Conference & Event Planning Services

Patti Spaniola has a deeply rooted passion for the hospitality industry and a diverse range of experience in the field. Her career began in a restaurant learning the fine details of superior customer service. Next, she moved to Cheyenne Mountain Conference Resort (now Cheyenne Mountain Resort) to work at the front desk (the heart of all hotels). From the front desk, she held positions as a wedding planner, conference coordinator and sales professional. After 16 years at the conference resort, she transitioned into an event planner for one organization. Instead of participants coming to her venue, she traveled with the conference and experienced a new perspective.

In 2008, Patti began her career at the University of West Florida as a part-time meeting planner in Continuing Education. Over time, she assumed the duties of Director of Continuing Education in addition to her event planning responsibilities. As UWF prepares to host the National Conference for Undergraduate Research (NCUR) in 2022, Patti was promoted to the newly created position of Director of Conferences & Events in January 2020 to focus efforts on this campus-wide endeavor. The timing was perfect. As COVID-19 upended the hospitality industry, she has taken advantage of the educational opportunities to explore virtual events and online event design facilitation. In addition to navigating planning for NCUR 22, she is focused on keeping up with the ever changing trends in virtual events in order to assist UWF planners and event owners with the transition. Visit the "Planning Virtual Events" Confluence page for resources.

As Director of Conferences & Events, Patti offers event design, brainstorming and collaboration workshops, Best Practices for Planning Virtual Events and Event Basics classes. All services are offered virtually.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Who Should Use These Services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event Design</td>
<td>#EventCanvas uses an engaging methodology that gets everyone on the same page to create value for all event stakeholders in a highly creative way. Witness the transformation of your event from &quot;ok&quot; to &quot;amazing!&quot;</td>
<td>Anyone including faculty, staff and students planning an event can request event design workshops. Contact Patti to schedule a custom workshop for your team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brainstorming the Pivot from &quot;In the Room&quot; to Virtual Events</td>
<td>These 45 minute sessions offer an opportunity for planners to share challenges and brainstorm solutions within a small group setting to create engaging virtual events.</td>
<td>These sessions are primarily for members of the Event Planners Group, although non-members can join upon request or request a private workshop.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event Planners Group</td>
<td>This network of planners provides opportunities for education, collaboration and practice.</td>
<td>Open to faculty and staff who have event planning responsibilities. Contact Patti to be added to the membership.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Practices for Planning Virtual Events</td>
<td>This class includes tips for planning engaging virtual events. See the class schedule in the Certificate for Event Planning offerings. Small group workshops are available upon request.</td>
<td>Anyone including faculty, staff and students can sign up for this class through Human Resources. See the Professional Development Library Calendar for dates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event Basics 101</td>
<td>This introductory event planning class provides the basics for planning successful events. See the class schedule in the Certificate for Event Planning offerings.</td>
<td>Anyone including faculty, staff and students can sign up for this class through Human Resources. See the Professional Development Library Calendar for dates.</td>
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Patti Spaniola, MBA, CMP, CED+

Patti earned an M.B.A. from Regis University in Colorado Springs, CO and a Bachelor of Science in Communication from Northwestern University in Evanston, IL.

She is a Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) and Certified Event Designer (CED). In June 2020, she became one of 3 Certified Event Design Online Facilitators in the world earning a CED+ certification.

Organizational memberships include Meeting Professionals International (MPI), Society of Government Meeting Professionals (SGMP), Senior Planners Industry Network (SPIN), Event Industry Council (EIC) and Association for Continuing Higher Education where she serves on the board of directors.

At UWF, Patti founded and leads the Event Planners Group of 75 members, teaches classes for the Certificate in Event Planning, partners with Global Hospitality & Tourism to offer exclusive opportunities for capstone students and provides event design workshops, resources, and consultations.

Contact Patti at pspaniola@uwf.edu.
Hot Seat is a process that uses crowdsourcing with a trusted group of colleagues who provide solutions to a problem.

The person in the Hot Seat poses a quality question in the form of "How might I ...(Challenge/Objective), while at the same time ..... (Boundary or Condition) so that I ... (Goal)?" For example, "How might I increase my revenue by 10% while maintaining current prices so that I can move into a new business one year from now?"

Trusted colleagues consider the question and offer ideas for solutions without further discussion. The only response that can be offered is "Thank you very much".

The person in the Hot Seat has the responsibility of trying one or two ideas over a 21 day period, then reporting back to the trusted colleagues with the results.

Anyone including faculty, staff and students can request a Hot Seat. Consider who might serve as trusted colleagues when making the request.

Event Design

Are you asking yourself these questions about your events?

- Why am I hosting this event?
- Who are the stakeholders I should be planning for?
- How does this event create value for my important stakeholders?
- Why should my stakeholders attend my event? What behavior change will occur for them because they attended?
- How do I keep my team on the same page with all of the other projects we are working on?

If your desire is to host meaningful events that are specifically designed to create behavior change for your stakeholders, then the Event Design workshop is for you.

Event Design Workshop Details

Planners are in the midst of creating virtual and hybrid events which require a different design than in the room events. In order to accomplish goals of creating an engaging event, the planning team needs to create a virtual experience rather than simply moving the in the room event to a virtual setting. Creating an engaging virtual experience takes creativity, collaboration and empathy to engage and excite participants that will meet the goals and objectives of the event owners and stakeholders.

Results of the workshop include:

- clear identification of stakeholders for whom to plan the event
- empathy analysis of the determined stakeholders to truly understand them
- identification of desired behavior changes of the stakeholders because of their participation in the event
- creative prototype for a successful event
- a well-designed event with clear objectives and tasks that will keep the planning team on the same page

Team and Time Requirements:
Workshop sessions are scheduled in blocks of 2.5 hours each and will require two 2.5 hour sessions to complete the event design process. This timeframe enables teams to empathize with 2 stakeholders. Additional time is needed if team members identify more than 2 stakeholders to evaluate. Contact Patti at pspaniola@uwf.edu to schedule workshop sessions.

Teams must have a minimum of 5 members to schedule a workshop. Selecting a diverse group within your team is encouraged, not just dedicated planners, as all team members will contribute valuable ideas.

Computer requirements:

At this time, all workshops are conducted virtually using Zoom and Mural.

- Video Camera is required. In order for the team to effectively collaborate together, everyone will need to turn on their video cameras they can be seen.
- Audio is required so ideas can be discussed collaboratively.
- Using a computer larger than a mobile device is helpful as Zoom and Mural will be open at the same time. Being able to see the Mural boards and type onto virtual sticky notes is required, so consider how the work can be done quickly and effectively with team member's computer set up. Using a laptop works, but it is easier with at least one larger monitor or dual monitors.

Pre-work:

In order to get a feel for the virtual event space, watch the Socio Event Hackathon. Witness the adventures of how 4 groups pivoted their in the room event to a virtual one. It’s inspiring and will help set the stage of possibilities that can be achieved using a virtual venue. Socio will ask for registration, but it’s worth it and be unsubscribed from later.

Testimonials:

“The annual event we had was always missing something, and I always dreaded planning it. We would try different things but nothing seemed to make it feel right nor create the sense of excitement that was needed. During the meeting design process I reveled in the creativity and the plethora of ideas that were pouring out from my coworkers and design team members. Once all of the elements had come to fruition, I was elated! The event was a huge success and I can’t wait to plan another one!” -Rhonda Robinson, Director of Leisure Learning, University of West Florida

“Using the #EventCanvas methodology was amazing, inspiring, engaging, and made my brain hurt from being forced to think in a different way. It was a pleasant way for us to think differently and ask ourselves: Who are the stakeholders? What do they want? How can we give it to them? We literally put pen to gazillion sticky notes to create a plan. It was transformative to me.” -Dr. TinaMarie Coolidge, Drexel University

“The way this event design methodology forced us to stay focused was exhilarating and exhausting! Patti was a taskmaster who politely kept us on track in prioritizing our tasks. Our most productive discussion was about stakeholders and determining who we should plan for. In the end, the team came to a consensus and created a unified prototype that valued all stakeholders.” -Dr. Marc Wilson, Southern New Hampshire University

“Having reflected on yesterday evening, I think the event was a huge success, not by accident but by design. I am proud to stand behind this group as we ratchet-up towards the conference.” -Dr. Josaphat Uvah, University of West Florida

“Virtual conferences really can work if designed properly.” -Participant in the first virtual ACHE 2020 Annual Conference

Most Valuable Takeaways:
"My most valuable takeaway was the idea of the time keeper to keep us on track. It kept us going and efficient. I also like the idea dump, I thought it was great for us all to throw out ideas no matter how big or small."

"Look at what you are wanting your key stakeholders to take away from the event and plan the event with this in mind."

"That event planning can be fun, easy and organized and this method just makes laying everything out so easy!"

"By taking the time in advance and getting everyone's thoughts, we have come up with our event plan and being on the "same page" will make for an amazing event."

"We finally approached the event with building an agenda that really involved active diversity and inclusive events."

"The actual events that would create the change from the entering behaviors to the exiting behaviors. It made us really have to think of what behavior we wanted to be changed and what it would take to change that behavior."

"It really helped me think through the event looking at it through the lens of identified stakeholders."

"It was helpful to consider the entering behavior and exit behavior, and with those components in mind, think of the event as a space where a change in behavior/attitudes should occur. Thinking about it in this way made it easier to narrow down on what the event should/should not entail."

"Identifying all of the feels/experiences of individual attendees"

"The whole experience was valuable. It provided us with a great platform (and dedicated time) to develop a plan for our upcoming virtual career fair. Your guidance and considerations were extremely helpful in this process."

"Having all of our internal stakeholders' opinions."

**Clients:**

**University of West Florida**

- College of Business, Women in Leadership Conference, June 2021
- College of Business, Hall of Fame Weekend, June 2021
- Department of Movement & Exercise Science, Poverty Simulation, June 2021
- Student Engagement, End of Year Student Celebration, February 2021
- Office of Undergraduate Research, Student Scholar Symposium, February 2021
- Digital Dexterity Conference, November 2020
- College of Business, National Assessment Day, October 2020
- Career Development & Community Engagement, All Majors Career & Internship Fair, June/July 2020
- Office of the Provost/Office of Undergraduate Research, NCUR Steering Committee, February 2020
- Usha Kundu, MD College of Health/College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, Staff Bash, January 2020
- Development, Endowed Scholarship Luncheon, January 2020
- Department of Movement & Exercise Science, Strengthsfinders Workshop, November 2019
- Certificate in Event Planning Leadership Team, Graduation Ceremony, June/July 2019
- Continuing Education, Equipped Leadership Workshop, May 2019
- Center for Cybersecurity, Cybersecurity Center for Academic Excellence Executive Leadership Forum, March 2019
- Office of Undergraduate Research/Usha Kundu, MD College of Health/College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities, NCUR 2019 Student Prep Workshop, February/March 2019
- Continuing Education, Leisure Learning Ice Cream Social, February 2019

**Association for Continuing Higher Education**

- 2021 Annual Conference, April 2021
- 2020 Annual Conference Pivot to Virtual, March 2020
- 2020 Annual Conference, March 2020
- 2019 Annual Conference, April 2019

**Event Design in Action**