Planning a Productive Career Path: An Online Resource Guide for Texas State University Freshmen Interested in an Event Planning Profession

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**BACKGROUND**

An event planning career is believed to be one of the most rewarding, yet most stressing as compared to other careers in the world. Thus, a person who is interested in pursuing a career in event planning needs to be informed of the problems they are likely to face (Allen, 2008). The most important lesson for a freshman pursuing the career to take home is that it takes more than just a desire for a great party to succeed in the fast-paced industry, one must have an eye for detail and the ability to handle constant deadlines and pressure (Boshkanova and Goldblatt, 2017). Several gaps have been identified during the research that employers feel that are the reasons why graduates are not able to secure the jobs. The first gap that 85% percent of the employers pointed is lack of required skills. Most employers pointed out that event planning requires someone who has the necessary skills which include organizational skills, negotiation skills, customer service skills, and finally budgeting skills.

The second gap that 98% of future employers agreed was a real problem was the lack of experience. They explained that it is regrettable that even though there are openings for graduates to gain experience through volunteering and internships most graduates have not taken advantage of this. They were categorical that they would fill a position in their company with someone who at least has two years’ minimum experience. The reason majority of them cited is that the industry is very sensitive and no one can afford to hire someone with no experience because mistakes in the industry are very costly and will cost them customers.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this paper is to research on what aspiring event planners should expect when they go to the field. The research will shed light on the gaps found in the profession and how to fix them. The paper will provide the freshmen interested in event planning profession with an Online Research Guideline Also the paper will address the various gaps that are there in the event planning profession. Below are some of the gaps that came up.

Problem #1 - Lack of Skills

According to the social tables, a site dealing with event planning, around 85% of the future employers in the event planning business cited lack of the required skills as the main reason as to why most graduates are finding it difficult to get jobs after they have graduated. The first skill the employers are looking for is someone who excels in negotiations. This skill is very important because this helps when it comes to bidding for jobs (Chalip, 2017). One can gain the skill by learning communication skills that will persuade a client to choose the services of the company one is working for. According to Lucy, the owner of Lucille event planning services, this can be overcome by volunteering so that one can learn the art of closing a deal. The second skill that most employers are looking for is someone who has great organizational skills, this skill is necessary because event planning requires a lot of planning and organization if the event is to be successful may it be a corporate or social event.

Most employers in this sector are looking for people who have excellent organizational skills and ability to pay attention to detail because they will be required to handle several projects at a go and while at it be required to set appropriate goals so as to achieve goals set for the event (Allen, 2008). This skill can be learned through taking courses that have a management aspect in them. Also, most employers are looking for people who have the ability to multitask, event planning has many aspects running together and for one to excel in this field this is a required skill. According to Kathy Piech, the owner of Your Dream Day company the next skill that employers are looking for is the ability to budget because one will be required to carefully monitor expenses throughout the planning process and also adhere to established projects and also they will be required to come up with new and innovative ways to reduce costs associated with planning events. Also, 95% of the companies visited on the website also pointed out that one more important thing that the graduates lack is skills to keep up with the technology; they suggested that the graduates should enroll for courses that offer courses that enable them to keep with the technology such as the use of space planning software. Lastly, employers are looking for employees with excellent customer service as this is the backbone of any business and especially event planning as this is how they get clients through referrals and repeat clients (Vivek and Hazod, 2018),

The problem needs to be addressed because the event planning field needs professionals. Also, graduates need to get jobs after they graduate and as such need advice and guidance on how to acquire skills that are required in the field. This can be achieved by volunteering in event planning companies even as they wait to complete their studies. This, in turn, will result in them gaining the experience that is necessary for the field.

When professionals lack the necessary skills in event planning then a lot of shortcomings will be experienced. According to Allen (2008), the shortcomings include: the events will lack proper planning and organizations. Secondly, the company will lack customers since the people lack the negotiations skills that are important when marketing and closing a deal. Thirdly, there will be complaints right, left, and center because the clients are not satisfied with the services provided. Also, the company will have a problem with the budget since the employee cannot be able to work with the resources allocated to that particular event. According to Vivek and Hazod, (2018), there is a likelihood of the company experiencing staffing issues because the event planner was unable to outsource the right guys since in event planning one needs the support of other professions such as deejays, caterers, interior designers among others.

Problem #2 - Lack of Experience

Most employers in the event planning business require a graduate to have 2 years plus experience in the field before they can consider employing a person. 98% of the employers agreed that experience is necessary. They mainly pointed out the fact that the field needs someone who at least knows what happens on the ground because a little mistake can mess the company in a big way (Chaplin, 2017). Also, they noted that they require a person who requires little or no supervision. Someone with experience in the field will be able to think on their feet. Since some issues need to be addressed on the spot without much consultation (Vivek and Hazod,2018), This is where one is required to use creativity and innovation to sort out the issues that arise when one is working on an event. Although the reason for this requirement is understandable it’s a real problem for the fresh graduate looking for a placement since they have not had an opportunity to practice.

It is important to address the problem because the graduates need to be given a chance to practice their profession that is if they are to gain experience in this sector. Most employers are not willing to give a chance to fresh graduates because they don’t want the responsibility that comes with mentoring the new entrants in the profession. They argue that their plates are full with work already. Starting out in the career is the most difficult yet the most important part of the career. This is where the new entrant gets the hands-on experience in the field. This issue needs to be addressed so that students still desire to pursue the career. The gap can be addressed by the colleges that offer this courses going out of their way to partner with the event planning companies so that they can offer their students internship opportunities after they graduate.

The problem has a negative effect on the graduates because they lose hope in ever making it in the career and so majority end up choosing other career paths. This is because it is the desire of every graduate to get a fulfilling career after graduation mainly because they have invested a lot of resources to ensure that they succeed in the career. Also, the graduates will depend on the career as a source of income.

Primary Audience

According to Zavera et.al, (2016), when writing a research paper, it is important to identify the audience because one is able to adapt the findings to suit them. The primary audience is the Freshmen of Texas University through the Student Event Planners Association. The association will be instrumental as they will give the exact number of freshmen pursuing the course in event planning. The audience is important because as they begin their career they need to know the challenges in the career.

Also, the group has been ignored for quite a long time. The online guideline will be important because it will enable them to anticipate the challenges and know how to counter them. The group is affected by the gaps because after graduation they are going to be faced with the same problem of not having the desired skills and experience hence missing the opportunity to gain access in the companies and this will result to them not being successful in this field. Event planning has several classifications and the freshman needs to understand whether their focus is on associate planning, corporate event planning, government planning or non-event planning (Allen, 2008). The other important thing to focus on is do they know what information they are supposed to have on their resumes to land the job in the event planning companies.

At the same time, do they have an idea on how to network with the professionals who are already in the field? Also, do they know that in order to gain experience they need to have experience in the field? Are they willing to contend with the pressures that come with pursuing a career in the event planning business which include having to put in extra hours including working in the evenings and on weekends, tough clients who only will only expect their work to be 100%, do they have the passion to do the work, are they good at multi-tasking and organizing, are they ready for long commitments. The online guideline will take both male and female students who are between 18-20 years. Their areas of focus should be General Studies, Public Relations, Hospitality, and Communication. The information will be sourced from the survey that will be sent out by SEPA to the freshmen to answer and also enquiring from the freshmen those who are interested in pursuing the career.

Secondary Audience

The secondary audience would be the Student Event Planners Association which is a professional organization that was formed at Texas State in 2009 and its mission is to cater for the millennials in the event planning and hospitality industry gain experience and knowledge, develop skills and also build networks. According to SEPA (2018), they have several chapters and Texas is among them and the university in the chapter include Texas State University, Texas Tech University, University of Mary-Hardin Baylor and University of North Texas. They are an important secondary audience because the students pursuing the career go to them for advice so they need to be harmed with the full information. The nest important secondary audience is the university management. This is because they have a role to play when it comes to supporting the student get placements this through networking with the event planning companies even though it is just a simple internship (Bonshnakova and GoldBlatt, 2017). This will help the students build their resumes so that when they complete their studies they can be able to get jobs easily.

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