

SO, YOU WANT TO WORK IN EVENTS?

By Britnee Packwood

Let's Start the Conversation

Sometimes it's hard to know where to begin. So often am I asked, "How did you know you wanted to be in the events industry?" I normally launch into this semi-elaborate recount of working for the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival during my time in college. It was an experience unlike any other: immersive, intense, challenging, but most of all invigorating. It was during that time I knew working in the events industry was where I wanted to be, and I didn't care what it took to make that happen.

Fortunately for me, that passion and desire has propelled me into a place in my career where I am very happy. I've met some amazing people in the industry, some of whom have become dear friends and mentors. However, this isn't the case for everyone. I'll be honest, I'm still a youngster and fresh on the scene (I just turned 26 this January). I started my career in 2011, and I still have a lot to learn. I was lucky enough to have some guiding hands help me traverse the industry landscape, and I want to give back.

We have a new generation making their way to the industry gates. I'll level with you, sometimes I don't even know what they are saying, but I want to use my experiences to help these "newbies." We all know experience is what puts us ahead, but practical and honest advice can also make the difference. Hence the purpose and theme of this column: "So, you want to work in events?"

That was a question I heard countless times over the course of interviewing for positions. It's a question I am now finding myself asking college students nearing graduation. I listen to people's responses, their reasons and ultimate goals. It's often followed up with my own question, "How are you going to get there?" Many younger people have no clue, or have a semi-developed guideline

they are clinging too dear life. My first piece of advice is to not cling to those plans. Keep your dreams and goals, but throw the turn-by-turn road map out the window. I learned quickly the events industry is a fast-paced and ever changing landscape. By all means, have a contingency plan, but remember... that will probably change too.

My second piece of advice, write down your dreams and goals. Use those to keep yourself accountable. You would be surprised how much further you'll be willing to push yourself. Remember, no goal is too small and no dream is too big. I've recently only discovered the importance of this within the last two years; it really has made a difference and I feel more driven and connected to my work.

My third piece of advice, keep a running record of everything you do. We're not perfect, and we all make mistakes—whether we want to admit it or not. If you keep a record of the tasks you've completed for an event and something went wrong, use that record as your tool to improve. This is something I'll discuss further, but keep this in mind as you begin taking on new projects (extra points if you start now regardless of where you are on current project).

As we move through the topics in this column, I am excited to explore and offer

advice based on my industry experiences and those of others. I certainly hope this column will be a catalyst for the younger people in the industry, and offer itself as a conversation starter. We're all moving into uncharted territory as our industry changes, some more than others; I am happy to lend my voice and I am happy to hear from you!

If you find there is a topic you wish discussed, please don't hesitate to contact me. I can easily be reached via email, britnee.packwood@gmail.com. I also welcome your thoughts on the topics and look forward to starting new conversations.

Britnee Packwood is currently Director of the National Lentil Festival in Pullman, WA. She started her career in events during her undergrad at the University of Idaho where she received a B.S. in Public Relations and a B.S. in Conservation Social Science. She is currently working on obtaining an MBA focusing on Music Business. When she isn't coordinating events one can find her listening to vinyl, knitting or enjoying the great outdoors. She can be reached at britnee.packwood@gmail.com.