



To the Point

By Deborah Sexton

Passionate About PCMA

Engaging new professionals and cultivating future industry leaders.

Imagine graduating from college not knowing what you want to do. You start to investigate a certain career, and someone encourages you to get involved with a certain industry association. Most enterprising people would check it out — see if there’s a job board, or attend a local networking reception.

Then there’s Madeleine Bart. After graduating in 2009 from Queen’s University in Ontario with a degree in English and psychology and spending a year teaching in South Korea, Madeleine returned home, not knowing what career path to pursue. The meetings industry seemed interesting. She met Jacqui Sullivan, then incoming president of PCMA’s Canada East Chapter, who helped her make some local connections. A few months later, she decided to take the plunge and attend Convening Leaders 2011 in Las Vegas — on her own dime, without having a job in this industry.

“I had an amazing time at the conference,” Madeleine recalled. “When I left, I felt I had connected with an industry association that cared about its members and valued high-level education. It was a place I could meet industry leaders and learn new concepts and trends.”

Just a few months after attending Convening Leaders 2011, Madeleine landed a job as event coordinator at the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. Since then, she has volunteered on Canada East’s Community Service Committee, participating in International Women’s Day and Service In Sync. She’s taken advantage of many PCMA education sessions and networking opportunities, and is serving as the chapter’s communications director this year.

“PCMA has played a huge role in my development as an event planner,” Madeleine told me. “It has given me an opportunity to meet and connect with some remarkable

industry leaders and create relationships that I will continue to develop and grow from.”

Why am I sharing Madeleine’s story? Because she’s a perfect example of the kind of leader PCMA is trying to cultivate. We can’t expect every student interested in meetings to take the initiative and attend Convening Leaders on their own, or every organization to have the budget to send new professionals — although the PCMA Education Foundation does offer a limited number of scholarships. As it happens, Madeleine was able to attend Convening Leaders again this year thanks to a scholarship from Canada East.

We’ve stepped up our efforts to engage and support new professionals or those who have been in the industry for five years or less, because we need to cultivate emerging leaders like Madeleine. A New Professionals Task Force started last year is going strong. Our new professionals are now active in the development of content for PCMA365, and will be participating in a new mentor program.

PCMA also made a special effort to support new professionals at Convening Leaders 2012, including an Education Foundation grant that provided financial assistance for task force members to attend, reduced-price tickets for Party With a Purpose, and targeted events such as a SIG (special interest group) meeting.

Moving forward, we’ll be launching a new professionals conference to be held mid-year and working more closely with new professionals to develop education for Convening Leaders 2013 in Orlando.

Madeleine says she tells other new professionals that PCMA is “the place to be.” It’s critical that we continue to make it so. ■

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▲ GETTING THERE: As we continue to engage new professionals in this industry, we need to be forward-thinking about how meetings are evolving — and that includes virtual and hybrid events. Producing successful digital events requires a new skill set, and I’m delighted that Virtual Edge Institute — whose executive director, Michael Doyle, is pictured above at Convening Leaders 2012 — is launching a new certification program to address this exciting piece of the meetings business. Read more about VEI’s Digital Events Strategist program on p. 32.

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