaced by the use of "conformance."

Q: What does "sustainability management system scope" mean?

A: This allows you to set out what, precisely, it is you are claiming conformance for. So, for example, if you run an event at the Albert Hall, and manage it to conform to BS8901, then your event conforms. However, the Albert Hall can't then turn around and say that they are fully conforming, or that an event they have there the week after conforms. It's just about defining what the boundaries of your conformance are. Here's what we put for a recent event:

"The scope of conformance to BS8901 for this event is defined as follows:

The venue is One Wimpole Street, London. We are only claiming conformance for the specific areas of the venue we are using, food prepared specifically for our guests, and extra travel associated with the event.

Guests are defined as delegates, event staff and speakers. We are not making any claims of conformance relating to general venue or catering staff.

In terms of BS8901, our conformance can be defined as:

1. Planning. We will plan all elements of the Summit to promote sustainability.
2. Implementation. We will have a dedicated staff member on the day ensuring that key performance indicators are being checked and monitored.
3. Feedback. We will record lessons learnt during the management of the event to carry forward to future events."

It doesn't have to be anything more complicated than that – though for an event like the Olympics you can imagine that the scope could run to many pages of intricate detail.

Eventberry has been updated to include a section for scope.

Q: What is the statement of purpose and values?

A: This is another new section which has been added to the standard, which sits at a slightly higher level than your sustainable development policy. So whereas your SDP might set out specific targets in terms of recycling, waste, energy use, etc, your SPV should act as a kind of mission statement for your sustainable development. The four principles outlined in the standard are inclusivity, integrity, stewardship and transparency. While there may be other guiding principles which organisations wish to add in we feel that these four represent the key pillars of a mission statement for sustainability.

We have defined our SPV as follows and you can feel free to use this as a template so long as you ensure that what you record for your organisation is in accord with your aims and ideals.

Inclusivity:

Diversity and inclusivity are at the forefront of Seventeen's approach to sustainable event management. We aim to ensure that all relevant groups affected by our operations as a business are consulted about issues of importance. We operate an open door policy allowing access to senior staff wherever appropriate.

We work hard to identify who our stakeholders are and recognise that this may extend beyond our immediate business network. We invite comments from anyone who has an interest in the work that Seventeen does.

We use our website to communicate with all stakeholders and allow comments to be added to news stories which we publish.

At every stage of our operations we aim to be open to suggestions, comments and criticism providing they are relevant to our work as a business.

Integrity:

We pride ourselves on operating as a business that acts with integrity.

We do not accept hidden commissions, mark ups or kick backs which are prevalent in the rest of the industry.

Wherever possible we publish openly on our website any information relevant to the operation of our business.

We are opposed to all forms of bribery, corruption, abuse of privilege and oppression.

Stewardship:

We recognise our responsibility to the environment we live and work in. We acknowledge that without a stable environment, our business cannot be sustainable in the years to come.

We are committed through our actions as a company to promote best practice in environmental stewardship and biodiversity across the globe.

We particularly value good use of resources, as we recognise that all resources are finite and valuable. We track and monitor our use of resources through the Eventberry system.

We are signatories of the Mayor of London's Green Procurement Code, currently at Silver Level.

Transparency:

We operate transparently at all times with clients, suppliers and stakeholders. We pass on third party costs without commission and are happy to offer advice and assistance at no cost to interested parties.

Our goal is to create events with style, substance and sustainability. We believe that it is possible to be a successful business while still being transparent. Our business is founded on the idea that transparency should be a key driver to that, not a hindrance.

At all times our goals are sustainability, transparency and creativity.

Eventberry has been update to include a section for purpose and values.

Q: The standard doesn't have those 28 questions anymore. Can I just ignore them?

A: The standard now asks you to think of sustainable issues around your activity but no longer spells out the 28 key areas defined in BS8901:2007. We have left these fields in Eventberry as they act as a useful shorthand to the kind of issues that could arise. If, however, you see an issue that is simply not relevant to your project, you should score it as such.

Q: How do I conduct a management system audit? Do I need an external auditor? It sounds expensive.

A: The standard asks you to carry out a management system audit periodically. Eventberry will prompt you to do this every six months and will guide you through the process. For smaller organisations the standard states that the audit may be carried out internally, ideally by someone not connected with actually managing the system. Eventberry will ask your auditor to answer ten questions relating to how the system is managed. This allows you to ensure that the management system is being implemented effectively.

Q: What is the management review? Is it connected to the maturity matrix?

A: The management review is an opportunity to benchmark your organisation's overall achievements over a period of time. The maturity matrix is no longer a compulsory format for this, but we have continued to use this as it will be familiar to most users of BS8901. The system will prompt you periodically to update your maturity matrix, based on your assessment of your progress.

Q: What about certification? Can you do it? How much will it cost?

A: You may choose to be certified by a third party, and Eventberry creates a very easy platform for certification bodies to assess your progress. As we act as advisors to all Eventberry users, we cannot also audit or certify your progress. The analogy would be of an accountant who prepares your annual tax return – he would not then also be able to audit this. We can advise you of potential certification partners, though we would advise that there will be a cost for this. You should weigh up demand from your customers for third party certification against the cost before deciding to go down this route.

