

THURSDAY CAREERS CHATS

Date of Session: 2/17/2011 Title of Session: Careers in Event Planning

Alumni Presenter: Natalie Diener Class Year: 2005

Title: Non-Traditional Wedding and Event Planner Employer: Self-Employed

Notes from Session:

>Like any job, networking is vital, but especially for event planning, and even more so when you own your own company. You plan parties for a living - networking is what it's all about.

-Become involved in one of the many event planning professional associations, such as the National Association of Catering Executives (NACE), the International Special Events Society (ISES), Meeting Professionals International (MPI), Association of Bridal Consultants (ABC).

-Conferences are great networking opportunities, as well as learning opportunities. Natalie just went to a NACE conference entirely about planning Orthodox Jewish weddings and Indian weddings.

>There are many transferable skills relevant to event planning (such as sales), so all experiences are important and relevant, even if they don't seem directly applicable.

>Rejection happens. It's difficult to face, but you need to pick yourself up and dust yourself off. You can't throw in the towel. Sometimes rejection can be a blessing in disguise and will allow for the opportunity to try something different.

>A lot of even planning, especially wedding planning, is sales. As a business owner, you have the responsibility of bringing in new business.

>Educational opportunities exist, i.e. wedding planner certificate programs.

>Event planning is a huge umbrella. You can find opportunities in many places where you wouldn't logically think of them, such as within other job positions and in various industries.

>Grant writing and fundraising are especially good skills to have if interested in non-profit event planning. (You might have a combined position).

>The corporate world has lots of opportunities for event planning, such as meeting planners (lucrative) and within marketing & PR (product launches...events have become a large part of corporate marketing, you can't just run an ad anymore).

>Working for an event venue or catering company is another option. A little different from non-profit and corporate event planning, as events come to you and then you plan them, rather than conceiving of them and then planning them.

>As a wedding planner, it's more than just planning events. There's also a lot of counseling involved because of the emotional aspects of the event. That's something to seriously consider when deciding between being an independent planner or working for an event venue/catering company.

>Museums have event departments, it's a good place to look for event planning internship opportunities.

>Think about your marketability:

- Related experience and skills
- Membership in a professional organization
- Reputation (word of mouth very important)
- Presentation (little details matter)

>You can find relevant from any academic background. Natalie was a theatre major and has found it to be directly relevant.