



THE LAST WORD



Class Action

Patti Shock, CPCE, CHT, has spent a lifetime educating future leaders in the event industry—and she isn't done yet

By Lisa Hurley

WHAT'S NEW

Since her start in events, "Technology has changed everything. From software to social media, there has been a paradigm shift in the way meetings are planned, produced and evaluated." But it's not all good news: "While technology is great, it has eliminated a lot of lag time that was a cushion for planners. Now, clients expect immediate responses and are very impatient. Things are moving at a much faster pace."

MY ROLE MODEL WAS ...

"My mother. She was a restaurant owner back in the 1950s when female-owned businesses were rare. Having a professional woman as a mother greatly influenced me and made me aware that I could have a career, regardless of my gender."

THE WISDOM OF A WAITRESS

"While most people look down on food servers, I learned many skills as a waitress that I use to this day: how to initiate a conversation, how to prioritize on the fly, how to be tactful ... and how to schmooze the guest to get that tip."

Hyatt's loss was the event industry's gain.

Patti Shock grew up working in her family's Italian restaurant in Oakland, Calif., with the goal of one day becoming "the first female general manager of a Hyatt Regency hotel," she says. But then it struck her: "I realized that I would spend my life looking at balance sheets and P&L statements," she says. "I changed my mind."

Instead, she turned to education. Her first job after college was teaching in the hotel, restaurant and travel administration department at Georgia State University in Atlanta. The event and meetings industry piqued her interest, and she realized that higher education in the field simply didn't exist.

Upon becoming department chair, she started adding classes—one by one—over the course of her 10 years there. "The dean of the University of Nevada Las Vegas took note and recruited me to create a meeting and events program," she explains. She became chair of UNLV's brand-new department of tourism and convention administration, and spent the next 25 years doing what she loves: teaching. "I have taught thousands of students from all over the world," she says. "Thousands more at other colleges have been taught out of books I have written." She retired in 2003 and now holds the title of professor emeritus.

Well ... she didn't exactly retire.

"I didn't want to just sit around and watch television for the rest of my life," she says. "And I felt I still had a lot that I could contribute to the industry."

Shock now serves as academic consultant at the International School of Hospitality in Las Vegas. "TISOH works closely with the industry in Las Vegas, and many of the top events professionals actually teach in the program," she says. "They care about their students and develop personal relationships with them." She also teaches online courses for Florida International University and Kennesaw State University.

The bustling Las Vegas event industry is ideal for her event students. "Our students get to do internships with some of the greatest event producers on the planet," she explains. "We see all of the latest food trends and get to know celebrity chefs. And, since I taught here for 25 years, the industry here is full of my former students. Rarely do I go to Strip hotels without a former student coming up to speak to me."

Although many professionals wonder what their legacy will be, Shock already knows that hers lives on: "I love knowing that I have made a difference in the lives of so many people, both students and industry professionals I have mentored over the years." ●

The International School of Hospitality tiso.edu