

EVENT

COMPLETE

DISTINGUISHED BUSINESS AWARD  
CORPORATE EXCELLENCE

## The Perfect Plan: When an Event is Bigger than Big

By David Gordon

Whether you are a new graduate, a career changer, or simply looking for work, choosing and then pursuing a new profession can be a daunting task. Many people frantically search for a solution to streamline success but they may not have to look as far as they think. Studies show that when professional work is in sync with what a person enjoys, it creates a virtuous circle of passion and energy that is a prerequisite for prosperity.

"The best way to determine what to do (professionally) is to figure out the things you spend time on that you don't get paid for," said Michelle Patterson, CEO of Event Complete. "Do what you love, because you will fall in love every day."

Event Complete, a full-service event management company, was created by Patterson after years of working as an organizer for Taste of Ladera, the largest not-for-profit charity event in Orange County, California. "I've always had that mindset of putting on events and pulling people together," Patterson told "The Suit."

Patterson and her team offer a slew of services that help turn just about any event into a thriving, revenue-generating affair. The company's Event Concept Development Plan provides the know-how for everything from site logistics, media relations and

security to invitations, stage and entertainment management, and even alcohol and beverage control.

But Event Complete isn't expecting to host any birthday parties in the near future. Patterson is also executive producer of The California Women's Conference, the largest women's symposium in North America. The historic conference boasts many A-list members and keynote speakers such as First Lady Michelle Obama, Deepak Chopra, Jane Fonda, Oprah Winfrey, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the Dalai Lama, Barbara Walters and countless other celebrities. "What I found is that the individuals who are really successful are the best to work with," Patterson said with a laugh.

Event Complete, which is committed to supporting charities, has developed both the social enterprise and the expertise needed to help generate funds. Patterson notes that communicating with both short-term and long-term sponsors plays a crucial role in efficient fund-raising. "It's important to understand what the target is you're focused on for your fund-raising efforts and make sure that (it) is not only communicated through the sponsorship package, but that it gets out to the masses," she said. Social media, whose influence on fund-raising is unparalleled, can be a useful tool in reaching out to the target audience. "Women represent 78% of consumers and 85% of decision

makers," Patterson figured. "The companies that recognize the impact that social media plays in the marketplace and directly related to women are the companies that are succeeding and doing well."

For many, the logistics of events can be overly stressful, which is why event planners have become so highly sought after. But Patterson, who says she "works well under pressure," also feels comfortable in high-octane environments and affirms the need to keep one's cool. "It's important, as the leader, to be able to set that tone. It's being able to go ahead and stay close to what the overall vision and mission is," she said. Patterson also tells her volunteers to keep things in perspective and not let the stress take hold of them. "I don't ever want to see them running across the exhibit hall," she mused, then added seriously, "People notice your energy levels. If you're stressed out and feeling overwhelmed, then your crowds and audiences will feel that same way."

Coming into 2013, Patterson plans on going even further in her profession. She has numerous events planned nationwide and internationally, including blueprints for programs in Singapore and for the United Nations. "You can never start soon enough," she said.

# The California Women's Conference

Michelle Patterson, CEO of Event Complete and Executive Producer of The California Women's Conference, the largest women's symposium in North America.

