

Jane Davies

Tell us about yourself:

I am on the cusp of turning 50! And since there is nothing I can do about that I might as well embrace it. I love to be busy and challenged - and I love to laugh. I'm delighted to have the role of 'mother' lightened, now that my son and daughter are grown. Oh, and my friends would say I love nothing better than sharing a glass of wine and hanging out with my husband and those same friends.

Tell us about your work:

About eight years ago, Robert Zed and I formed ZedEvents, a conference and events management firm in Halifax. We started off doing local fund-raising events, and quickly grew to managing conferences and events throughout the region and into other parts of Canada. We enjoy working with non-profit organizations, government departments and businesses alike - and our focus is always to reveal and then support the hidden strategic purpose of each event we manage.

How did you get to where you are today?

Some days I would say luck - but I think it has been more about the passion I have for the work. I have been blessed with many great opportunities and loved them all: everything from Olympic sponsorship programs, to international conferences, to political campaigns - all of them taught me so much. I think this is the other quality that has helped me move forward in my career: I love to learn and am never afraid to learn from anything and anyone. If you stop learning - well, I am not sure what happens after that, but I know I never want to find out.

Walk us through a typical day at work:

The great thing about the event management world is there is no such thing as a typical day - every day and every client is different. One of the things I love most: being plugged into different cultures and having a chance to get to know these people. I believe that the secret to success is, first and foremost, to really get to know my clients' culture and understand what success looks like in their eyes. Then I never stop asking the hard questions - which sometimes clients are afraid to ask themselves. I always tell clients at the outset: we are the objective view point and to take advantage of the fresh insight we offer.

Name: Jane Davies

Present: Vice president, ZedEvents. A conference and events management company based in Halifax - we do business across the country

Past: Communications manager - Maritime Life

Expertise: Event and conference management leadership

Specialty: Communications

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Why are you good at what you do?

People have told me that what they most appreciate about me is my enthusiasm: they want to be involved in what I am doing because they enjoy sharing in that energy. For my part, I work hard at communicating clearly and consistently with clients, colleagues and suppliers alike, both to ensure that everyone understands the message, but more importantly, so that everyone sees that success for our clients is success for all of us. At a more basic level, I think it is because I love to plan, I love to find solutions, I love to work with people and I love watching those people succeed.

What are some of the challenges you face?

Wanting to give every client and every event the very best – but there's only 24 hours in a day and seven days in a week. I have noticed that event managers tend to be perfectionist by nature. So wanting only the best is always the goal. And most of the time you only get one shot at it, which of course drives a perfectionist crazy. But you do your stuff and you learn from each event, and then you get to do it even better the next time.

What would you say are some of your biggest achievements?

As long as you add the word 'professional' (my two children and my 27 year marriage are my most treasured accomplishments), the obvious answer would be producing the David Foster Gala in Halifax, where I was rubbing shoulders with performance super-stars and the glitterati of the region. But I genuinely get as much satisfaction supporting clients and smaller events which are just as important in their eyes and in mine. For instance, ZedEvents has helped to build a seasonal event for housing-challenged people in Halifax that, I would say, is the most rewarding achievement of my career. And, of course, watching my team succeed provides me with my most rewarding moments.

What do you like best about the meetings industry?

What's not to like? The dynamics, the drama, the challenges, the clients, the partners and friends you make along the journey – it's all good. But at the risk of sounding trite, as an event management consultant I love watching my clients succeed. I love being the coach on the bench and watching the players win the game. At 50, it really is about watching others benefit from your wisdom, your experience and, most of all, your mistakes. As I tell my cherished children: you learn more from your mistakes than your successes – and if that truly is the case, then I must be really good by now! ■



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