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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN THREE TYPES OF MEETING & EVENT PLANNERS

by

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2007

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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Part One

Introduction

Meeting and event planning has evolved into a career path that is sought after by many individuals. In fact, it is one of the most rapidly increasing career paths for college graduates. There are multiple types of meeting and event planners. Each having similarities and differences.

The meetings and events industry has evolved greatly over the years making it difficult for those present in the industry to know what next steps are available to alter or advance one's career path. Knowing that working as a meeting and event planner is enjoyable, but not completely sure what options for change or advancement are available, creates a hurdle in the decision making process that must be overcome to determine what new direction one may want to take their career. Does one stick with what they know? Does one challenge themselves with another type of planning position? Does one have the correct skills sets to transition to another planning position? Deciding where to take one's career can be a stressful decision, especially if detailed information on the tasks and responsibilities of that job are not readily available.

Purpose

The purpose of this professional paper is to provide a comparative analysis of the skill sets needed for association meeting planners, corporate event planners, and independent meeting and event planners so that recommendations can be made on ways in which these planners can transition from one type of meeting planning position to another. More specifically, this paper was created for those who are looking for information about meeting and event planning careers to help determine a future career path for themselves for which they would be well suited.

Statement of objectives

The objective of this professional paper is to look back at the history of meeting and event planning to clearly define the roles of three prominent types of meeting and event planners. The importance of doing this is to provide accurate background information about the industry and how each position has evolved into what it is today. This is necessary information to know in order to make realistic recommendations as to whether or not a planner from one sub-type should ~~make~~ the transition from one type to another and how complex that transition may be. The main focus of this professional paper is to provide a literature review of the meeting and event planning industry with a comparative analysis of three of the main sub-types of planners. Focusing first on the definition of meeting and event planners and the roles they play in the workplace, followed by a historical evolution of meetings and events.

Once the background of the industry has been established, a comparative analysis of the three main sub-types of event and meeting planners; the corporate planner, the association planner, and the independent planner, will be presented by explaining the intricacies of each sub-type (Convention Industry Council, 2005). Not all meeting and event planners have the skills sets and personalities to work within each of these sub-types, so as a planner who may be interested in changing their career path it is important to know the characteristics of each sub-type and which qualities one must possess in order to work well within that sub-type (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009) Recommendations can then be made as to how each type of planner can transition from one subtype to another and whether or not that move will be appropriate.

Justifications

Meeting and event planning is different within each organization. Sometimes meetings and events have their own department, sometimes they are under the marketing department and

sometimes they can be found under the executive or human resource areas. To take this even further, the meeting and events department can also fall under additional categories depending on whether the planner works for an association, a corporation or independently for their own company.

Taking an in depth approach to researching these positions and recognizing the skills that go along with each is necessary in developing an understanding of each position. In conducting the comparative analysis of the three positions it will become apparent that there are common skills within all three positions and ones that are unique to each. This analysis will play an integral role in the meetings and events industry, as there will now be documentation of the similarities and differences within the positions. This can enable future, potential event planners to make a more educated choice when choosing their career path. With the help of this paper, planners will now be able to analyze where they may fit within the industry according to their skill sets, personality characteristics and the amount of experience they currently have in the field.

The findings from this professional paper could be used in a classroom setting for a college degree or certificate program to teach students about the different aspects of the meetings and events industry and that not all meeting and event planners perform the same duties or tasks. Professionally, the information created within this paper could benefit those in the industry if it were presented in an industry publication. It would provide-others who may be looking to expand their skills or who may be inquiring about the job duties of planners in other sub-types, first hand access to the information. There is demand within the industry for this comparison to be made and the benefits will become pronounced once others have had the opportunity to read this professional paper and apply the recommendations to their own careers.

Constraints

The constraints placed on this professional paper are in a few different areas. First, though meetings and events have been happening for thousands of years, choosing a career in meeting and event planning is still something that is quite new (Development of event planning, 2011). That being said, the research on the subject may be difficult to find or may be available via limited resources possibly limiting the different perspectives on the planner sub-types and the historical evidence of the evolution of the career within the industry.

The research generated for this professional paper was done by someone who is currently a meeting planner so there is also potential for bias in the recommendations section as well as personal opinions being added to the description section. Precautionary measures will be taken to ensure that all data is from reliable sources and not the subject of opinion or personal experience.

Part Two

Introduction

In 2002, the meetings and conventions industry was deemed as one of the most significant sectors of the economy (Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002). Without this industry the hotels, attractions, restaurants, transportation companies and prominent U.S. corporations would not survive. However, this was not always the case. Throughout history the meetings and events industry went through its ups and downs to evolve into the powerhouse it is today ("Development of event", 2011). The industry has evolved to the extent that college campus' across the country are offering degree programs in meeting and event management and professionals have multiple industry certifications available to be taken.

Today, the meetings and events industry is so strong that conducting meetings and events are necessary to keep any entity afloat. Whether it is a small meeting for 15 of a corporation's board members, a tradeshow for 5,000, a wedding for 200, or a fundraising event open to the public; meetings and events are a part of our everyday lives. Behind the scenes at each and every meeting or event is an individual or team of individuals who are responsible for making it all happen. These meeting and event planners are in charge of every aspect of the event, most of which is not noticeable to the attendees. Meeting planners are in charge of booking room blocks for conventions, hiring caterers and choosing menus, setting up the tradeshow floor, creating and distributing marketing materials, managing budgets, negotiating contracts, working with audio visual teams, hiring entertainment, scheduling transportation, creating educational programs and so much more (Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002).

The job duties of an event planner are infinite; however, there are several aspects of this career that can be broken down into different sub-types; association meeting and event planning,

corporate meeting and event planning, and an independent meeting and event planner. A corporate meeting and event planner is someone who works within a large corporation or organization planning and scheduling their in-house meetings and events (Careers-in-Event-Planning.com, 2011). In other words, this person is responsible for planning the meetings that are for employees only and pertain solely to the organization for which they work. An association meeting and event planner is responsible for planning gatherings for people who are members of the association (Convention Industry Council, 2005). This group of attendees typically does not work for the same employer, but are linked to the association by a shared interest or industry. An independent meeting and event planner is one who typically works for themselves and has started their own company. They market themselves to plan a variety of events from social gatherings like weddings and birthday parties, to working with organizations as a third party for product launches or conventions (Careers-in-Event-Planning.com, 2011). Though each of these careers may share some of the same skills and abilities, they are each different in their own respects. This professional paper contains table that compare and contrast the three career sub-types. These visual examples of the three careers will help paint a better picture of the characteristics of each career to aid in determining which path may be best for a planner who is considering changing the direction of their career.

Literature Review

History of Meetings and Events

Though a career in meetings and events was not considered a profession until about 30 years ago, it does not mean that meetings and events were not happening long before then. The first record of an event can be traced back to ancient Rome in 167 B.C. This three day street festival was in celebration of L. Aemilius Paullus becoming victorious over the Macedonians. To celebrate, people donned their gaudiest apparel, drank the finest wines and gorged themselves on gourmet delicacies. Exotic animals were paraded through town and the Roman hero was driven in a white chariot pulled by four white horses (Matthews, 2007). The celebration was glamorous and well-deserved, but it did not happen by itself. There were local Romans who worked together to plan each piece of the celebration.

One of the first meetings recorded in history occurred between Henry VII of England and Francis of France in 1518, where they met to sign a mutual nonaggression pact joining the powers of Europe. Similarly, these types of impactful meetings and events occurred throughout history in Greece, China, India, Egypt and many Native American cultures before emerging in the United States (Matthews, 2007).

As with the meetings and events that occurred in other parts of the world, the United States was not far behind in its industry development. There were several key inventions and situations that occurred during the past century that helped to shape the meetings and conventions industry in the U.S. The repeal of Prohibition in 1933 enabled attendees to drink alcohol at events and the invention of air conditioning allowed meetings and events to be held in warmer climates in the Southern and Western U.S. (Carey, 2007). By the same token, the implementation of interstate highways and air transportation, attendees could now easily travel to

another destination to meet. Audio visual equipment has come a long way since the creation of the broadcast microphone in 1942, the walkie-talkie in 1958, the fax machine and the personal computer in 1983, to the internet, digital camera, spider screens, and the high tech lights and projectors we have today (Carey, 2007).

It was not only the increased need for meetings and events that caused event planning positions to become more prominent. Corporations and associations realized how much work went into planning these meetings and events and how many details there were to take care of. Their employees no longer had the time to plan these meetings and events in addition to their own workloads. Thus, came the birth of the career as a professional meeting and event planner (“Development of event”, 2011).

This emergence of the new career path also created the demand for educational opportunities in the meeting and events field. The awareness of the hospitality industry increased in 1922, when the Cornell School of Hotel Administration was founded at the request of the American Hotel Association. The goals of the founders of the program were to create an academic institution that would provide an area of study for those who had interest in the hotel and restaurant industry (Cornell University, 2011). It did not take long for this career path to become established and for individuals who graduated from the hotel school to become front runners for prominent jobs in the industry.

With the Cornell Hotel School as an example, other universities located in popular meeting and event destinations started developing similar programs. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) began offering hotel classes in the 1960’s and within twenty years the program had evolved to have three undergraduate degree program tracks and even started

offering a master's degree. In 1998, there were said to be 2,500 students enrolled in the program representing 42 states and 39 countries (UNLV Web Communications, 2011).

In 2000, the University of Central Florida opened the doors to its Rosen College of Hospitality Management. This school was unlike any other. It offered hospitality undergraduate degrees, but instead of only offering electives in event management, the college offered a specialized degree in the field. This was a huge milestone for the meetings and events industry and has done exemplary things for spreading the word about the industry (Bottoroff, n.d.).

Not only are educational opportunities available for those who are enrolled in college programs, but there are also certifications available for meeting and event planners based on their experience in the industry (Carey, 2007). The Convention Industry Council (CIC) formed a council whose purpose was to design a certification program for meeting planners while educating them about the industry. This Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation has become quite prominent in the industry and is a way to acknowledge one's skills and dedication to meeting and event planning (Convention Industry Council, 2005).

Meeting and event planning professionals each share personality traits and characteristics that make them the correct fit for this career. Meeting and event planners are typically extremely organized, excellent at multi-tasking and time management, quick thinkers, creative, problem solvers, enjoy working with and being around people, speak and write eloquently, have superb customer service skills and have the ability to work well creating and maintaining a budget ("Personality traits", n.d.). Other skills that are helpful for meeting and event planners are management of others, meaning they have the ability to delegate duties, motivate others and lead team members. Implementation planning, knowledge about technical equipment, coordinating

multiple tasks at once, food knowledge, and contract negotiation are also skills that are necessary for meeting and event planners (Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002).

Working in the meetings and events industry can also be physically demanding for planners. Standing, lifting, walking and kneeling are all everyday aspects of a career in event planning. Traveling regularly is another common task for meeting and event planners. It can be daunting to be in three cities in one week, not to mention simultaneously planning three events. The pressure of deadlines and keeping track of hundreds of details can also be just as exhausting (Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002).

Though these skills can be linked to almost any meetings and events career, there are three prominent career paths for meeting and event planners. Association, corporate and independent planners are those who are most recognized in the industry. However, they are each different in their own respects and each require a meeting and event planner with qualities and traits unique to that planner sub-type.

Association Meeting and Event Planner

An association meeting and event planner coordinates events for associations of various types and sizes. Associations tend to focus their events on the interests of their members and what they can do to bring together a group that has a connection through a career, hobby, or common interest. The meetings and events that an association holds are typically attended at will and are not mandatory for attendees to go to. Some have a trade show component and educational sessions while others are based solely around social gatherings. There is no set formula for the size of an association function or the reason for the gathering. Associations can be anything from the American Lung Association, the National Restaurant Association, Meeting Professionals International, the National Association of Broadcasters, to the Craft and Hobby

Association, the Beekeepers Association, the National Association of Youth Sports and even the Harry Potter Alliance. There truly is an association out there for everyone. That being said, it also takes certain personality characteristics for an event planner to work for an association. Since associations are so focused on what they are, they have to produce events in the same manner. The themes of the events will be just as unique as the association. If it is a medical association, the education and venue choices may need to be similar to something that has to do with medicine or surgery, while a livestock association may always need to meet outdoors. As a meeting and event planner, it is in one's best interest to be sure they get along with the personality types of those who would associate themselves with that particular organization (Toh, Peterson, & Foster, 2007).

Out of the 80 million people who attended meetings in the U.S. in 2001, 16 million of these were said to attend association meetings. These meetings exist with the interest of the association's members in mind and tend to be more family friendly, and education focused. The overall skills needed for this type of meeting and event planner fit the normative definition, but things start to change when the details of these skills are researched a bit more. These differences in skills are driven by the difference in overall goals between association meetings and those of corporations (Toh, et al., 2007).

Negotiating pricing for room blocks, and food and beverage are two areas that are different for an association planner. Association meeting and event planners are looking for a meeting destination that is family friendly, easy to get to, and has plenty of options for dining, attractions, and other activities. When negotiating room blocks, association planners have to be careful of their attrition percentages and prefer complimentary rooms instead of an overall percent discount off the bill (Convention Industry Council, 2005). Association planners have a

hard time with room blocks because they have no real control over where attendees stay. They cannot force them to stay within the block, so it is an estimated science for association planners to determine room block size when negotiating contracts. Marketing for association events also falls heavily on association meeting and event planners because it is their responsibility to spread the word about the events they are producing to generate a buzz to help drive attendance numbers. As previously mentioned, it is not mandatory for members to attend association events, so creativity within the events themselves and marketing strategies are essential to reaching attendance goals (Toh, et al., 2007).

Association meetings are also focused more on generating revenue than corporate or independent events are. In order to make a profit it is important for the planner to accurately budget their events. They need to take into consideration the costs they can charge attendees and the hard costs they are incurring. These costs can often be minimized with the help of sponsors and paid vendors. Recruitment of sponsors and vendors is also another area that association meeting and event planners need to have strength in. One misstep in a budget can be detrimental to the overall return on the event (ROE), so it is imperative that the budgets are created with accuracy (Convention Industry Council, 2005).

Association events are not only evaluated on how much revenue they raise. This may be important to the actual association itself, but the success of the overall meeting or event is determined by the attendees. They are the ones who decide whether or not they learned what they had anticipated and if they enjoyed themselves while attending (Toh, et al., 2007). Though logistics is predominately the main task of a meeting and event planner, the number two role of an association planner is education planning. Having a planner on staff with strength in and a

passion for educational presentation is extremely important, especially considering that education is one of the main ROE's of the gathering (Korn, 2008).

Corporate Meeting and Event Planner

Meeting and event planners who are employed by a corporation or organization to plan their meetings and events are often involved with sales and training seminars, in-house information meetings, corporation wide updates, and incentive trips (Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002). Corporations that have planners on staff can be large or small. Darden Restaurants and the KPMG accounting firm both have planners on staff to aid with planning product reveals, corporate initiatives, quarterly updates, and training sessions. The meeting and event planners within corporations often arrange travel for executives and conduct registration for their meetings and events as well. This group, unlike the association market, is typically required to attend their meetings and events making attendance numbers easier to estimate. Corporate audiences tend to be captive and attentive because the information they are obtaining relates directly to their job, rather than a hobby or interest. (Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002).

Meetings and events for corporations are not always large. In fact, meeting planners for corporations plan more events per year than most associations. In 2002, 52 million out of the 80 million events held in the U.S. were corporate meetings (Toh, et al., 2007). The reason corporate meetings are the majority of this statistic is because corporate meetings tend to be smaller and more frequent. An association may plan one or two, five day events a year, while a corporate planner may plan over 100 meetings a year with some even occurring on the same day. This increased frequency in events also means that there is a shorter lead time to plan. That being

said, a corporate meeting and event planner needs to be highly organized and have confidence in their ability to multitask and meet deadlines (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009).

Another strength that is essential for corporate planners to have is in negotiation and budgeting. Over 50% of corporate meeting and event planners' major responsibilities fall under tasks that involve negotiating (Korn, 2008). Where negotiating skills were important to association planners in that they needed to be cognizant of the attrition rates, a corporate planners' main negotiation concern is the rate of the overall hotel room night and the costs of food and beverage for the meeting. Corporations have budgets for these events that must be used as a guideline throughout the entire event planning process. It is especially important to budget correctly in a corporation because the group is not meeting to make money; they are meeting out of necessity, and need to be aware of their spending. Holding meetings within their means and not being frivolous are two key factors. Corporate planners need to be aware of the worth of the services they are purchasing and be confident they have negotiated effectively to get the best rate possible for the group. Excessive spending on meetings and events can lead to an overall loss in profit for an organization, making it the meeting planner's responsibility that this does not happen (Toh, et al., 2007).

Not only do corporate meeting and event planners have a heightened awareness of the budgeting and negotiating process while planning their events, they also need to take into consideration the opinions of the organization's shareholders and corporate rules and bylaws. Where association meetings tend to be more fun and informal, corporate events are usually held in a business type atmosphere with little to no décor. There is not room in the budget for much creativity with food and beverage selections either. Meetings are held with the purpose of setting goals, planning, or sharing information. They are concise and to the point, meaning that planners

need to be straight forward, organized, and ready to plan in a limited amount of time (Toh, et al., 2007).

Independent Meeting and Event Planner

Independent meeting and event planners are a different type of planner in that they are just as their name suggests, independent. Meaning they have the freedom to choose what types of events they plan and for whom. They can take on as much or as little work as they please and have the ability to make themselves available only to a small niche market if they choose. However, segmenting your clientele to a certain degree can potentially have negative consequences (Farmer, 2007). On one hand, an independent planner can better use their talents by creating a niche for themselves and specializing only in weddings or social events, however, this also means that they need to work extra hard to market themselves to gain business. If they were open to planning various types of meetings and events they could take on virtually any client that approached them. Developing personal relationships with vendors is especially important to the independent planner, as the stronger the relationship with a vendor the larger the discount they are able to receive, and the greater the potential for the planner to be compensated personally because they are saving their clients more money (Farmer, 2007).

Comparable to association and corporate meeting planners, the beginning stages of planning an event as an independent planner is to work with the client to determine the purpose of the event and if there is any particular messaging that needs to be conveyed. The difference with independent planners is that they need to be extremely flexible from event to event and take the time to learn the intricacies of each client and what they are looking for their event to achieve. It is like starting with a completely clean slate for each event. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009).

Independent meeting planners are considered catch all planners and go to people for planning out of the ordinary events. They have the responsibility of organizing the details from A-Z. The reason people sometimes prefer to hire an independent planner is because they themselves do not have the time, experience, or contacts to plan something of this nature on their own. They hire an independent meeting and event planner to take on that role for them so they do not have to worry about handling it themselves (Farmer, 2007).

One distinct differentiation between independent planners and the other sub-types is that they are able to determine their own salaries. They are the ones who have the responsibility of running the business so, they are also responsible for determining their compensation. Planners can choose to pay themselves based on salary, commission or a set per hour rate. This may seem like a benefit to some, but it takes additional business tact and skill to be in charge of keeping the finances for your own company along with handling the budgeting for all of your clients. The accounting skill level for independent planners is much higher than any other type of planner (Farmer, 2007).

Independent planners, like association and corporate planners, need to be secure in their abilities to act quickly, on short notice while keeping the overall goals and objectives of their clients in mind. They need to have confidence in their abilities to not only organize multiple types of events simultaneously, but they also need to believe in their product so that they can effectively sell it to prospective clients. This aspect is one of the only characteristics that is unique to the independent planner. Association and corporate planners do not need to advertise their services and grow a client base, but an independent planner does. Without this type of self - marketing and word of mouth advertising, independent meeting and event planners would be struggling to stay afloat. It is essential for their success to make time to advertise their services

and promote themselves within their target markets (Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002). Without partaking in marketing initiatives it is difficult for an independent planner to gain a solid group of clientele. Some may view this added step as a negative when looking at this as a potential career choice because it will take away time they could be spending planning and executing events. However, without this step it is virtually impossible for any new business venture to succeed, especially in the hospitality industry. Though it is certainly an option to hire someone to help with the sales and marketing efforts, as a new or small company there may not be capital available to use towards something like this (Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002).

Other Types of Planners

In addition to the three aforementioned types of meeting and event planners, there are several other types that have staked their claim in the meetings and events industry. It is not uncommon for most non-for profit agencies and charities to employ someone to aid with their fundraising events. Logistically, these events are similar to those mentioned previously, with the addition of raising money, cutting costs and trying to get as much donated as possible. Often planners for non-for profit agencies are either part time or volunteers because the capital is not there to pay someone to do the work (Careers-in-Event-Planning.com, 2011).

A number of government agencies have someone on staff to take care of their meetings and events as well. The difference here is that as a planner you need to adhere to certain governmental policies, ethics codes, and even a raised level of confidentiality and security (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009).

The downturn in the economy helped with the emergence of the third party meeting planner. A 3rd party meeting and event planner is someone who works for a company that employs meeting and event planners who are then outsourced to organizations that are looking to

hire a meeting planner for one large annual event or to handle all meetings (Convention Industry Council,2005). The interesting part about a 3rd party planner is that they typically have several accounts they work for, depending on the work load per account. Third party planners even sometimes work in-house within organizations if the work load is large enough. The benefit to this is that if a company needs help with one aspect of their meeting or all of it, they can contract a 3rd party planner to help with this. Large companies focusing on this type of industry are HelmsBriscoe and Conference Direct (Toh, et al., 2007).

Conclusion

In 2008, meeting and event planners held 56,600 jobs in the U.S. and the industry is not expected to stop its growth there (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). That statistic is proof that the industry is strong and that a career in meeting and event planning plays an integral role within the workplace. Meeting and event planners are predominately found working in one of three settings; association, corporate or as an independent business. Though the skills and traits needed for each of these career paths share similarities, they are each different in their own right and require certain strengths unique to that sub-type. A meeting and event planner for an association will be more focused on leisure activities, where a corporate planner may have to plan events with little to no notice, and an independent planner could be planning events like a wedding or bar mitzvah. The experience needed for each of these positions can come from work-life experiences or from educational degree and certificate programs (Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002). Overall, meeting and event planners for associations, corporations, and independent agencies may seem similar, but after conducting the literature review on the details of each sub-type it is evident how different they truly are from one another.

Part Three

Introduction

According to a study conducted in 2009, by the U.S. Department of Labor, it is estimated that the employment growth for meeting and event planners is expected to be over 16% between 2008-2018 (Bureau of Labor Statistics). This statistic makes the meeting and events industry one of the fastest growing in the United States. The combination of the upswing in the economy and the increase in national and international business partnerships has helped to increase the demand for organizations and corporations to create their own in-house meetings and events teams (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). That being said, what better time to create a case study based on the career options of a highly demand, up and coming career path.

Methodology

This case study was designed by comparing and contrasting the most prominent meeting planner subtypes; association, corporate, and independent. The study was formulated in this manner to allow those who are already working in the industry an inside look at another part of the business or to provide knowledge to someone who may be looking for information on a potential future career. Most importantly, this case study provides a breakdown of the skills necessary to be a meeting and event planner, while also providing the skills, attributes, and tasks that are unique to each sub-type. Incorporating these differences into the case study was essential for someone who is currently working as one of the planner sub-types and is interested in possibly switching to another sub-type.

The literature review portion of the case study gathered information and researched historical data on careers for meeting and event planners in the hospitality industry. An outline

of each career type was created from this literature review containing details behind each organization in which a particular sub-type was employed.

Results

The collection of resources for the literature review also helped to serve as a way to gather data to further acknowledge the similarities and differences between the three major meeting and event planning sub-types. Tables I-IV serve to help educate the reader on the details of the meeting planner sub-types in categories such as planner characteristics, compensation, educational background, and types of events planned.

Table I provides a list of the prominent skills, traits, and qualities affiliated with association, corporate, and independent meeting planners. After analyzing the table it is evident that the majority of the skills needed are found in each of the sub-types, however, there are several traits that are unique to only one sub-type.

Table I

Comparing and Contrasting Characteristics of the 3 Meeting & Event Planner Subtypes

Skill/Trait/Quality	Association	Corporate	Independent
Budgeting	X	X	X
Site selection	X	X	X
Food & beverage selection	X	X	X
Audio visual familiarity	X	X	X
Education planning	x	X	x
Logistics	X	X	X
Contract negotiation	X	X	X
Goal setting	X	X	X
Ethics	X	X	X
Travel	X	x	x
Marketing	X	x	x
Crisis planning/risk management	X	X	X
Operational business skills			X
Word of mouth referrals			X
Travel arrangements	X	X	X
Public relations	x		X
Trade show management	X	x	
Entertainment arrangements	X	x	X
Multitasking	X	X	X
Management	x	x	X
Active listening	X	X	X
Coordination	X	X	X
American disabilities act knowledge	X	X	X
Staffing/support services	X	x	X
Physical activity (standing, lifting, walking etc.)	X	X	X
Creativity	x	x	X
Recruit volunteers	X		x
Brand awareness	x	X	x
Strategic planning	X	X	X

Note. key: X = always necessary x = sometimes necessary blank = rarely necessary

Sources: Farmer, 2007; Fenich, 2011; Korn, 2008; Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002; Toh, et al., 2007.

Table II shows a comparison between the compensation possibilities of the three planner sub-types. These comparisons are broken down based on an average salary range of planners obtained from a survey done in 2002 and then by how they are typically paid; hourly or salary.

Table II

Compensation comparison between the three planner subtypes

	Association	Corporate	Independent
Average Salary Range	$47,759/yr.	$59,825/yr.	$63,152/yr.
Salary vs. Hourly	Salary/Hourly	Salary	Hourly
Eligible to Receive Commission			X

Note. Source: Meeting and Convention Planners, 2002.

Table III shows a percentage of meeting and event planners who received a professional certificate in meeting and event planning. These percentages are from a survey performed in 2007. By looking at the percentages of planners who received a professional certification, it is apparent that certifications seem to have a greater importance to the independent meeting planners. The reasoning behind this most likely stems from the desire of an independent planner to have validity behind their claim to knowledge and experience. Attending a class or training and obtaining a certificate to prove your acquisition of knowledge can be an important factor for an independent planner in attracting clientele. It was not until about fifteen years ago that planners began to benefit from these industry certifications, so it is astounding that within such a short amount of time that there is enough research available to yield such results (Goldblatt, 2000).

Table III also shows that independent meeting professionals have a higher interest in becoming members of a meeting and event planning professional organization. The reasoning behind this statistic is similar to that of the professional certificate. Being a member of an

organization representing one's profession demonstrates that they have interest in the industry, do what they can to stay current with the industry trends and are in touch with other industry individuals. Independent planners also have the advantage of creating their own schedules and budgeting to cover the costs of being a part of these professional organizations, which could be another reason why their participation percentage is a bit higher than the other types. Corporate and association planners may enter into their positions with-established vendor and meeting connections based on the organization they represent. For an independent planner these relationships have to be formed individually, making it additionally important to become active in a professional organization.

Table III

Educational background comparison between the three planner sub-types

Education Received	Association	Corporate	Independent
Education - Professional Certification	12%	12%	27%
Belong to professional organization	12.5%	12.5%	50%

Note. Source: Farmer, 2007.

It is becoming increasingly popular for meeting and event planners to attend school to receive a degree in Hospitality Management, Event Management or Meeting Management. Various schools across the country, such as Cornell University in upstate New York, the University of Central Florida, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, have seen so much interest develop in these degree programs that they have created separate colleges within the university to cater directly to these hospitality students. In fact, each of these universities also offers Masters and Doctoral degree programs in hospitality. Considering how new this level of education is in the meeting and event field, the data comparing what planner sub-type some of these graduates may be working in today is minimal. If the degree programs continue to receive

a consistent increase in the level of student interest they receive each year, it will not be too long until this data becomes readily available.

Table IV shows a list of common tasks for association and corporate planners. The chart shows how one planner sub-type would act in one situation and how the other would act in the same situation. This compare and contrast chart does not include tasks from an independent meeting and event planner because of the variability in the events that they plan. As mentioned in the literature review section of the paper, independent planners can work on events in the corporate, association, and social setting, so the characteristics of the events they plan have a high level of variability depending on the type of project they are working on.

Table IV

Comparison between the characteristics of meetings and events for planner sub-types

Association	Corporate
generates revenue	cuts costs to stay within budget
laid-back	formal
want comp rooms	want meeting cost reduction
limited technology use	uses a lot of technology
location based on destination and extra-curricular activities available	location based on price and ease of access
family friendly	employee based
frequently held overseas	rarely held overseas
evaluated based on whether or not the attendees enjoyed themselves	evaluated based on overall cost savings
not flexible with rescheduling	flexible with rescheduling
"hot dates" don't make a difference in date selection	takes advantage of "hot dates" when booking meetings
more acceptable to accept perks from venues	cannot accept gifts from vendors
cannot force attendance because attendees are members of the organization by choice and events are not mandatory	can force attendance because attendees are employees of organization

Note. Source: Toh, et al., 2007.

At the beginning of this professional paper there were several assumptions that were made based on the initial research and previous industry experience. Most of which were proven to be incorrect after performing additional research on the profession. Initially, each of the sub-types seemed to be quite similar, almost so similar in fact, that there was a time that there may have not been enough distinction between the sub-types to justify creating the professional paper for others in the field to learn and benefit from. What was learned was that each of the planner sub-types; association, corporate, and independent, share many of the same characteristics used to perform their jobs, but there are several key traits that are unique to each type that one would

need to have in order to truly excel at that position. The same was to be found for the strengths and skill sets for each position. Overall, they seem almost identical, however, they are each used in a different manner and for a unique reason depending on the sub-type. This makes it important for each planner to understand why they need to show strength in certain skills for one sub-type more so than another.

The differences between the three meeting and event planner sub-types were interesting to discover throughout the research process. The quantity of events planned within each industry can range from one or two large, four day conferences to 100 hour long meetings, coupled with educational training, annual employee outings or incentive trips or even down to a wedding, fundraising gala or planning a birthday party. The number of meetings and events planned per year can be just as diverse as the types of events being planned by each sub-type. That being said, the diverse quantity of events also yields separate goals and returns on investments needed to consider each event a success. Whether an event makes a profit, serves as an educational tool, or is created simply to entertain an audience, the meeting or event was founded on the premise that something would be achieved as an outcome of holding and attending the event.

Whether someone is a veteran in the industry looking to make a shift in their career path or just making their entrance into the industry, having the skills and attributes mentioned to be a successful meeting and event planner are certainly helpful, but being passionate about what one does can take a career to a whole different level. Being passionate about your career and having a vested interest in the meetings and events being planned is a trait that cannot be duplicated. It is this extra excitement and dedication one possess that enables them to go that extra mile, work well under pressure, do whatever it takes to produce a positive outcome for all parties involved, and meet the goals and objectives created for the meeting or event. If someone is passionate

about what they do, it is evident in the way they carry themselves, showing a true interest in what they do and being genuinely concerned about the outcome of what they are planning. Confucius said, “Choose a job you love and you will never work a day in your life”. There is much truth to this quote in that if you enjoy what you do, it will not seem like work at all. Having a passion such as this for your work will only lead to a positive attitude, enjoyable workplace environment, and successful outcomes at the meetings and events produced.

Recommendations

The goal for researching and writing this professional paper was for it to be able to serve as a tool for those in the meeting and events industry to gain additional knowledge about other types of meeting and event planning careers. It is hopeful that after reading this paper one will be equipped with knowledge about the skills and traits needed to be a successful meeting and event planner and what attributes separate one sub-type from another. This paper may also serve as a tool for someone currently in school and looking to possibly branch out into the meeting and events industry or someone simply looking to gain more knowledge about a career path that may interest them.

After reading through the literature review section and analyzing the charts, it is recommended that the following self-reflective questions be answered to help further analyze one’s personal strengths and weaknesses. These questions were derived from the research and are meant to help someone whether they are new to the industry or looking to gain more information about it, recognize traits about themselves that will help determine which sub-type of meeting and event planning may fit their personality type and skill set the best.

- Decide what you are personally passionate about.
    - Is it social or business focused?
- Do you like predictability in your job?
- Would it bother you if you planned the same event more than once?
- If you could choose between planning 40 smaller intimate meetings or 2 large annual meetings, which would you choose?
- Do you want to be your own boss or have direction from someone?
- Do you like working on a team or by yourself?
- Do you make conversations with others easily?
- Do you enjoy working with and being around people?
- Are you creative?
- Are you good at math?
- Is it easier for you to see the “big picture” of something or would you rather focus on the “right here right now”?
- Do you handle stress well?
- Are you organized?
- Can you work with short timelines and firm deadlines?
- How are you with time management?
- Can you juggle working on multiple meetings and events at once?
- Are you okay with working nights and weekends?
- Do you consider yourself detail oriented?
- Are you currently working within one of the subtypes?

If so…

- Make a list of what you like and dislike about your current sub-type.
- Does this list mirror any of the other sub-types?
  - If so, do you feel that you would be better off switching companies within your sub-type or possibly switching sub-types completely?

Once this internal reflection has taken place and one has been able to come up with a determination on what sub-type they may be interested in or better suited for it is also recommended that they do some additional research to make sure their next career move is truly something they are interested in. To gain this extra sense of security, it would be extremely beneficial for interested individuals to contact meeting and event planners who currently work within the sub-type they are most interested in or best suited for and ask if they would have a few minutes to talk about their career. Asking current meeting and event planners to talk about what they do on a day to day basis is a great way to try to get a feel for how this relates to their particular company culture, their personality and their skill set as a meeting and event planner. Partaking in these one on one interviews will help provide validity to the types of traits and characteristics needed to work within each of the meeting and event planning sub-types.

Attending a meeting and event planning professional meeting can also help someone gain contacts within the industry, is a great way to meet others who may be in the same situation, as well as meet people who can serve as mentors. Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is a great source for current and potential meeting planners, as well as the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA).

Conclusion

The demand for meeting and event planners, like most industries, fluctuates with the economy. However, a survey conducted by Successful Meetings found that 96.7% of CEO's rate the meetings and events produced by meeting planners within their organization as playing an integral role in fulfilling their company's mission (Stark, 2005). It follows that there will always be a position deemed necessary within the workplace for meeting and event planners. Whether that is within an association, a corporation, or as an independent planner, regardless of the state of the economy, people will continue to meet and gather for business and social functions.

The tables are a visual interpretation of the meeting and events sub-types helping to provide a greater understanding of the similarities and differences between the three sub-types. Whether it is analyzing the characteristics of each type, comparing the compensation ranges, the education required, or the detailed aspects of planning the meetings and events, there is certainly much to learn.

The recommendations section serves as an area for self-reflection where questions are asked to determine which meeting and event planner sub-type one may be best suited for. These questions can also help to determine an area where one may find their strengths. Or a window of opportunity may appear as something is learned about oneself that may have not have been known without taking the time for self-reflection.

This professional paper gives a detailed description of one of the nation's fastest growing career paths, meeting and event planning (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). Through the use of a detailed literature review, three of the industries' most common sub-types; association, corporate and independent meeting and event planners are explained thoroughly. The characteristics and traits of each of these sub-types are compared and contrasted in a way

designed to help current and potential meeting and event professionals determine whether they may have an interest in working within any of these sub-types. The self-analysis questions encourage someone who is potentially looking to work within a different sub-type to gain information about themselves, what they are looking for in a career, and what some of their strengths and weaknesses are as a current or potential meeting and event planner.

Knowledge is power. The more information known about yourself, your character strengths, and what you are looking to gain from a career, will only help in the journey toward finding another or even a new career path in which you may be better suited or more challenged.

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