



Karen Turner

Karen Turner, director of Turner Event Management in Saskatoon, tells of her transition from real estate agent to conference manager and why kindness is the key to her success

Tell us about your role at Turner Event Management.

Since launching Turner Event Management more than 20 years ago, my roles and responsibilities have changed and evolved. When my business partner of 13 years retired in 2011, I rebranded my business to focus on managing conferences only. Now, the company offers a full menu of conference management services while I specialize in sponsorship, media relations and negotiations.

What's your favourite part of your work?

I absolutely love learning about different segments of the various industries in Canada. I get to work with all sorts of people who are experts in a variety of areas and professions—all of whom are working to make sure Canada remains a strong economic powerhouse on a global scale. Helping this diverse group of people share their stories and celebrate their accomplishments is a big reason why I do what I do.

Tell us a bit about your background. What led you to where you are today?

I worked extensively in the non-profit sector for a huge part of my life and received my

degree in fundraising management from MacEwan University in Edmonton in 2000. Before then, I worked as a loans manager and a real estate agent for 14 years. Even back then, I was always planning events and open houses. Because I love beautiful things, from art to food presentation, I've found the marketing, sales and communications required for all of the kinds of work I have done is the common thread, pulling my background together with the work I am currently doing.

What is your proudest moment on the job?

There are many events I am proud to have organized and worked on, but perhaps my proudest moments are more personal. In this industry, as in many industries, there are always going to be difficult clients. I am proud of my ability to hang in there until the bitter end without losing my cool. It feels good to know that my perseverance and approach means that, in the end, even difficult clients feel fortunate to have worked with me and are recommending my services to their friends on the golf course.

How would you describe your approach?

I follow a simple, golden rule: be kind. I think

kindness is important and goes a long way. You sometimes have to make tough decisions but you don't have to sacrifice kindness when making them. Also, remember to smile with your eyes.

What advice would you give to those just starting in the industry?

If you show up, something will come to you. Instead of running around with your hair on fire, learn to relax, have some wine and just pay attention. Inspiration will kick in, and if it doesn't, at least the wine was delicious. You've got to learn to be OK with change—you have to keep moving and stay relevant. Keep learning things and growing creatively.

What might some of your colleagues and clients be surprised to learn about you?

I'm an introvert, which makes me a good fit for my job. I don't need or want to be in the limelight so I'm the perfect person to organize—I always say I know I am successful when they don't know who I am and my client is the star. Most people who know me know I'm a runner but don't know I've ran nine full marathons and 33 half marathons. 🔥