

Student Enquirer

Edition: 1

New this year we will have quarterly profiles from our MPINCC professionals providing insight into their careers, how they got there, and advice to students. Below is our first edition, and please check the [website](#) for future editions. Got a topic or a profession you would like to learn more about? Email Samantha Shaw at sshaw@bbwinternational.com

Melanie Walton, CMP, MBA



Company: Stanford University

Title: Meeting Planner, Stanford Conferences

Other: Co-Chair, Student Affairs Committee, MPINCC

Job Description: I work with the Stanford faculty and staff who are either producing an event on campus or who are bringing their professional association to campus for a meeting or conference. All of our events are educational in nature and support the mission and vision of Stanford. Typically my programs are multi-day, involve overnight accommodations either on- or off-campus, and are attended by people from around the globe. We offer a variety of services to our clients from strategic event management, to budget development and account management, site selection for on- or off-campus venues, logistic coordination of transportation/catering/audio-visual needs,

collateral development, travel arrangements, registration services, on-site event management and post-event reconciliation.

I have financial goals to obtain during the course of the year and all of our revenue is returned to our division of Residential & Dining Enterprises in order to off-set the cost of room and board for Stanford students.

How did you get started in the industry? I was working in the medical field and wanted to change my career path. I started taking classes for a Certificate in Meeting Management and my instructor suggested we volunteer at an MPI event. I took an unpaid day off from my job to volunteer, bumped into my instructor at the event and she introduced me to her colleague, Julie, who was the director of events at a local museum. Julie was looking for an administrative assistant, and she hired me. The day I started, the Event Coordinator gave her three week notice and I was given the option to be trained as the administrative assistant or the coordinator. I chose the coordinator position and the rest is history! I was in the right place at the right time.

What areas other areas of the industry have you worked in? I have worked in the events industry on both the supplier and planner sides. On the supplier side, I worked for the Boston Museum of Science, Bentley College, Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy and most recently the Oakland Marriott & Convention Center. On the planner side, I was the meeting planner in the Philanthropy Department at Lahey Clinic Medical Center planning their fundraising and friend-raising events.

What attracted you to your current role? The opportunity to plan larger, more complex events, to truly be the meeting planner for international conferences being held at the University.



What do you love about your job? I love that I'm challenged, working with wonderfully brilliant people, producing events that are discussing cutting-edge topics. ...working on campus surrounded by palm trees isn't so bad either! (Did I mention I'm from Boston!)

What keeps you up late at night about your work? The weight of the responsibility that comes with being the primary event planner. Knowing that your clients are relying on you to deliver a quality, successful conference and knowing that you can't control everything.

What do you wish someone had told you before you started in the industry? Your most important skill is going to be developing relationships. Your business partners will be your strongest asset in producing a successful event.

What are employers looking for in candidates for this type of position? In my particular case, my employer was looking for someone who not only had the skills required by a meeting planner (my CMP definitely helped), but also someone who understands the politics and culture of working on a campus. Planning events at Stanford is not as easy as planning events at a dedicated event facility such as a convention center or a hotel. They were looking for someone who understands that aspect of their business and who can navigate the labyrinth of policies and procedures in order to bring programs to campus.

What advice do you have for students trying to get a job? Gain as much experience as possible: work the coat check, stuff the name badges, handle a portion of the budget, plan everything you can, volunteer, join a professional association, participate in informational interviews so you can get a good idea of what it means to work in different aspects of the event industry, build your network and get out there!

Adriane Powell, CMP



Company: Cappa & Graham, a DMC Network Company

Title: Director, Business Development

Other: Director, Membership Administration, MPINCC

Job Description: My goal is to generate new business leads, as well as to build strong relationships with new clients and generate new opportunities with past/repeat clients. In my position I must remain highly visible within the industry maintaining and building relationships with corporate, 3rd party, incentive houses and association planners/buyers. In addition, I often take on the operations portion of programs.

How did you get started in the industry? I had always been involved in planning events at school such as graduations, dances, etc. I also had an internship in college that planned large scale events. It wasn't until after I graduated that I realized event and meeting planning could be an actual career.

What areas other areas of the industry have you worked in? I've worked with a non-profit that planned large scale events that in turn took the money raised to fund programs for underprivileged children. I also worked at a restaurant so I understand the food & beverage and banquet side of the industry.



What attracted you to your current role? I love organized chaos, forming relationships and watching programs come to life.

How long have you held this position? I've been with Cappa & Graham for four years.

What do you love about your job? It's constantly changing. Different clients, trends, venues and content keep things exciting. I also love meeting and interacting with such a diversity of people.

What keeps you up late at night about your work? Big proposals and last minute changes to programs always keep you until late hours. It's also always hard to sleep the night before a big program. For example, even with everything in place and the best team by your side, it's nerve racking knowing the next morning you're responsible for transferring all participants in the Giants World Series Victory Parade. Again, that excitement and adrenaline rush is what makes it worth doing.

What do you wish someone had told you before you started in the industry? The hours can be long and exhausting. While I knew this one before, I always have to reiterate: meeting & event planning is a lot of legwork and more demanding than people realize.

What are employers looking for in candidates for this type of position? Employers are looking for someone who is professional, detail oriented and can react quickly to changes onsite. It is also important to be personable and good at networking.

What advice do you have for students trying to get a job?

- Always follow up with your contacts
- Don't take rejection personally
- Do as many informational interviews as you can
- Networking is key

Questions or comments about *The Student Enquirer*?
Email Samantha Shaw at sshaw@bbwinternational.com

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