



Sportsworld Group is leading the hospitality industry in sustainable events management, through certification to ISO 20121 at Wimbledon Fairway Village

“We like to lead in the events industry and, when we’re pitching, ISO 20121 sets us apart. The Standard is internationally recognized, so it looks great in front of our clients. We have already secured a client in Brazil because of it.”

Len Olender,
Sponsor Services Director,
Sportsworld Group

Customer objectives

- Reduce negative environmental, social and economic impacts
- Demonstrate best practice
- Enhance credentials when pitching for new business
- Strengthen the Sportsworld brand
- Be seen as a leader in the event industry

Customer benefits

- Well-managed event impacts
- Enhanced visitor experience
- Reassurance to clients and prospects
- Internationally recognized certification from BSI
- Improved employee engagement and company culture
- Competitive advantage

Customer background

Over the past 30 years, Sportsworld Group has earned an international reputation as one of the UK's leading corporate hospitality, events management and sponsorship services providers. Part of TUI Travel Plc, Sportsworld delivers memorable guest experiences at many of the world's greatest sporting and cultural occasions, including the Olympic Games and Rugby and Football World Cups.

In 1992, the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) appointed Sportsworld as an official hospitality agent and overseas tour operator to The Championships, Wimbledon. Today, the company continues to deliver a wide range of corporate hospitality and tours packages to its exclusive Wimbledon Fairway Village. In November 2013, a team of sports industry experts recognized Fairway Village for the excellence of delivery and management of its official Wimbledon programme, presenting it with the Gold Award for the hospitality category at the annual International Sports Event Management (ISEM) Awards.

Why certification?

Post-Wimbledon 2013 and its ISEM success, Sportsworld did not rest on its laurels, but sought feedback from clients on how to improve their experience further. A key area raised was event sustainability and, with BSI's support, the company set itself the ambitious goal for Fairway Village of gaining ISO 20121 for Sustainable Events Management by August 2014.

The aim of ISO 20121 is to reduce the negative environmental, social and economic impact of major events. Launched in June 2012, and inspired by the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Standard introduces a framework of sustainability measures across the supply chain, from construction companies to caterers.

Len Olender, Sponsor Services Director for Sportsworld Group, explains the key drivers for the company's decision to go for ISO 20121. "Firstly, we simply wanted to make a difference by becoming a more sustainable company; secondly, we wanted to show leadership in the sports events industry; and thirdly we wanted a USP [unique sales proposition] to differentiate us in the market."

Olender continues, "We chose to focus on Wimbledon first because we'd been involved there for 22 years, so we knew the ins and outs of it and felt we would be less likely to be surprised by the requirements."

Sportsworld's tough target of achieving certification to ISO 20121 within such a tight

timescale led to a crucial relationship with BSI, whose guidance in implementing the Standard was to prove crucial.

Implementation

Sportsworld's parent company, TUI, provided an intern to look in detail at the requirements of ISO 20121. Parts of the TUI group had also been through various ISO certification processes before, so Sportsworld was able to draw on their experiences.

"Our team had to do a lot of homework because of all the rules and regulations we needed to understand," says Olender. "BSI's role then became critical because the timing was so tight. Their assessor walked us through the Standard in a really methodical way and conducted a Gap Analysis, which helped us to prioritize which issues we would need to address and when to tackle them."

Several sustainability issues were specific to Wimbledon Fairway Village. The temporary VIP hospitality facility is located on a golf course, less than 200m from the tournament's show courts, where a luxurious, air-conditioned marquee is built and operated to provide a tranquil base from which guests can enjoy The Championships. Garden areas and private chalets for 30-plus guests, with separate bar and dining areas, are also created.

As Liz Turnbull, Senior Event Manager for Sportsworld, explains, "We had to consider potential damage to the surrounding environment. For example, there are a lot of trees, so we had to take account of tree protection orders, as well as flora and fauna that might be affected."

She continues, "We also had to ensure we were minimizing waste during construction. As a temporary structure, the walls and glass are reused and the lining is recycled."

Once up and running, onsite operations such as catering, waste disposal and traffic management all posed further sustainability challenges. "One of the biggest tasks was educating staff, for example, to use the correct recycling bins. On the busiest days we'd have more than 100 staff on site – not just our own employees, but also caterers and other service suppliers," says Turnbull.

Beyond environmental factors, the Standard also required Sportsworld to introduce key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to broader social and economic issues, ranging from the health and happiness of staff to using resources from the local community.

Benefits of certification

ISO 20121 has helped Sportsworld impress and reassure clients, and strengthen its brand image. "We're proud that, with BSI's help, we were able to attain the Standard," says Turnbull. "Certification makes it very clear that Sportsworld is adopting a sustainability policy and is showing leadership within the events industry."

Olender agrees. "We know our facility is sustainable and we feel good about it. We feel a lot more comfortable because we've been educated personally and as a company about sustainability issues," he says.

"It's also important we're first off the block. We like to lead in the events industry and, when we're pitching, ISO 20121 sets us apart from competitors. The Standard is internationally recognized, so it looks great in front of our clients.

Sportsworld has also noted a subtle change of company culture, with employees becoming more motivated and acting more responsibly in day-to-day tasks, such as printing out fewer documents. "ISO 20121 has made sustainability more tangible to people, with a lot of measures simply making good business sense," says Olender.

BSI's role

"BSI has been a tremendous support throughout," says Olender. "Without their assessor's knowledge and guidance, I think the process would have taken us another year. When it came to our audit we were a bit apprehensive, but BSI was very reassuring. It was an interactive process and we learned a lot."

He continues, "We sell British expertise and BSI has great expertise too, so our two brands complement each other. BSI has the perfect name – its logo acts like a warrant – it means a lot to our clients all around the world."

While Fairway Village's certification to ISO 20121 is already a great story to tell clients, Liz Turnbull says, "It's something we'll build on year on year. We're reassessing our KPIs for next year. For example, one objective we've set is to give surplus food to charities for the homeless."

More broadly, Sportsworld Group intends to use Wimbledon Fairway Village as a template as it rolls ISO 20121 out to other events in the UK and globally. Olender concludes, "It gives us a framework we can use anywhere, including events in some developing countries where they've hardly even thought about sustainability yet."