

- OK so – we're here to talk about event planning. It's my hope that I can truly demystify some aspects about the profession, maybe teach you something, and hopefully make you laugh.
- Very broadly, this morning we'll be chatting about:
  - The industry itself
  - Some of the basics
  - We'll talk about event branding and why it's important
  - We'll look at some emerging trends
  - I'll let you in on some tips and tricks
  - And finally, we'll have a quick Q&A session so that I might answer any burning questions you have
- Before we get started, I think it's important for you all to *really* get to know me...
- So... you might be thinking, that guy looks familiar. Where do I recognize him from?!

- Well, I am unapologetically and un-ironically Celine Dion's biggest fan. This is part of an email that Spotify, a music-streaming service, sent me last year.
- I am the 1%... when it comes to Celine Dion
- Here I am in Montreal before seeing her live for the first time ever... clearly doing fine.
- Oh, and here's my poor cat... this is Rhys, and I genuinely wish he could be here with us today. Unfortunately, he is not a service cat so he's not allowed in our buildings.
- I guess when you think about it, I'm easily defined by a French songstress and my cat. Not sure if that bodes well for me or not... but moving on!

- All jokes aside, who am I really?
- I'm a graduate of Dalhousie, having earned my BA in 2014 with a double major in psychology and sociology and social anthropology
- I actually worked with Event & Conference Services as a student; it's this work experience that exposed me to the career I'm in today
- Broke through the "Dal bubble" upon graduation and left to "spread my wings"; I actually ended up learning a lot throughout my time in hotel sales.
- But realizing that I missed Dalhousie terribly, I u-turned back at the earliest opportunity
- Having been back with Event & Conference Services for over a year and half; recently moving into the role of Manager of Business Development & Events, I'm really loving it!
- OK, while I could go on forever, enough about me!
- So - why is this a timely session?

- Ah – our 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, of course!
- I recently made the joke that I talk about the 200<sup>th</sup> so much, that I'm now contractually obligated to always wear a 200<sup>th</sup> t-shirt as an undershirt...
- As we continue to move closer towards Dalhousie's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, there will be a sharp increase in special events, conferences, receptions and galas both on and off campus.

- Another reason why this session is quite timely, is the fact that we'll all serve as an event planner at some point during our time at Dalhousie
- “Other duties as assigned” ... oh, how we both love and fear you! It's a staple inclusion in most job descriptions, and for many on campus it can mean the planning of...
  - A 3-day conference for 1000
  - A gala dinner for 600
  - And executing a donor event the VIP-est of the VIPs
- I want to make sure that you are prepared to plan and execute amazingly spectacular events – whether you're a seasoned veteran or someone just beginning their foray into event planning.
- And I do see two of my bosses in the audience today, so, no pressure I guess...

- For those who've planned an event or two, I hope you find the video I'm about to show you as humorous as I do
- Quick disclaimer: Despite what you might think from the title, this video is indeed rated E for everyone

- It wouldn't be a university session without going over at least *some* data...
- In Canada, "business events" make up a sizeable percentage of the economy. Keeping in mind that this data is from 2012, we know that the industry is on the up-and-up.
- Business events attracted 35.3 million participants, with 29 billion dollars in direct spending
- Business events delivered 27.5 billion dollars to Canada's gross domestic product, approximately 1.5% of Canada's GDP
- Business events contributed 8.5 billion dollars in taxes and service fees to all levels of government
- Business events supported employment of more than 200,000 full-year jobs, directly
- Based on the data collected by Meeting Planners International, there were more than 585,000 business events held in Canada, in more than 2,000 venues. That's impressive for a country our size!
- All of this data is thanks to Meeting Planners International, of which Dalhousie University Event & Conference Services is a very proud member

- It almost goes without saying that event planning is an incredibly diverse profession, with a variety of different event types (just to name a few):
  - Meetings
  - Conferences
  - Banquets
  - Galas
  - Receptions
  - Special events
- You name it... we've probably hosted it on campus
- While the type of event you're planning can vary greatly, a lot of the principles we'll be looking at this morning remain the same
- No matter what type of event you're planning, it's important to ask yourself two things:
  - What is the goal of this event?
  - What is meant to be achieved through this event?
- It's vital to keep these two questions at the top of your mind for the duration of the planning process – by continually asking yourself these questions, you will lead yourself, and your event, to success – I promise



- Let's go over the basics
- First, establishing a realistic budget, and working within that budget, is key to the success of your next event. Especially from a fiscal responsibility standpoint, of which we always try to strive for when planning university events.
- Train yourself to try to think less like “how can I make this easier for me, the planner?” and more like “how can I make this better for my event attendees?” – thinking this way will take your event to the next level
- Source a venue that works; one that captures everything your event attendees are looking for
  - Interestingly, over 50% of planners will be looking for non-hotel venues in 2017. Huh... I wonder where they can find fantastic non-hotel meeting spaces...?
- Be sure to make use of all of the resources available to you – both on and off campus. Even if it's a simple question, I encourage each and everyone one of you to call Event & Conferences Services to ask for our opinion – we're industry professionals and we'll jump at the chance to assist you – even if it's as simple as pointing you in the right direction
  - In addition to Event & Conference Services on campus, Discover Halifax (formerly known as

Destination Halifax) is a great resource for large, city-wide events.

- And not to directly quote Julie Chen from Big Brother... but you really should “expect the unexpected” and just run with it!

- Next, let's talk about event branding.
- Event branding can very quickly be looked over by planners as something that either:
  - The planner doesn't have enough time for, or
  - There is pre-conceived notion that there's no budget available for proper event branding
- Today, I'd like to dispel both of these thoughts
- Why? Because the most successful events, no matter their size, have a strong brand with strong messaging
- The first thing to think about is establishing an event name, tagline and logo – these are things that are established for most events, by planners, without even thinking that these are pieces of your event's brand.
- They really are the building blocks with which you can do a lot, at a relatively low cost.
- Some of my favourite low-cost event branding techniques include:
  - Social media props – a great way to encourage an organic online conversation during your event
  - Sponsor backdrops – they create a strong visual brand presence which can be used at different functions within one large event
  - Gobo lighting – a relatively low-cost way to project logos or messaging that really catches the eye

- And you may not realize it, but your communication style goes an incredibly long way in establishing your event's brand
- When speaking to your event audience (before, during and after your event) it's important to be entertaining to be heard!
- When marketing your event and speaking to your audience, make sure you are paying attention to how your own attendees are communicating on social media.
- If you're planning an internationally acclaimed academic conference, that plans to debate a topic that is incredibly over your own head, perhaps using emojis in your communications wouldn't be best.
- Well, except maybe for the poop emoji... because we all love him

- There are so many new, unique and interactive ways to communicate event details to your audience... don't restrict yourself to the traditional means.
- I mean, look at how great I look in these Snapchat filters...
- But in all seriousness: geographically-targeted Snapchat filters, emojis, gifs (or jifs, if you will...)... there are so many new ways to communicate with your event audience.
- My biggest piece of advice would be to be sure you're using communication tools that speak specifically to your audience.
- Using these new resources will further establish your event's brand presence.

- Above all, make your communication work for both you and your audience! It's a two-way street
- Now, personally, I'm quite a big fan of gifs... especially Celine gifs...
- I think I have one for almost every occasion

- Let's look at emerging trends
- As of late in the meeting & event planning industry, there's a huge culture shift happening
- Planners are encouraged now to stop simply planning meetings
- And to instead begin designing experiences
- This don't totally surprise me, as there seems to be a renewed sense amongst a variety of people, that interestingly seems to be quite cross-generational, that we begin to spend less money on material items and more money on experiences
- Who says that those experiences can't be the meetings and events that we plan?
- More and more conference attendees will choose to add a couple of days to their business trip to allow themselves time to experience the city they're visiting
- And with a city like Halifax, there is a lot to experience outside of your plenary or breakout space!
- When you're planning your next national or international event, be sure to communicate the various experiences available to visitors, so that they might come early and stay late
- Discover Halifax is a great resource that will help you do just this

- It's important to recognize that the events and conferences that you plan have a direct link to the tourism economy in our province
- And it's a big economy – larger than oil and gas, forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, and agriculture - combined,
- Last year, it's estimated that we saw 2.6 billion dollars (that's billion with a B) worth of tourism dollars flow into our province.
- A few years ago, the Ivany report told us Nova Scotians that the tourism industry *needs* to get to 4 billion dollars by 2024. It's a lofty goal.
- So what's my point with all of this? It's that, to achieve this goal, for the sake of our province, we need all planners (and that means you) to understand and appreciate how vital the events we plan are to the tourism industry in Nova Scotia, which is a substantial part of our province's economy and continued success.



- In our everyday lives, there's hustle. There's bustle.
- The same can be said about the conferences and events that we plan and attend!
- There are moments where being jammed in a 50,000 sq.ft. room with 800 strangers can feel simply overwhelming.
- This is why a big trend for 2017 is the use of quietness and quiet spaces.
- You may have heard about 'sleep pods' that have been popping up in forward-thinking organizations like Google
- Still waiting for Dalhousie to get on board with that...
- But the same sort of concept is being applied to conferences and events – providing attendees with breakout sessions that are more “chill out” spaces than anything else.
- Some planners are even getting creative – instituting yoga and meditation classes.
- Even session speakers are beginning to incorporate moments of mindfulness into their presentation
- But not in this session – because we've got too much to talk about!

- Another big trend popping up recently is live video
- Live technology is geared at giving very real-time feedback, analytics, and also opportunities to sell.
- Most event technology needs input before the event – it requires incredible effort to be set up, hence the resistance from some busy event planners.
- Live technology is tied in the now; it is a thermostat that gives you the indication of current “room temperature”.
- With that in mind, here’s some interesting data about Facebook’s newest feature, Facebook Live:
  - People spend 3x longer watching a video which is live compared to a video which isn’t
  - Since launching last year, search popularity for “Facebook live stream” has risen over 330%
  - User comments on Facebook Live videos are posted at 10x the rate of regular videos
  - Live video grows attendance: 30% of people who watch a livestream of an event will attend the same event the following year
  - Live video is cost effective – it is a common misconception that live video is costly. But thanks to tools like Facebook Live, anyone can leverage the technology and see a positive return on investment.

- OK – we've established that live video, and Facebook Live, is great... but how can we use this service in the most effective way? Let's this video and find out.

- Maybe live video isn't your thing. After all, it can be scary to go live!
- It's important to recognize that in addition to live broadcasting, online videos are beginning to dominate the content creation game.
- Most social media platforms are, more and more, promoting their video sharing capabilities.
- These same social platforms are pushing videos to the top of their newsfeed algorithm – because as we've established, video is more engaging than static photos and text posts
- Photos and words are not nearly as powerful as video when marketing experiences – and remember, your next great event is about creating an experience
- There are opportunities to connect with attendees before they register for your next great event, after they've registered, while they're attending and after the event has ended – this provides you creative flexibility to really connect with your audience.
- Here's a save-the-date video which I find really fun. I have no clue what this conference is really about... but after watching this video, I really want to go!

- These days, it's all about food. Taste, texture, presentation. It seems that everyone's a foodie and everyone is certainly a critic.
- When thinking back to fantastic trips you've had and great events you've attended, you might not always remember where it was or when it was, but chances are you'll remember the food.
- Whether it was good or bad, well, that's another conversation altogether... but as planners, we always aim for perfection.
- The key is collaborating with a caterer who is able to make use of their Executive Chef's creativity and their ability to leverage local and seasonal ingredients.

- One emerging trend in many industries, event planning included, is diversity and inclusion.
- Much like Dalhousie's Strategic Priority 5.2, event planners are increasingly recognizing the importance of diversity when planning an event or conference.
- One event think-tank says, "white male line ups are the oldest residue of very old event concepts – the worst of the worst"
- As a white, male speaker part of today's line-up... I do have to agree
- The point being – the more we recognize opportunities for and embrace diversity in our event attendees and speakers, the more we are changing the way we do events.
- It means advancing our industry, it means changing the behaviour of our attendees with a positive message.
- Diversity can be incorporated into your next event in a variety of ways – from the speakers you choose, to the manner in which your social events and breaks are planned, the more you keep 'diversity' top of mind, the more positive of experiences are delivered to all attendees.
- It also elevates the profession of event planners from mere executors of tasks to agents of change.

- As briefly mentioned previously, making use of non-traditional meeting spaces is becoming a bigger and bigger trend.
- Formality has given way to informality in how communication takes place in the workplace, and this is now spilling over into how meetings and events are conducted, and the selection of location in which to conduct them.
- Luckily for us, we have a plethora of unique and non-traditional spaces on campus!
- Whether it's the McCain Building, which we're currently in, or Shirreff Hall, which began construction 100 years ago this year, there's a flexible space to be found on campus.
- So... tell your planner friends...

- Now I'd like to share some insider information...
- Don't be afraid to share your budget and/or desired price point with the vendors you're working with.
- I promise that we are not trying to take you to the cleaners – we're trying to deliver on your expectations. It's a very common question that sales people are taught to ask a client.
- So be prepared to be asked that question the next time you phone a service provider in the event industry.
  
- Timing is everything – no event runs perfectly on time and you need to embrace that.
- So it's important to provide attendees with buffer time in between sessions – and when doing so, get creative!
- Provide attendees with interactive ways to engage with your event and with each other in such a way that allows them to pass the time.
- I was recently at a conference, alone, and the breaks in between sessions got kind of lonely.
- But then... an afternoon session was dedicated to a 'doughnut wall' – and yes, it's actually what you think it was – a wall filled with doughnuts.
- I have never so quickly bonded with complete strangers, I swear.



- Maybe that's a good idea for next year's DPMG conference...
- When you're on-site at your next event, be sure to kill everyone with kindness – when something goes wrong at your event, because it definitely will, focus more on the solution and less on the problem... or the person who may have caused the problem.
- By doing so, the staff working your event are going to feel that much more empowered to fix whatever issue is occurring and therefore positively influencing your event attendees. Kindness goes a long way – especially in stressful situations.
- Remember that success is completely subjective! Never call an event “over and finished” until you collect feedback from your attendees. It's this feedback that really measures the success of any event.
- The data you collect from conducting post-event surveys will make your next event that much better
- When planning your event budget and allocating certain amounts to certain expense lines, be sure to budget appropriately for audio-visual... and then some!

- A/V can really make or break your event
- I mean... imagine this presentation without my fantastic Snapchat filters, fabulous Celine Dion gif or the videos I've shown you?
- It just wouldn't be the same
- For those inexperienced in planning events, it can seem silly... almost painful to spend so much on audio-visual equipment...
- But trust me – it's all worth every penny
  
- Planning an on-campus event can seem daunting and challenging – but it doesn't have to be!
- Navigating the system – space booking, security requests, custodial requests, trucking requests, food & beverage orders, A/V bookings... even a small meeting can become more complicated than it needs to be
- Event & Conference Services on campus now handles common-pool university bookings (Campus Bookings) and paid bookings – making us more of a one-stop-shop
- The advantage to paying a nominal meeting space rental fee is the fact that when you do so, you are assigned an “event manager” who will take care of your space booking, FAMIS requests, food & beverage order, A/V... everything! It's an incredible

service for those of us who are just too busy to do it all ourselves.

- In fact, Event & Conference Services is moving closer and closer to a true “one-stop-shop” operation
- For example, did you know that our office has a relatively new online registration service that not only captures the data you want from your attendees, but also captures secure, online payments? Well, you actually used our service to register for today’s conference.
- And today, I’m very excited to tease a totally new service offering that we hope to roll out over the next few months – and that’s complete event management services.

- So, what does that mean?
- Think of it as hiring a third party meeting planner, which is actually a common practice amongst some departments
- In essence, internal departments at Dalhousie will be able to “hire” an event planner directly from our office for an event or conference, whether it’s on campus or off campus
- We recognize that a lot of the time, departments don’t have the man power to run some of the larger-scale events that are put on – like international conferences.
- That’s where we’ll step in!
- It’s going to be a flexible service offering that can really be tailored to exactly what you’re looking for
- More details, such as pricing and the different options available, will be published this fall
- So please keep your eyes on [dal.ca/eventservices](http://dal.ca/eventservices)

- That's all she wrote, folks!
- I'd like to take the next few minutes before lunch to answer any questions that anyone might have for me
- And for those who don't wish to ask right now, please feel free to
- Email me – it's a pretty simple address
- Call me – I'm at 2461
- Or, to take a page out of Dr. Florizone's book, tweet me! I'm QuinnLyle on Twitter.