



# ST. LOUIS AREA CHAPTER

EduCon 2023

## Roundtable Recap

### How to Manage (and Avoid) Professional Burnout

- Ask if you can help others on your team to help relieve some of the tension and pressure.
- Organizational leaders need to understand what their working teams are experiencing right now; create environments where team members are heard and feel supported.
- Get in agreement that everyone is working through great expectations, little resources, and a high level of activity; help create a culture of grace and empathy so that team members can perform at their best under the circumstances and extend grace to others.
- Intentionally find ways to relieve stress and have fun!
- Remember that it is important to have a confidant to confide in; find support on bad days and laugh on the good days.
- Find a way to leave office struggles in the office; don't take work stress home.
- Remember that what is happening now is not personal. When someone misses a deadline, or if they are having a bad day, they are not personally targeting you – activate grace.
- Post date email communications so employees don't feel pressured to respond immediately outside of normal working hours.
- Team members need to set boundaries and communicate expectations clearly to reduce chaos and ineffective work environments.
- Make accommodations for team members to have focus and reflection time when working on projects – everything seems rushed with even more urgent deadlines now.
- If you have direct reports, actively advocate for a good work environment for your team members and the resources to your work well.
- Actively engage stress relievers:
  - Wellness programs.
  - Schedule a mindfulness break during the day.
  - Has anyone heard of a "Dammit-doll"? Buy one and use it. Most often you can buy the doll from a small business.
- Respect everyone's process – people fall into many categories, or no category at all – everyone approaches things differently.
  - What's important?
  - Clearly communicate priorities.
  - How do they operate?
  - Is it work -life balance, life-work balance, or are they work-life integrators?
- Add to signature line of email, or instant response to message, something that helps manage your wellbeing and clearly communicates expectations of how to engage with you (Example):

- Signature line: You are receiving this email outside of normal working hours. Managing work & life responsibilities is unique for everyone. I have sent this email at a time that works for me. Please respond at a time that works best for you.

### **Negotiations, Contracts and Partnership**

- Many organizations and businesses are identifying new streams of income and/or diversifying their business mix.
  - What new partners are needed during the shift?
  - Do contracts need to change?
- Work toward a space where contract terms are mutually agreeable.
- Contract language needs to be more specific in terms of defining the end product and cancellation terms. Much greater effort is needed to spell things out to communicate expectations from all ends.
- Suppliers should be more transparent about the levels of staff involved in creating the end contract sent to the planner and share what is important for each internal contract influencer. Transparency leads to fuller communication and will allow both parties to work toward mutually agreeable terms.
- What is the role of a Director of Revenue Management?
- The overall trend of attendees registering late impacts results. Hotel room pick-up is slow. Guarantee numbers for F&B are unsure until 7 days before arrival. How can contract terms for hotels, F&B, and other support providers be more flexible to accommodate this trend that is now becoming the norm?
- Hotels are hesitant to offer courtesy room blocks for meetings anymore. What is a mutually agreement arrangement to offer the room block needed and manage the liability for both supplier and planner?
- Force majeure language needs to be updated for contracts created post pandemic with generally accepted industry terms.
  - Consider using the words “impossible” and “possible” in negotiating contract terms to support force majeure language and work toward a mutually agreeable understanding of what “impossible” and “possible” means.
  - Clearly detail understanding and perhaps incorporate units of measurement (measure impact), regulations of the governing municipality, etc.

### **Designing Inclusive and Welcome Event Experiences**

- More vendors and planners are working harder to meet the specific needs of the clients and their guests.
  - Suppliers and planners have to be more client and guest centric in their planning to identify the needs. Ask qualifying questions – dig deeper for answers – intentionally work with a diverse mix of vendors to support needs.
  - Be thoughtful in planning and ask questions in advance.

- Go beyond dietary restrictions to create greater inclusivity; greater attention is being paid to mobility and sensory needs.
- It is more common, and there is a greater push, to have a diverse mix of vendor partners contracted at each level of the planning cycle. Different perspectives, resources, solutions and equipment are offered with greater diversity.
- Try something new (i.e., Programming, speakers, venue, location, methods to connect with guests in advance of activation) to engage a different mix of attendees.
- Welcome ALL PEOPLE to the table.

### **Creative Budgeting and Cost Management**

- Everyone needs to understand that costs are going up and adjust accordingly.
- It is harder to source goods and services, and profit margins are slimmer all around, resulting in less opportunity to negotiate price for everyone (supplier, planner, end consumer).
- Find new options and resources to manage costs.

### **How Can I Use Data to Enhance My Events?**

- Ask the right questions for surveys? Data can support:
  - Uncovering new opportunities for the organization
  - New or different ways to engage guests.
  - Pain points in planning.
  - Activity that is out of sync with the needs of the organization or attendee.
  - Better understanding of attendee demographics.
  - Understanding guest satisfaction.
- Work with internal team to better understand how data can help you identify a different sales mix, fundraising strategy, or employee engagement support.
- Data helps fill in the gaps in the debrief session and help plan for “after action” (i.e., Registration pace, trends in consumer behavior, planning cycle and impact on internal team member work load, etc.)
- Unearthing data encourages curiosity, and you will ask “what else can I find out?”
- Use data and qualitative feedback to communicate with senior leadership.
- Knowing the data about your events and meetings assists with contract negotiations.
- Knowing the data and trends of your organization helps suppliers accept business that positively supports their sales goals (i.e., identify needs dates, understand which offerings are most popular, negotiation opportunities for business that evens out the seasonality of their business, etc.) and create contracts that are mutually agreeable.

### **Building Relationships in a Virtual/Hybrid World**

- Take time to get know your clients and employees; relationships are more important than ever before.

- Find ways to have coffee or lunch together online if travel is impacted and you can no longer meet in person.
- Send clients or team members gift cards for coffee or lunch.
- To help build connections, be present on the platforms where your audience is (i.e., clients, colleagues, team members, recruiters, learning communities).
  - Teams, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, MPI Global forums
- Have you considered:
  - Virtual Coffee Event: Send a person a gift card for a coffee and enjoy coffee together on a Zoom call.
  - Put a face to the name: Update head shots for everyone on your team so you can put a face with a name when emailing or communicating with each other.
  - Best Practices: Establish, communicate, and reinforce best practice standards for virtual meetings.
    - Acceptable attire
    - Corporate designed backgrounds
    - Video or no video?
    - What time should virtual calls be scheduled considering the possible difference in time zones for remote teams?
- To help support employee engagement, make sure that whatever is offered in the home office as an incentive is available for remote workers as well. Try your best to make everyone feel included.
  - If you are hosting a team lunch, send a Door Dash order to your remote team member.
  - If everyone is receiving new office swag, ship the branded items to the remote team members in advance.
  - Make time to have one-on-one meetings with remote team members.