



Q&A with Emily Dietrich: PMCA's "20 in their Twenties" Honouree

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This October, the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) revealed its "20 in their Twenties" class of 2019, honouring the business event community's top young professionals.

Emily Dietrich, Manager of Business Events with the Niagara Parks Commission, was one of the industry trailblazers named among this year's honourees. We sat down with her to discuss the business event management field, her experiences, and tips for getting the most out of a trip to the Niagara region.

How did you arrive in your current role with the Niagara Parks Commission?

I've had an interest in events for as long as I can remember. When I graduated from the Business Communications program at Brock University, I enrolled in the Event Management Post Graduate program at Niagara College. The course was great because it involves 250-plus industry volunteer hours, which helped me make a lot of connections early on. I then worked on an event with Vintage Hotels which got my foot in the door to secure a full-time job as a coordinator in their sales department. At that time, there was a period of two weeks where I was working there while finishing my exams and bartending on the side!

I worked my way up in the department over the next five years, spending time in the weddings division, travel trade, and corporate sales. I really tried to seize any opportunity that could increase my skill set. This past March, I was ready to move on to the next phase of my career as Manager of Business Events for the Niagara Parks Commission.

What skills or traits are important for success in the business event management field?

Enthusiasm, creativity, attention to detail, and an overall passion for the industry.

How have you seen this industry change over the years?

I've noticed more meetings incorporating travel experiences into their programming, like half-day excursions or offsite dining events with engaging activations, which I believe is being driven by the increasing number of Millennials in the workforce. Millennials are always looking for —

— unique experiences and aren't as inclined to choose chain restaurants. Meeting planners are taking notice and allowing attendees the opportunity to experience the local culture of their meeting destination.

From your experience, what do organizations often overlook when planning an event?

I love it when organizations consider ways to reduce the environmental impact of their event, but it doesn't happen very often, so I would say it's important to consider the waste your event is producing and acknowledge what you can do to reduce it. Some suggestions include not over-ordering desserts and food on late night buffets, eliminating paper cups and plastic water bottles, and reducing the quantity of printed materials. You can also ask the venue to have locally sourced foods whenever possible.

What makes the Niagara region an ideal place to be a business event professional?

Niagara is an easy sell! There is always something new to experience here and lots to do throughout all four seasons. There are so many aspects to the region which complement each other nicely and can offer an amazing experience for business events. That includes exquisite locally-sourced cuisine; VQA wine; fun indoor and outdoor attractions; world-class golf; well-maintained historic sites; manicured gardens and parks; and, of course, our pride and joy — Niagara Falls itself. We have the pleasure of bringing our groups back again and again and offering something different each time.

What advice would you offer others entering the business event management field?

Opportunities are all around us all the time. You have to learn to see them, seize them, and follow them through. If you're a recent graduate or new to the industry, your greatest contribution will be your ability to work hard. Have a high attention to detail and try to deliver perfection in every task.

That being said, doing your job well is not enough on its own. Be professional and confident. That's about more than just giving a firm handshake. Are you articulate? Is your physical presentation polished? Are you self-disciplined? Do you have a positive attitude? Ensure your personal brand is one that your employer and clients would want associated with their company and you'll find more opportunities coming your way.

This industry is a ton of fun and filled to the brim with wonderful people. You will love it and never want to leave!

Emily Dietrich is Manager of Business Events with the Niagara Parks Commission. For more, visit niagaraparks.com/meetings and fallsmeetings.com.

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