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New Year, New You

This Year, Resolve to Evolve

Dion Magee
Columnist

The best job security may be being prepared for any career transition that comes your way.

As highly regarded professionals in the events industry, how do we continue to reinvent who we are? How can we transform our skill sets and experience to other opportunities or even careers?

Thanks for the question. In this new era of technology, I think life will continue to seem more challenging. Let's face it — we are not getting any younger, and it's important for us all to create a great platform to sustain our professional and personal growth. Jobs will come and go and they may force us to consider other career options. However, we can always rely on our vast experience, skill sets and relationships to move forward in the journey of life.

Gain Diverse Experience

For event professionals, it's important to ensure that we are experienced in many facets of the business.

For me, my dream job is planning social and corporate events. It is my passion in life. Recently, however, a senior vice president in my company suggested that I consider adding additional projects such as strategy planning, research or communications campaigns. I was not excited about adding to my already busy list of duties and projects. But, as I asked for clarity, he shared that event planning can easily become outsourced and that my skills should be able to transfer to another part of our business that's not related to event planning at all. I thought about it, and he was right. No jobs are guaranteed and I have to be better prepared for any career or project transition.

Grow your Skill Sets

In transitioning to any new position, project or company, be sure to have a solid foundation for growth. There are seven key skills necessary for any job in our industry:

1. **Accounting Experience** — You don't have to be an accountant, but make sure you know the basics of accounting,

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such as creating and managing budgets.

2. **Project Management** — As planners, we are the ultimate project managers. Always strive to improve your system of management.
3. **Written and Verbal Communication Skills** — We should be able to write and speak well and convey clear messages while listening to clients or stakeholders.
4. **Marketing Experience** — Again, know the basics. We are marketing our personal and professional brand every day.
5. **Contract Preparations** — The best way to gain experience is to review many contracts. See yourself as a facilitator for your clients.
6. **Negotiation Experience** — This is a must-have for most of us. A good negotiator is invaluable.
7. **Management Experience** — Whether you manage vendors, clients or employees, a good supervisor is a critical link to promoting team work, great morale and a sense of value.

Know the Industry

I can't stress how important it is to be knowledgeable of the industry and to keep in tune with trends and new products and services. Attending event conferences, seminars and workshops are essential to staying current. By being involved, you are building and creating new relationship that will enhance your professional acumen.

Additionally, employers are more willing to hire someone who was referred by word of mouth. If you are knowledgeable of the industry, a client or employer does not have to spend a lot of time and energy on training resources. They also gain the benefits of relationships that you have already developed.

The best opportunities in my life came out of relationships with friends and suppliers in the industry. For instance, in late 2002, I recall meeting a talented professional, Lisa D. Frazier of Fraziersharp Event Management Group and Madison & Myles Wedding and Special Event Design. Ms. Frazier owns and manages these well-respected event management and publicity firms in the greater Washington, D.C., area. Today, we are great partners and allies, and I really depend on her advice and expertise.

Create your Legacy

Just like any professional brand such as Coca Cola or Hershey's, you have to create a long-term strategy to market your personal brand.

I strongly believe that clients choose companies or partners based on personalized service from individuals. Companies do not succeed without the individuals. As individuals, we are highly skilled, detailed and committed to adding value to any event or program. Your personal brand — you — is important. What do you want people to say about you? How do you want others to perceive the brand that is you?

We are building individual legacies that we want others to remember, respect or learn from. So, market your personal and professional brands. My 2007 New Year's resolution is to stay sharp and up to date on services, products and trends.

Thanks for reading. Until next month, love what you do and do what you love!

Dion Magee is senior manager – corporate programs and events for Verizon Communications.
Contact: dion.magee@verizon.com

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