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Six Who Matter: The Party Girl



This is part of our [Nov/Dec 2007 issue](#). More specifically, this article is part of our [2007 Six Who Matter series](#).

Big bashes and gala events have all the markings of a gluttonous culture. But with the help of this New York native, parties can be both gaudy and green

Greentrepneur isn't a word, but maybe it should be, describing innovators who run their own businesses, but are making sure - through greener, more eco-friendly practices - that the earth is still in business. Danielle Venokur is this kind of business owner.

On a recent Tuesday, Danielle opens the iron gate on the creaky elevator and welcomes me through the door of dvGreen's Manhattan office. In appearance, Danielle seems to embody the earth, from her radiant freckled skin to her brown dress; her hair is pulled back simply, and if she's wearing makeup, it's imperceptible. She shares the vast, impeccably decorated work space with her mother, a designer who has seen to it that every piece of furniture, from the ultra-sleek refrigerator to the glass work/dining room table, looks like it has a specific place.

But behind dvGreen's ordered present is a CEO who found her calling slowly. Beginning with a dream of creating a more fashionable laptop bag, she detoured through the L.A. television industry, became interested in flowers, and evolved her interests into an independent business devoted to saving harried party-planners while saving the planet.

Danielle's awareness that she was "not recycling responsibly" dawned on her while she worked at L'Olivier, a high-end Manhattan florist. She and her fiancé switched to better light bulbs and replaced the showerheads and the fridge, which she says "cut our energy bill almost in half."

"I was becoming more aware of eco-awareness in my personal life, and saw a stark contradiction between what was going on at home and what was happening at work," and what she calls the "tremendous amount of waste that there is in the events business. Maybe this was going to be the new business idea: to create events but at a reduced footprint. But I didn't want to start if I wasn't going to be able to produce really beautiful events."

Through online research, Danielle found many resources, including organic caterers and producing invitations using soy-based ink on natural papers. "People shared their knowledge, which made it easy to figure out quickly that this was going to be viable," she explains.

With no one else in New York City equally dedicated to event planning and the environment, the media found dvGreen quickly. She landed a few clients, planning a non-profit benefit and an internal symposium for Pepsi, and lined up a few weddings (including her own, next spring).

For each client, Danielle puts together what she calls a "greening document", reviewing every aspect of the event, the location, the numbers, the budget, and client preferences. Then she calls on her now-extensive network of vendors and resources to help people's green dreams come true.

While the Westchester native would not necessarily define herself as religious, she admits to a spiritual influence on her work. "Everyone has their own definition of God, but for me it means anything living, whether it's a plant or a human. If you're not being responsible in the way you act in relation to that, then you're disrespecting God."

One of Danielle's strongest connections to Judaism is the family coming together to celebrate the holidays. "From an eco-standpoint, the best thing would be to have no more parties at all," she notes. "But I think it's important to take a step back and commemorate what's essential to your life, family and community, to mark the moments. My memories of those family experiences made me realize how important events are."

Danielle happily offers advice about how to reduce your own carbon footprint at events, large or small. "Ideally, shop at farmers markets. Reuse - if you have enough china, that's better than using disposable paper. But if you can't, purchase recycled disposables instead of unrecyclable plastic. Contact a local composting facility to find out what kind of food waste they accept, and keep a separate bin for compost. For tablecloths, choose vintage or organic fabrics over virgin cotton. For candles, use beeswax and soy wax rather than paraffin, a petroleum-based product that emits greenhouse gases. These are not huge life changes."

As the "DV" in [dvGreen](#), the CEO feels a high level of responsibility to her company's mission. "There can be beauty, and it doesn't need to conflict with the environment."

-- Text by Esther D. Kustanowitz / Photo by Sam Norval

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