

**Career Profile:
Special Events Coordinator**

**Presented to:
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Entertainment Management**

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October 28, 2003**

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POSITION:

Special Events Coordinator

JOB DESCRIPTION AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Event management is “a profession that requires public assembly for the purpose of celebration, education, marketing, and reunion.” To ensure the most successful event possible, the event coordinator should research, design, plan, coordinate, and evaluate the event. (Goldblatt, 2002, 7-8) The coordinator will also be responsible for: media interviews; transportation of materials to the festival site; arrangements with security, tent company, porta-potty company, barricade rentals, golf cart rentals, City Utilities, stage rentals, trash containers, sound systems, radios, telephones, and table/chair rentals. (Jones, 2003)

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

The special events profession has a very promising future. According to Jeff Goldblatt there are several factors as to why the profession has grown in the past few years. First, “two-income” families are hiring event managers to help in the planning of their social life-cycle events. Second, the people of the United States have become very educated in the field of event management. Lastly, the event management field “incorporates multitasking skills that form a generic management base.” (Goldblatt, 1997, x) Recently there has been high demand for event coordinators in the not-for-profit industry. Companies are turning to event planners to raise money for their organization through specialized fundraisers. (Jones, 2003) The expansion of our healthcare system will also generate new jobs for event managers in the field of tourism, recreation, leisure, and education. (Goldblatt, 2002) The opportunities really are endless and event planners can be utilized in several different types of organizations.

EARNINGS:

The typical salary for an event manager ranges between \$25,000 and \$75,000. (Goldblatt, 1997) An event manager working for a not-for-profit organization would earn between \$20,000 and \$35,000. (Jones, 2003)

ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITITES:

Advancing as an event manager takes time and a lot of experience. A person will most likely start out low and then advance as they gain more experience. Most people stay in this profession, not because of the salary, but because they have a deep passion for creating memorable events.

RECOMMENDED EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

A degree in Public Relations, Communications, Entertainment Management, and Marketing would be suitable. The most important education for this type of job is experience. (Jones, 2003) The International Special Events Society offers the Certified Special Events Professional (CSEP) certification program. (Goldblatt, 2002) Information regarding the CSEP certification can be found on the International Special Events Society website [<http://www.ises.com>]. A person in this field must also be up-to-date on the latest technology advancements. (Goldblatt, 2002)

ESSENTIAL SKILLS:

A person should have most or all of the following skills: organizational, desktop publishing, public speaking, sales, ability to work under tight deadlines, writing, ability to delegate when possible, and ability to multi-task. (Jones, 2003)

APPROPRIATE PERSONALITIES:

An event coordinator should possess most or all of the following personality traits: easy-going, self-starter, friendly, confident, detail-oriented, flexible, positive, outgoing and focused. An event coordinator should also be able to take constructive criticism and be a team player. (Jones, 2003)

EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS:

Event coordinators typically have baccalaureate degrees in business, marketing, public relations, and communication. Approximately 20 percent of the event coordinators have earned graduate degrees. (Goldblatt, 1997) It is recommended to get experience and an internship before entering the field full force. (Jones, 2003)

CHANGES IN PAST DECADE OR MORE:

The most notable change in the past decade is probably technology; the ease of the internet and e-mail has made communicating almost effortless. Also, not-for-profit organizations are creating new positions for event planners to help in fundraising. Finally, because Americans are living longer, there has been a greater need for event planners in the healthcare system. For example, event planners are needed to coordinate specialized events for the elderly.

INSIDER TIPS FOR LANDING A JOB LIKE THIS:

“Intern and/or volunteer to help plan an event or serve on a committee. Visit your local Convention and Visitors Bureau or Chamber of Commerce. Get a calendar of events from your community and make some calls. If it’s a nonprofit event, they would probably love the help. But, make sure you’re committed and willing, work hard and be willing to do whatever is necessary. Staying late and picking up trash is part of the job, so you have to be willing to do that if this is really the career you want to go into. Network and join professional organizations—many of them offer student memberships (and scholarships). Public Relations of the Ozarks is a good one. Be willing to pay your dues. Don’t get discouraged.”
(Jones, 2003)

TYPICAL CAREER PATH:

A person will typically receive a college degree and/or CSEP certification before settling into the job market. While receiving a degree, the person should gain experience by pursuing an internship in the field of event planning. Once the person graduates, he or she will have hopefully gained beneficial experience and networked accordingly. Most likely, the person will start in a lower-level job and then work their way up through experience and perseverance.

PROS AND CONS:

Pros for an event coordinator: exciting, challenging, gratifying (when you are the person with all the answers pertaining to an event), and satisfying (when you are doing something positive for

your community). Cons for an event coordinator: can be highly stressful and sometimes the job includes sleepless nights. (Jones, 2003)

KEY PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

International Special Events Society

401 North Michigan Avenue

Chicago, IL 60611-4267

312-321-6853

800-688-ISES (4737)

E-mail: info@ises.com

Website: <http://www.ises.com>

Organization is a great resource for those going into or for those already involved in the special events field. The organization also offers the Certified Special Events Professional (CSEP) certification.

International Association of Fairs and Expos

PO Box 985

Springfield, MO 65801

417-862-5771

E-mail: iafe@fairsandexpos.com

Website: <http://www.fairsandexpos.com>

International Festival and Events Association

World Headquarters

2601 Eastover Terrace

Boise, ID 83706

208-433-0950

Fax: 208-433-9812

E-mail: nia@ifea.com

Website: <http://www.ifea.com/index.asp>

Appendix A: Sample Job Announcement and Description

Category: Special Events
Job Title: Special Events Coordinator
Company: University of Southern Maine
Address: USM, PO Box 9300, Portland, ME 04104-9300
Type of Organization: University
E-mail: rustin@usm.maine.edu

Statement of the Job:

The Special Events Coordinator engages in planning, conceptualizing, implementing and managing the full details (as defined below) of USM special events. The fundamental goal is to increase community awareness, advocacy and financial support to USM. The Special Events Coordinator will also be responsible for access to or knowledge of academic and community protocol, donor and friend information, and event data bases.

Essential Functions:

1. Develop special events ideas, themes, timetables and budgeting for approved activities.
2. Become familiar with donor names and interests for development of invitation lists.
Design and mail invitations.
3. Handle all event details, such as: food, flowers, table settings, other decorations, space/facilities, parking, coats, name tags, musicians, and student involvement. Keep senior offices informed of event status via events checklist.
4. Compile attendance lists by managing the RSVP process.
5. Attend events and monitor performance.
6. Conduct follow-up of all arranged events.
7. Maintain list of all University events with knowledge of the purpose, date, audience and budget for each activity where appropriate and provide the involvement of the Special Events Office in each event.
8. Maintain historic files of Presidential and University events. On Presidential events, report to President's Office.
9. Develop, write, implement and manage an events standards policy for the University.
10. Maintain positive supportive relationships with University internal departments and external sources of event support to ensure successful implementation of each event.

Budget Responsibilities:

Responsible for management of budgets, billing arrangements and invoices for specific events.

Public/Professional Activities:

Participate in IFEA (International Festival and Events Association), YFEA (Yankee Festivals and Events Association), CASE, and NSFRE. Participate in relevant local and regional groups such as the Greater Portland Chamber of Commerce.

Internal/External Contacts:

The arts and business communities.

Qualifications:

Bachelor's degree plus at least three years of experience in events planning and running of events or similar experience. Must have or be willing to develop knowledge of protocol, donor data bases, and community information. Experience with developing and executing large special events, knowledge of resources and trends, ability to work with committees. Excellent written and verbal communications and diplomatic skills a must.

Appendix B: Interview Transcript

Contact Information:

Shellie Jones
Urban Districts Alliance
304 W. McDaniel St.
Springfield, MO 65806
Phone: 417-831-6200
E-mail: shellie@udaonline.org

Interview Questions:

What is your job title and description?

Marketing and Events Coordinator for Urban Districts Alliance, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Throughout the year, I am responsible for managing three events—Artsfest on Walnut Street, a juried outdoor art show; First Night Springfield, an alcohol-free New Year's Eve arts celebration; and Cider Days on Walnut Street, a juried outdoor arts and crafts show. Artsfest and First Night are sponsored by the Springfield Regional Arts Council. Cider Days is sponsored by the Historic Walnut Street Association.

Explain a typical workweek, the week of an event.

There never seems to be a 'typical' workweek in event planning. The week before Cider Days, I usually can be found doing media interviews, putting out fires, fielding phone calls and transporting materials to the festival site. I'm also doing last minute coordination with tent people, porta-potty folks, barricade rentals, security, Mo. One Call (to mark utilities), golf cart rental folks, City Utilities, stage rentals, trash containers, sound systems, radios, telephones, and tables/chair rentals. I'm finalizing emergency contact information, putting festival booklets together, checking to ensure all artist nametags and volunteer badges are in order, artists/crafters lists are updated, money handlers and money counters are in place, signage is all ready, and any last minute supplies have been purchased. On Friday afternoon, I'm on the street, putting up tables and chairs, ensuring artists/crafters are in the right place, putting up signage, etc.

What type of education/major is needed for a person in this position?

Public Relations, Communications, Entertainment Management, Marketing would all be good. A degree is great, but experience I believe is far more important in landing this type of job.

Where did you start in order to gain experience in this field?

My first event planning experience was at a chamber of commerce in Kodiak, Alaska. I was their Community Relations Director. I was responsible for producing their monthly newsletter, membership sales, and event coordination of the Kodiak Crab Festival, a 5-day event that attracted 15,000 annually. I started at the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce in 1994.

What do you feel is the outlook on this job market? Do you see it as a highly demanded field in the future?

High demand...I doubt it. But, I do think there will be an increase in demand, particularly in the nonprofit sector. More and more, nonprofits are turning to events to raise necessary funds.

What is the typical salary for an event coordinator?

Nonprofit world--\$20,000-\$35,000

Do you have any tips or suggestions for people just starting into the field, in terms of what to do for experience?

Intern and/or volunteer to help plan an event or serve on a committee. Visit your local Convention and Visitors Bureau or Chamber of Commerce. Get a calendar of events from your community and make some calls. If it's a nonprofit event, they would probably love the help. But, make sure you're committed and willing, work hard and willing to do whatever is necessary. Staying late and picking up trash is part of the job, so you have to be willing to do that if this is really the career you want to go into. Network and join professional organizations—many of them offer student memberships (and scholarships). Public Relations of the Ozarks is a good one. Be willing to pay your dues. Don't get discouraged.

What was your college major?

Public Relations major, Journalism minor. Also have an associate degree from OTC in printing/graphics and technology.

Do you think your course of study helped prepare you with your job?

Yes. That, along with the various job experiences I have had, whether they have actually been in event planning or not.

What skills do you think an event planner should have?

Organizational, desktop publishing, public speaking, sales, ability to work under tight deadlines, writing, ability to delegate when possible, ability to multi-task.

How do you make an event more memorable for your audience?

Always try to keep it fresh. Add at least one new or exciting element to every event you do. Keep it fun. Once the event is over, dissect it to see what you could have done better or different, and write it down.

Are there any personality characteristics that would be helpful with this kind of job?

Committed, passionate and dedicated. Easy-going, self-starter, friendly with a good sense of humor. Confident, detail-oriented, flexible, positive, outgoing and focused. Also need to have a thick skin and be a team player.

Is there a process you follow to plan the event?

Timeline and basic outline of tasks. Best if you have an 'event bible' that gets updated annually.

Is there a list of pros and cons to go along with the work?

Pros-Exciting, challenging, definitely not boring, fun, gratifying—it's nice to be the person that has the answers, satisfying because you now you are doing something positive for your community (all our events are non-alcoholic). Your family-friendly events are bringing people together and creating memories. When you see children smiling and people having fun, you kind of forget the stress and sleepless nights.

How long does it take to plan?

Depends on the event. You work on things in different stages. For our events, typically around 6 months.

Are there other people involved in the planning?

Artsfest and First Night Springfield has an advisory committee. For Cider Days on Walnut Street there is not an advisory committee.

Appendix C: Recommended Resources and Readings

Recommended Readings Resources:

The Complete Guide to Special Event Management, by Dwight W. Catherwood and Richard L. Van Kirk

How to Produce a Successful Crafts Show, by Kathryn Caputo

Special Events Magazine

Behind the Scenes at Special Events: Flowers, Props, and Design, by Lena Malouf

Special Events: Proven Strategies for Nonprofit Fund Raising, by Alan L. Wendroff

Dollars & Events: How to Succeed in the Special Events Business, by: Joe Jeff Goldblatt, Frank Supovitz

Appendix D: Complete Contact Information of Individual and Company Interviewed

Shellie Jones
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Urban Districts Alliance
304 W. McDaniel St.
Springfield, MO 65806
Phone: 417-831-6200
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