



Phasing out single-use plastics in meetings & events operations

Quick facts



Type of procurement:
replacing single-use plastic items



Year of inception: **2018**



Type of business: **Hotel**



Organisation name:
Radisson Hotel Group



Number of staff: **100,000**



Country/region: **Global**

Background information

Approximately 6,300 million tonnes of plastics are estimated to have reached end-of-life since the start of mass production in the 1950s. With only around 9% of global plastics waste recycled and 12% incinerated, and the fact that plastic is extremely durable, the majority of these plastics are accumulating, either in landfills or in the environment.

Environmental impacts range from short-term impacts, such as the entanglement of animals, to longer term impacts, such as the bioaccumulation of toxic compounds in the food chain. Over 500 species are known to be affected by ingestion, entanglement and ghost fishing, with over 800 species affected if dispersal by rafting and habitat effects are included¹.

The challenge

More than one million meetings² take place at Radisson Hotel Group worldwide each year.

To respond to the call of UN Environment to ban plastic pollution at the 2018 World Environment Day³, **Radisson Hotel Group set up the objective to ban single-use plastics in meetings and events organised in its premises by 2020, and raise awareness among corporate guests and inspire similar initiatives around the world.**

The strategy

Radisson Hotel Group plastics strategy covers the following items, i.e.: water bottles, wrappings of branded candy, straws, other food & drink packaging and branded pens.

Solutions to tackle the phase-out of single use plastics involve various teams, including the Sourcing, Branding, Operations and Responsible Business teams. While some alternatives to single-use plastic are sourced at corporate level, most of them need to be procured locally. **Brand standards were amended accordingly, and employees trained to source alternative solutions.**

In addition, The Sourcing team:

- ➔ Engaged with existing suppliers and **challenged them to provide sustainable solutions and alternatives** and set incentives for successes achieved;
- ➔ Worked closely with suppliers to set a road map to replace single use plastics with alternatives at a global level and negotiate collection and recycling of packaging as part of the supplier contracting in the Requests for Proposal;

¹ Source: United Nations Environment Programme (2018): Addressing marine plastics: a systemic approach. Available at <http://gefmarineplastics.org/publications/addressing-marine-plastics-a-systemic-approach-stocktaking-report>

² Estimate based on business volume of average hotel

³ More information is available at: <https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/>

- ➔ Provided guidance to hotels to proceed with proposed alternatives, for example for the installation of in-house water filtration systems;
- ➔ Identified new suppliers e.g. for the material for the branded candy wrappers, for in-house bottled water or for pencils;

The Responsible Business team also **engaged with guests to raise awareness on the activities around tackling issues of plastic waste, with the #Refusethestraw campaign**⁴.

Impacts



- ➔ **Changing the brand standards allowed the group to implement the solutions globally.** An example of this are branded pens which have been replaced by pencils and the giveaway sweets, which are now wrapped in eco-friendly, wood-based foil branded wrappers.
- ➔ In 2018, 162 Radisson Hotels were equipped with filtered water systems. An in-house bottled glass water bottle (1 Liter) typically saves 82.8 g of CO₂. Considering that an average hotel uses 39,000 water bottles in meetings & events, **this amounts on average to 3.2 tons of CO₂.**
- ➔ Even the simple act of encouraging guests to refuse plastic straws has had a major effect. Radisson hotels in the Middle East, Turkey and Africa are already on target to see a drop in plastic straw use of 90%, equivalent to a **reduction of 6,5 million in one year.**



Lessons learned

- ✓ **Education of the teams is critical to allow the uptake by staff of the Radisson Hotel Group environmental agenda.** In the EMEA region, approximately 70% of all staff have been trained in 2017, in various topics of Responsible Business. The training contains simple examples of how to make habits more responsible and build a culture of Responsible Business. An advanced level of training is given to the management-level staff.
- ✓ **Cost of replacing plastic products with a plastic-free solution needs to be clearly defined.** Engaging with suppliers to find suitable solutions which are in line with cost expectations is significant. Conversations are ongoing with global leading bottled water producers about the cost-efficient availability of plastic free solutions in specific geographical areas like India and China.

"We, at Radisson Hotel Group, strive to minimize the amount of plastic used in our operations (...). We encourage our hotels to find innovative solutions and contribute to the increasing global awareness to ban single use plastics."

- Inge Huijbrechts, Global Senior Vice President Responsible Business and Safety & Security



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⁴ More information is available at: <https://blog.radissonblu.com/refuse-the-straw/>

For further information

- 🌐 radissonhotelgroup.com/responsible-business
- 📍 Contact person: Sven Wiltink, Director Responsible Business EMEA
- ✉️ sven.wiltink@radissonhotels.com



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