

FOUNDATION



In the Eye of the Hurricane

I'm writing this on April 6 at 11:26am. There's 17 days, 10 hours and 2 minutes until Thunder Over Louisville. 23 days, 20 hours and 2 minutes until the start of the KDF miniMarathon/Marathon Races. Let's just call it an even 31 days until the Kentucky Derby when this whole 2016 Festival will end. In between now and the next 31 days, the Kentucky Derby Festival will produce another 65 events on top of the 5 we've already done!

With e-mail piling up in between staff members stopping by my office to ask questions while at the same time answering phone calls regarding insurance issues, I decided to take a moment and breath and write this article. I'll confess that Nia Hovde at the IFEA Headquarters in Boise gave me an "out." She said that if it's too much I can skip the summer issue of "ie" magazine. I'll also confess that I almost took her up on it.

But here's the deal and it's something that I believe about each and everyone one of us. No matter how busy we are or swamped we become at home, work and in life, we always – and I mean ALWAYS – have time for things that really matter to us. Whether it's a personal pleasure like finding 50 minutes late in the evening to crack a beer and watch another episode in my House of Cards binge, or moving things around so I can go to my daughter's gymnastics class on Saturday morning, I'm going to find time for what I want to do. That's why I'm going to pound out 700 words while I'm in the middle of chaos, because to me, the IFEA and its Foundation are important. I'll try to explain why in the next few paragraphs below.

I walked into the 2007 IFEA Convention in Atlanta without any idea of what to expect or, if I'm being completely honest, why I was even there. I was new to this festival & event industry thing, having just emerged from the world of professional politics with a multitude of scars and a healthy dose of cynicism about Washington. From the moment I attended my first session, I knew I had met "my people" and I started to vigorously grow my network. Insurance professionals like Carol Porter from Haas & Wilkerson,

who introduced me to a number of key folks working in risk management and who has also personally taught me lot about keeping people safe at my events. Meeting mentors like Peter Ashwin, who is considered one of the very best in the safety and security field, having managed and worked events at the very pinnacle of our industry; namely the Olympic Games. Listening to leaders like Bill Flinn from the Pasadena Tournament of Roses, who taught me that patience and perseverance and respect for the traditions of our events are valuable lessons for personal professional growth. I've made some of the best friends I could ever ask for, like Mary Ann Dilling and Pam Sartory, who I know I could call and at the drop of a hat they'd be there to offer counsel or help.

Look, the paragraph above is not just name-dropping some of the top event professionals in the world. It's about showing you that with time, focus and a little effort, you can play your cards right and build an Outlook contact list of people who can help you grow professionally. Whether it's landing that next job up the ladder, or needing some helpful advice on an issue you've run across, the IFEA and its network of industry leaders are there for the taking!

So going back to 2007 and Atlanta. After the boiler room of politics, I had this perception that I was walking into Disneyland. What I discovered walking out of the Convention is that I had to give this festival thing a shot. I met whip-smart people who were driven to succeed in a fast paced and competitive environment. I started building a network of professionals who are as accomplished as anyone you'd ever meet in any industry. It's all a give

and take. I've been asked to help and I will continue to ask for help in return.

What's this got to do with the IFEA Foundation and my role as its Board Chair? Well, I'd tell you that taking a risk and introducing yourself to someone at this year's Convention might lead to a conversation. Then another conversation. Then another. Which leads to building a network and gaining a foothold in an international association of professionals. The IFEA Foundation's mission is to grow and promote the IFEA. The money we raise helps to make the Convention bigger and better and provides scholarships to those who might not otherwise be able to attend. Maybe, just maybe, one of those scholarship attendees starts a conversation and builds a network. What if they eventually become the next Director of Operations at Disneyland? I'd say mission accomplished!

With only five months to go until Tucson 2016, my plan is to get through the next 31 days, take a breath, and start preparing for the Convention. My team and I have an auction to plan and in the words of an infamous presidential candidate, it's going to be huuuuugggeeee! Just 172 days, 6 hours and 57 minutes to go!!

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