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## RECRUITMENT

# Better to be safe than sorry

By Ben Leary of Aubergine Recruitment

The UK events industry is worth £11 billion pounds to the UK Economy according to Hiscox. With both corporate and consumer spending remaining high, the knock on effect from the 'Credit Crunch' is yet to be felt by the industry. However over the next 12 months we will see fixed costs go up and spending reduced across the board. According to finance experts large banks and blue-chip companies are now under increased pressure from their shareholders to reduce current spending on corporate entertainment. This downturn is highlighted by a decline in the number of organisations and independents that previously spent large amounts on corporate events now without an entertainment budget and a workforce that are dealing with an increase in the cost of living, negative equity and mass redundancies in some sectors.

Any organisation intent on survival must now be more competitive and have the right staff for the job. Recruitment and selection of employees has always been a necessary cost in any organisation. The key challenge for us as an industry is to maximise the output from the time and money we spend on the recruitment process by training and developing our employees and increasing the quality of events staff in the market. Will Broom, Managing Director of Londonlaunch.com and ISES [President elect], spoke recently about a new qualification Certified Special Events Professional designation

(CSEP) for the events industry. Originating from the US, the qualification is recognised as the special event industry's foremost certification program which assesses skill and competencies and is earned through education, performance, experience, and service to the industry. CSEP reflects a commitment to professional skills and performance and over the next few years will become a must have for professional events employees. For an employer it will provide an industry standard enabling us to identify qualified professionals ensuring we get the right people for the job whilst driving recruitment costs down. CSEP will also provide the opportunity to benchmark our current practices with others from across the industry from both here in the UK and the US.

The industry for most of us is still largely seasonal, during these quiet times it is important to retain our core 'back room' staff to deal with sales, quotes and the day to day running of the business. Where as for busy periods we need to employ external professionals to come in as contractors or employ an external company to bring in larger volumes of staff on an event by event basis. We need to ensure that the people we are employing are seasoned professionals but also know the values of the business they work for. We need everybody from senior managers to the back of house staff trained on the business's brand and values increasing the level of engagement and a belief in the

product and services they provide. This will help avoid costly mistakes not only by having a motivated team but showing your client that everybody who works for you feels valued and is happy in their job.

At Aubergine Events we work with a range of clients in the events industry and supply large volumes of staff during peak periods. As an agency it is not possible to talk at in great depth about each of our clients with all new staff but we do put every new starter through a comprehensive induction programme which includes modules such as Who We Are; Who We Work With; Where We Want to Be and Group Standards and Expectations. At Aubergine we believe that this is a really important part of the training and development we give our staff and is essential in creating passion and a belief in the excellent service we provide. Since we have introduced these modules in to our induction programme 2 years ago our staff retention rate has gone up by 35% and our positive client feed back up by 18%.

This year is set to be more competitive for everybody in the industry and with clients reluctant to spend large amounts on corporate events we need to make sure that we are giving them value for money and employing the right people to make the event a success. Many people I speak to at industry evenings tell me that the credit crunch will not affect the industry and I certainly hope this is the case. However we need a contingency for what could happen. Keeping fixed costs low and employing the right people is, I believe, key to building a sustainable, profitable business that will keep the UK at the forefront of the global events industry.

Aubergine Event Staff is London's leading event staffing provider.

We supply a range of staff from corporate hosts, waiters, Cloakroom attendants, Event Mangers, Chef's and many more.

We work with some of the biggest names in the business and service a range of clients from caterers, event managers, venues, conferences and many more. We have a proven track record and all our team are fully trained in house by our experienced events team.

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