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INTEGRATED STUDIES
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TOP THAT! EVENT
32620 DEQUINDRE ROAD
WARREN, MI 48092
MARK P. EPHRAIM
TOP THAT! EVENT DIRECTOR

A. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

A. LOCATION AND LOCAL TRADING AREA

Top That! Event (TTE) is located in Warren, Michigan, previously located in Livonia, Michigan. Top That! Event mainly operates in the metro Detroit area. Top That! Event does do business all over the state of Michigan, and in other nearby states including Ohio, Indiana, and Minnesota. Petoskey, Bay Harbor, Traverse City, Mackinac Island, Bay City, Saginaw, and Mount Pleasant are a few areas that Top That! Event has operated outside of Metro Detroit. Top That! Event's parent company, Chair Cover and Linens is located in Madison Heights.

B. SIZE

Top That! Event is a relatively large event planning company. This company can be split up into three departments: warehouse production, floral, and coordination. The coordination department employs four people with a 300 square footage showroom. The floral department employs two individuals and the warehouse employs eight people. The warehouse is a total of 18,000 square feet and home to thousands rental items and materials.

C. PRODUCT SERVICE MIX

Top That! Event has a massive product service mix. This company is a full service event planning company that can over coordination, floral, and rental items. There is a whole warehouse filled with various items that make up the product service mix. These items include linens, ceremony structures, backdrops, bars, carpets, ceiling treatments, centerpieces, chandeliers, chargers, chiavari chairs, decorative columns, communal tables, curtain panels, Indian furniture, lounge furniture, props, floral

arrangements, gobos, podiums, decorative glass teardrops, dance floors, lamps, easels and stands, cocktail tables, lighting, vases, votives, linens, chair covers, sashes, napkins, stationary, and custom graphics.

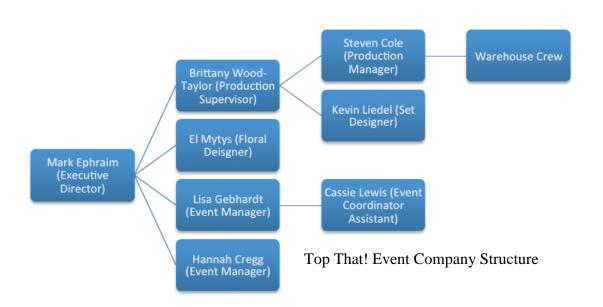
B. ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE, AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

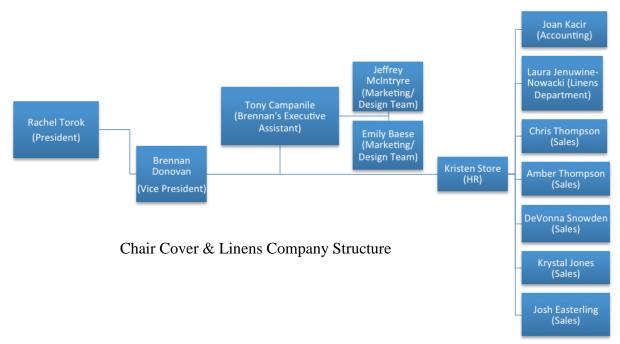
A. PROPERTY OWNERS AND CHAIN AFFILIATION

In January of 2011, Chair Covers & Linens, Inc., a seventeen-year-old company, acquired MPE Events, a ten-year-old company. Together they formed a new full service event design and production division called Top That! Event. Shortly after the creation of Top That! Event, a full service graphic design and stationary division were established. In 2012, Chair Covers & Linens acquired Mandavo, an Indian wedding planning company, broadening the spectrum of specialized wedding services. In 2013, Chair Covers & Linens acquired Artistic Studios, a prop building company, with the vision of having the capability to build whatever could be imagined. The union of the companies has generated an incredible team with an exceptional amount of capabilities and experience that is unsurpassed.

Todd Lloyd is the founding Executive Director, President, and CEO of Chair Covers & Linens. Todd followed a very traditional business path after finishing college, as he became a Financial Consultant for Merril Lynch. Todd, who always had a passion for events, purchased a small retail flower shop in Roseville, Michigan. That small business evolved within 20 years to what is known as one off the largest privately owned event companies in the United States. This company, known as Chair Covers & Linens, has become a multiple division company that has offices throughout the country and produces thousands of events each year.

Mark P Ephraim is the former owner of MPE Event Productions, Inc. Mark has been actively involved in the event industry for over forty years. Mark is known as an award winning floral designer, a certified wedding consultant, and a professional corporate event planner. Mark opened his own floral shop in West Bloomfield, Michigan, which really made his presence in the event industry. Upon selling his flower shop, Mark worked for a corporate event planner for the next eight years. In 2000, Mark incorporated MPE Event Productions. Mark and Todd had been very good friends within the industry. In 2011, Mark and Todd decided to join forces, creating Top That! Event. After the tragic death of Todd in January of 2014, the company dynamic completely changed. Rachel Torok, who is Todd's sister, became the President of Chair Covers & Linens. Rachel has been a part of Chair Covers & Linens since Todd started it, as the Accountant and Financial Manager. Brennan Donovan, who was previously the Operational Manager, became the Vice President of Chair Covers & Linens. Chair Covers & Linens remains the parent company of Top That! Event. Mark still remains the Executive Director of Top That! Event and now serves under Rachel and Brennan.

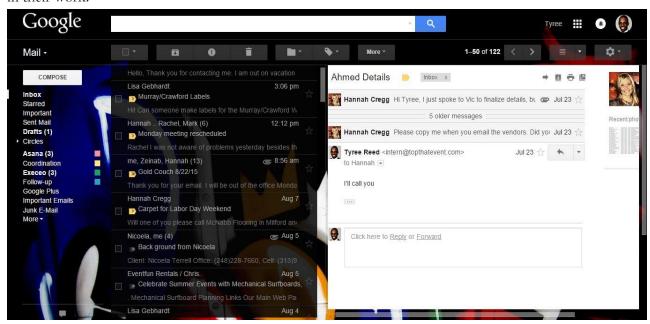


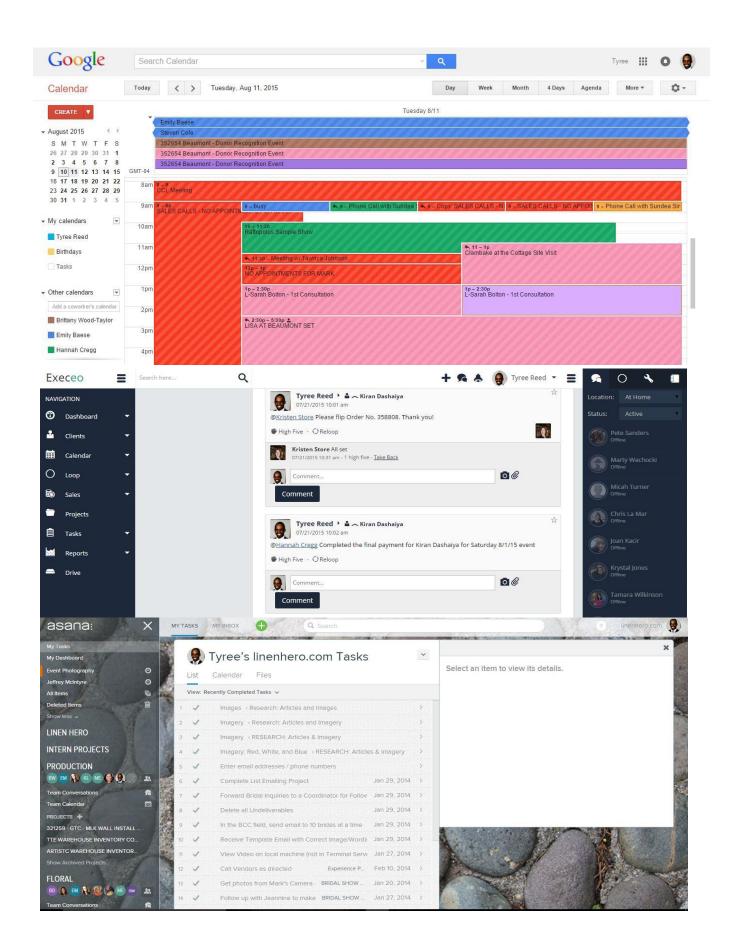


A. COMMUNICATION LINES

The formal communication lines that exist for Top That! Event would be their email system, which is Gmail, and Execeo. The informal communication lines that are used within Top That! Event are the telephone system and word of mouth. The formal communication lines are used when things must be documented in order to have a thorough record of business related things. Execeo is the most formal line of communication that is used. Execeo is a business communication software that allows you to communicate without email. Execeo resembles the social media site Facebook, but is used in a professional manner. The company has the option of creating private groups to organize the information in a more efficient way. Execeo keeps records of all clients, with their specific information and any communication that has occurred with them, records of all orders, and any issues that arise with any aspect of business. The coordinators are responsible for posting in Execeo when they have taken a payment for an order, when a proposal is converted to an order, or relevant communication has occurred that the whole company needs to know. The email system is used to have record of all

communication between the client and the coordinator. Email allows the coordinators to keep a record of what the client is looking for to accurately produce a quote and set up their event with the client's standards. The telephone system is used most often, but is always checked with the email system. After having a conversation with a client, employees are required to email the client a confirmation of their conversation to make sure everything is correct; the same goes for physical conversations. I have not worked for a company previously that had used so many different kinds of communication lines. I believe that having alternate lines of communication will only allow business to run more smoothly. This allows everyone to check everyone's work and work out any issues that occur more easily. I am really only familiar with a telephone system and word of mouth, as a result of working in the restaurant industry. Generally, restaurants do not rely on email systems or specific software to communicate. These alternate communication lines only allow Top That! Event to be more thorough in their work.





B. WORK ENVIRONMENT

The work environment is always changing. The work environment is relaxed and pretty peaceful but at times it came be kind of chaotic depending on the amount of events that are scheduled. Most of the employees get along fairly well, which result in a positive work environment. It is easily distinguishable between management and employees. At times management and employees can clash and it definitely get in the way in the work environment which lead to some uncomfortable situations and tensions. The culture is very dissatisfying when top management is present. The culture is much more laid back and pleasant when employees are not around top management. The employees are really focused on getting their work done and working as a team when top management is not present.

C. SATISFACTION

The employees do seem satisfied when top management is not present. Top management seems to bring out tension and a lot of stress in all of the employees. Many of the employees get along extremely well and bring out the best in each other. People who get along in the workplace only allows work to happen more efficiently and effectively. From my understanding, no one absolutely hates working at Top That! Event so that is a good thing!

D. SUGGESTIONS

I have noticed that employees make suggestions to management often. Management does not always listen or take their suggestions to heart, but they are definitely suggesting alternatives.

Sometimes suggestions can be taken the wrong way. All employees are very actively suggesting alternative ways to do things, whether it is communication, production set up, or coordination design.

Everyone wants the same thing for the company. They all want to work in the most effective and efficient way possible.

E. PROBLEMS IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

There are no problems within the work environment that are unusual. There will always be personalities and work styles that clash in the work place. The employees and top management are all very hard working individuals, with hard work comes stress. Stress can lead to tension, which could cause issues among employees. I have noticed that some of the top management is stuck in old school managing practices, which do not work so well for the technological times that we are in. Some of the staff struggles with the fact that they have a boss who is younger than them and may not know as much about the industry that they do, but that is just the nature of the company. The long demanding hours of the industry definitely adds to some tension in the work place especially after a long weekend of events. Another problem that can occur is while being an intern we are encouraged to ask questions but sometimes there may not be an answer so we are challenged to figure it out ourselves.

B. MARKETING MANAGEMENT

A. GUEST PROFILE

The current guest profile for Top That! Event includes brides and corporate clients. 95% of our clients that we generate from brides who are looking for help to plan their weddings. Present brides include three different categories: Indian brides, Caucasian clients with Indian fiancés, and Caucasian brides. The age ranges of these brides are from 21 to 32 years old. The Indian brides tend to be on the younger end of the age spectrum. Lately, the guest profile has been brides who live in

York, and Indian who are looking to get married in Michigan. The corporate clients that Top That! Event works with often includes Motor City Casino and Beaumont Hospital. The ASAE and Thomas Jefferson University has been some recent corporate clients of Top That! Event. Corporate clients enlist in the help of Top That! Event to put on recognition events, whether this be a dinner party, a luncheon, or a convention, or to host unveiling events, such as a new technology for the hospital.

B. TARGET MARKET

The target market of Top That! Event includes couples that are getting married and corporate clients. Top That! Event is looking to target individuals between the ages of 18 to 29 years old. This demographic can be male or female. Traditionally, Top That! Event targeted engaged females.

However, due to recent changes in laws, Top That! Event hopes to appeal to clients of both genders to welcome same-sex and opposite-sex marriages. Top That! Event is targeting individuals of Indian culture, as well as Caucasians. Top That! Event is focusing on Indian weddings, but welcomes weddings from Catholic, Jewish, Pakistani an, and Nigerian backgrounds. Top That! Event targets individuals who are college graduates, earning \$35,000 per year with a stable career. Top That! Event also targets corporate clients, including casinos, hospitals, foundations, and associations. For the near future, Top That! Event is targeting individuals who are participating in the 2016 Auto Show as well as the upcoming campaign.

C. LIKEABILITY

Guests really enjoy the fact that Top That! Event is a full service event planning company.

This company is often a one-stop shop for many clients, which makes the business appeal very

convenient. Guests love the fact that we have a showroom available so they can physically see some of items they are discussing with the coordinators. Top That! Event offers various books for flowers and linens, so the client can pick out exactly what they are looking for. Some clients get disgruntled that Top That! Event has moved to Warren. Clients who have used Top That! Event in the past get aggravated that the business is much farther away from where it previously was. Many clients also struggle with the fact that they cannot come in for a consultation on the day they call to schedule one. Top That! Event fills up for consultations fairly quickly, and clients cannot always come in when they want to. The coordinators and the assistants work together to fit a client in as soon as possible, or at a time that works best for everyone. Many of the Indian clients that Top That! Event receives are very concerned that the coordinators do not know how to plan an Indian wedding, since neither of them are Indian. It sometimes takes a lot of convincing that the coordinators are very capable of planning an Indian wedding. The Indian culture also provides a language barrier at times. This language barrier frustrates the clients because they do not think the event will be produced, as they want due to miscommunication.

D. GUEST SATISFACTION

Overall, guests seem to be very satisfied with Top That! Event. Top That! Event will not produce anything that isn't done exactly as discussed with the client. If the business decides to outsource, they have special regulations to make sure that they are still being represented positively. The guests do seem to get frustrated when the coordinators cannot communicate with them, as often as they would like, or there is a price discrepancy. The coordinators are extremely busy individuals, as there are only two of them, and they do the best they can to meet the daily needs of every client. In order to make everyone happy, Top That! Event should consider hiring a new coordinator to take on

some of the workload. An additional coordinator will allow all of the coordinators to get back to their clients faster, and settle any issues that the clients have. Many of the guests get frustrated when they see the amount that Top That! Event is quoting them. Clients have to choose between spending more money to get what they are envisioning, or allow the coordinators to give suggestions to get the most for their budget. This problem can be solved by the coordinators producing two quotes, one that is asking exactly what the clients want, and another that is more budget friendly, but similar to the client's wants. Giving the client realistic options will improve their guest satisfaction.

e. DIRECT COMPETITORS

Top That! Event has five direct competitors. These competitors include Emerald City Designs, Luxe Event Linen, Bellisario Florist, Bill Hamilton Designs, and Bombay Wedding Events.

Emerald City Designs is a full service event planning company that offers fresh floral designs, linens, rentals, custom stationery, coordination, destination events, and a subsidiary expo and event service, located in Farmington Hills, Michigan. Emerald City has very active website as they share many of the awards they have won, the reviews they have received, their blog, a flower glossary, and links to their social media accounts. The flower glossary is a very unique aspect to their website that definitely sets them apart. However, the website is very wordy, which can turn off many clients. Emerald City has a Facebook page with 1,944 likes, and they promote the contests they are having as well as what the company is currently doing. However, there is very little interaction from their followers on their Facebook page. Emerald City also has a Twitter account with 214 followers, which is solely the business posting different things the company can offer clients. Emerald City also uses Pinterest, which has over 700 pins and 243 followers. The Instagram account has 233 posts and 442

followers. Emerald City has 57 reviews on the Knot, with a 5 out 5 rating, and only 5 bad reviews. Emerald City has 55 reviews on Wedding Wire with a 4.7 rating out of 5.



Luxe Event Linen is a linen company that offers specialty linens, chargers, chair covers, and chiavari chairs, located in Troy, Michigan. Their company website is very appealing and thorough, offering the different types of products available, reviews, pricing, preferred vendors, awards, and a blog. Luxe uses Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and YouTube, with links to them from the website. Their Twitter has 386 followers with no interaction from followers. The Facebook page has 1,616 likes with many likes and comments on their posts and pictures. This shows that their followers interact with the company often. The Instagram account has 274 posts and 719 followers. The Pinterest account has 748 pins and 268 followers. Luxe has 52 reviews on the Knot, with a 5 out of 5 rating. Luxe has 51 reviews on Wedding Wire, with a 4.9 out of 5 rating.



Bellisario Florist is a company who offers floral, event design, cakes, linens, rentals, backdrops, draping, chairs, and place settings, located in Eastpointe, Michigan. Bellisario uses a Facebook account that has 2,956 likes and a very high volume of interaction. Bellisario has 32 reviews on the Knot, with a 5 out of 5 rating. Bellisario has 88 reviews on Wedding Wire, with a 4.9 rating out of 5.







Bill Hamilton Design is a full service event planning company that offers design and floral, located in Oak Park, Michigan. The company website is not very appealing or eye catching, which could turn away many guests. Bill Hamilton utilizes a Facebook page that has 1,055 likes, with very minimal follower interaction and very few company posts. Bill Hamilton has 30 reviews on the Knot, with a 5 out of 5 rating. Bill



Hamilton has only 13 reviews on Wedding Wire, with a 5.0 rating out of 5.



Bombay Wedding Events is a full service wedding planning company for Indian weddings, located in Troy, Michigan. They offer the latest videography and photography technology, as well as experienced Mandap artists. Bombay's website is appalling, they have a grammatical typo on the homepage! Bombay has a Facebook page that only has 271 likes and extremely minimal interaction.



The company has only made nine posts this year!

This company does not have a Wedding Wire or
the Knot profile for customers to leave reviews.

In comparison to its competitors, Top That! Event utilizes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest. The Facebook page has 1,098 likes with frequent postings and little follower interaction. The Twitter account has 157 followers with identical postings of what is on the Facebook page. The Instagram account has only 75 posts and 169 followers. The Pinterest account has 1,494 pins and 222 followers. Top That! Event does not have a profile on the Knot for customers to leave reviews. Top That! Event has 67 reviews on Wedding Wire with a 4.9 rating out of 5.

F. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Top That! Event has many strengths and weaknesses compared to their competitors. Its strengths include social media presence, website appearance, services offered, and Mandavo. Top That! Event has a very strong social media presence that is used regularly. The social media outlets are used in the correct way to showcase what Top That! Event is currently involved in, in order to entice potential customers. Top That! Event has relatively strong customer interaction. The website for Top That! Event is visually appealing. It showcases everything that the company has to offer in a professional and helpful manner. Top That! Event is the only company, compared to their competitors, that offers an extensive amount of services. Top That! Event can market themselves as a one-stop shop for events, where many other event-planning companies only offer a fraction of what Top That! Event does. Mandavo is a very unique portion of Top That! Event. Many event-planning companies do not have the experience or the means to take on Indian clients like Top That! Event does.

The weaknesses include Instagram, Twitter, aspects of the website, and the Knot. Top That! Event is relatively new to Instagram. The company needs to work on having a stronger Instagram presence as it only has 75 posts. Top That! Event is utilizing its Twitter page in the same exact manner as the Facebook page. This provides no variety for its followers, which can definitely be improved to better serve all areas of social media. Even though the website is one of its strengths, the website lacks the ability to click on links that will directly take viewers to social media outlets. This aspect will make give customers better access to all of the social media outlets. Top That! Event lacks a profile on the Knot. Having a profile on the Knot will only get their name out there even more to clients who are searching for event planning assistance.

G. PRIMARY MARKETING STRATEGIES

Top That! Event uses a combination of marketing strategies including community marketing, digital marketing, relationship marketing and direct marketing. In terms of community and relationship marketing, Top That! Event creates needs that past clients have in order to have a loyal customer. This is especially true to corporate clients. Top That! Event creates a marketing strategy specified for corporate clients in order to develop a long-term relationship and have frequent business with one affiliation. Top That! Event is very willing to make specific and unique packages, including discounted pricing to keep a customer coming back. In terms of direct and digital marketing, Top That! Event uses these outlets for the majority of their marketing. Top That! Event does their marketing on a digital basis that allows members in the selected target market take action to make a direct response.

H. ADVERTISING, PROMOTION, AND MARKETING TACTICS

Top That! Event generally uses digital media for advertising and promotion. They will use Facebook in order to promote a special that is occurring or products that they offer. Top That! Event also generates multiple e-blasts to promote the business. They will send out an e-blast to a selected email mailing list, as well as post it on Facebook, to entice potential clients to take advantage of the limited offer. Top That! Event also participates in joint offers with various businesses, such as jewelry stores in order to draw in customers. Top That! Event will produce specialized flyers and brochures to hand out to clients with paperwork with every engagement ring that is purchased. The company is currently doing this promotion with Diamond Vault Jewelry, offering a discounted rate to any client

who mentions this offer. Top That! Event also actively produces specialized flyers and brochures to take to bridal shows and expos.

I. PRICE DETERMINATION

In regards for rental prices, Top That! Event multiples the original price of the rental product, whether what they are paying to outsource or what they purchased it for, times 1.5 to decide on a rental price. This 1.5 markup allows Top That! Event to make a profit on each rental item, while covering the cost to outsource. For example, when quoting a customer to make a custom backdrop, the client would be quoted the price of fabric for the amount needed, plus labor to make the material, times 1.5 to reach a full price.

C. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

A. NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

There are a total of 104 employees between Top That! Event and Chair Covers and Linens. Top That! Event employs 13 individuals, where Chair Covers and Linens have 91 employees. This number includes all warehouse employs, as well as everyone in the regional distribution centers. Top That! Event has five hourly employees, and eight salary employees. All thirteen of these employees are full-time employees.

B. SUPERVISORY/MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEES

Of the 104 employees that these two companies have, ten of these individuals are leadership staff. Top That! Event has five leadership personnel, having one supervisor, three managers and a director.

C. EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT

Employees at Top That! Event are recruited through career websites, such as Monster and CareerBuilder, social media sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, and event industry websites, such as NACE, ISES, and ABC. Top That! Event trains employees through on-the-job experiences or training, one-on-one opportunities with someone in a supervisory role, and going to weekly meetings. Weekly meetings are a great opportunity to learn about how Top That! Event should operate, and about our products, since there is a room full of individuals in leadership roles in the same room who can share their input on a topic. Evaluation of employees occurs through frequent communication with the individuals in leadership roles. The management level employees are very quick to address someone when something has been done incorrectly, and show him or her the correct way to do something. Top That! Event is a big advocate for professional development. The company encourages their employees to become members and become involved with various societies within our industry such as NACE, ISES or ABC. Many of the employees are members of one or multiple of these societies, and encourage the other employees to become involved and attend the monthly meetings.

D. EMPLOYEE CULTURAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC

Demographically speaking, the hourly employees that Top That! Event employs are younger males. These workers work in the warehouse as the production crew. Culturally speaking, the employees are pretty diverse. There is a real mix of cultures and demographics between the hourly and leadership employees at Top That! Event.

E. WAGES

The average starting wage for hourly employees varies based on the position the individual is offered. Generally, warehouse workers will start are \$10 per hour. Some employees may be offered more or less based on the position, their experience, or their age.

F. BENEFITS

Top That! Event offers their employees a variety of benefits. These benefits include medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and AFLAC products. Top That! Event covers the life insurance for the employees, where the employees pay for vision and AFLAC products. The employees split the cost of medical and dental with Top That! Event.

G. ANNUAL TURNOVER

The annual turnover rate for year-round, permanent full time staff is approximately 2%. The hourly employees, or the ones who work in the warehouse, have an extremely high turnover. There are always people coming and going to work in the warehouse.

H. EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

Employee motivation is a key factor to focus on. Top That! Event has discovered that compensation and respect has been the most successful way to motivate employees. Offering employees overtime or a raise will motivate them to work harder. Not treating the employees' right, such as not giving them adequate breaks, has not been successful in motivating employees to work harder. Employees who are offered means to motivate them to work harder produce better events, which makes guest satisfaction increase.

I. EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

Hourly employees constantly communicate and participate with managers in the management of the facility. At Top That! Event, there is an open-door policy among leadership staff that encourages hourly employees to communicate their ideas with them. The leadership staff loves hearing new ideas from the staff. They believe that sometimes the best people to solve a problem are the ones who do that job each day, as opposed to the ones who view the company as a whole.

J. GUEST SERVICE

Guest service can be improved in many ways at Top That! Event. The company is making their mobile responsive website live to make it more convenient for customers. Top That! Event is religiously working on e-commerce, and constantly researching trends to ensure that their product lines are able to satisfy the palates of many customers, instead of just a few.

D. OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

A. MANAGEMENT'S DAILY FUNCTIONS

I. MAINTENANCE

Top That! Event has a maintenance crew that manages the small things that need to be taken care of within the property, and the landlord handles large things, such as pipe issues, paving the parking lot, etc. The maintenance crew generally consists of the warehouse staff.

II. HOUSEKEEPING

At this time, Top That! Event does not have a means for housekeeping. All of the employees pick of the slack of housekeeping duties, such as vacuuming the showroom, sweeping the warehouse, doing the dishes, and taking out the trash. The individuals who do these tasks are generally the warehouse crew or the assistant.

III. ACCOUNTING

All of the accounting for Chair Covers & Linens and Top That! Event is managed by the account Joan Kacir. She handles receiving checks and payments from clients, as well as paying basic utilities. The human resources manager, Kristen Store, deals with the payment and reimbursement of employees.

IV. SECURITY

At this time, Top That! Event does not have a security system for the physical building. They had a security system at the Livonia location, but it has just not been installed at the Warren office yet. Due to the lack of a security system, only a few employees have access to keys to get into the building. Top That! Event does have security system on the computers that is closely watched by Tony Campanile, who is the Vice President's Executive Assistant. Tony reports to everyone if there is a slight chance that the computer system has a virus, and warns everyone not to open certain files if they look suspicious. There is also an extensive security system on Party Track to ensure only employees can use the software, and avoid the pricing information being stolen. Top That! Event is a big advocate for checks and balances processes to make sure everything is being done correctly. This way not one person has too much authority, and the business can run efficiently.

V. RENTAL ITEMS

The Production Supervisor, Brittany Wood-Taylor, manages rental items, and everything else within the warehouse. She is in charge of prepping, loading, unloading and fixing all items within the warehouse. Brittany is the person to confide in if there is a discrepancy or any questions regarding any rental piece.

B. EQUIPMENT

The majority of the equipment that Top That! Event has within the warehouse is purchased; this includes two company vans and a truck. The building itself, along with the printer and laser cutter

is the only leased thing on the property. Occasionally, Top That! Event does have to lease a larger box truck to assist on larger events.

C. ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Top That! Event does not have an energy management program at this time. However, the employees of the establishment try to environmentally conscious. The employees are sure to turn lights of when they are not in use and recycle conscientiously.

D. COMPUTERIZATION

Top That! Event relies heavily on the use of computers. The majority of the work that is done within this business is done through computers. Most of the communication that employees have with clients or other employees is done through the email system, Gmail. Top That! Event works around the Google Calendar in order to know when to schedule consultations, if they can take on an event, and to know client payment schedules. The company utilizes Execeo to communicate with one another regarding any issues that occur with an order that clients have. Top That! Event creates proposals and orders on the computer with the system Party Track. It is safe to say that without computerization, this company could not conduct business.

I. AUTOMATION

In terms of automation, there are not a lot of functions within the computer system that are automated at Top That! Event. When an employee is out of the office, Gmail does allow you to have an automatic email response, which is very beneficial for the client's of the coordinators. The codes that have to be entered into Party Track to put certain items on a quote or proposal are automated.

These automatic codes ensure that the item you put into Party Track is the item you will receive on the day of the event. There is also automated client information on Execeo. When a new order is created in Party Track, the client information is automatically put into Execeo. This makes it extremely easy to find the client in Execeo and communicate based on the client's order.

II. INFORMATION PROVIDED

Execeo is the only system that provides management information. Execeo provides all the information that the company has for clients and venues. For clients, this information consists of contact information, event date, and event venue. For venues, this information consists of venue contact information, pictures of the venue, and venue specifications, such as ceiling height, color of the walls, floor plan, etc.

III. BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS

There are many benefits and drawbacks to computerization. Top That! Event experiences the benefits of having easy communication. Chair Covers & Linens is a nationwide company, so it is extremely beneficial to be able to use computers to communicate frequently and efficiently. Prior to using Google and Gmail, Top That! Event used Outlook and Microsoft as a means for basing their business on. Since switching to Google, the company has experienced a much easier way to do business. Using Google as their main system has allowed the employees to utilize Google Drive, and virtually share everything with everyone, use Google Docs to create the required documents they need, and search anything within their files for an easy locating method. The drawback of virtually everything being computerized is that is the Internet or any of the software is down due to technical issues, the

company is basically screwed. However, Top That! Event does have their own technological support company, FUSE, that is readily available to troubleshoot any issues that occur.

E. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

At this time, Top That! Event and Chair Covers & Linens are currently restructuring the company financially. Due to this restructuring, Top That! Event was not able to give out any of the financial data needed for this section.

F. STRATEGIC PLANNING

A. SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM GOALS

Top That! Event's short-term goal includes increasing the volume of sales right away to make a profit. Top That! Event's long-term goal is to grow into a bigger company, maybe even become national, by doing higher class and more expensive events. The management of this company wants to produce unique and spectacular events with a very strong customer satisfaction rate. The company wants to be dedicated to events while producing events with integrity and pride. The company wants to promote teamwork within the company, as well as attain community recognition for the events that are produced. Top That! Event does not necessarily have the goal to become the biggest event company, but to become the best company. Management wants Top That! Event to be the company everyone in the area calls when they are having an event. Top That! Event believes there is always room to grow, but it is not believed that you have to be the biggest in order to be the best. Top That! Event wants to take pride in their work and showcase that pride to their clients in producing amazing events.

B. FUTURE CHANGE

In terms of business, a company can never know how the company will change in the next 2, 5 and 10 years. The company has a viewpoint of how they would like the company to change, but that doesn't mean the company will change in this manner. This viewpoint includes that the company will continue their efforts to develop a team of associated that will work in harmony to produce flawless events through a collection of philosophies, procedures, and policies. Top That! Event expects to produce events that their staff is proud of, which will portray as a passion for this career. Top management plans to add to and fine tune a well-oiled machine of people they have within their company to produce flawless events. Top That! Event expects to see little changes over the next few years that will gear towards bigger goals of expanding such as focusing on rental items and being viewed as a company who can mass-produce events.

C. TRENDS

Top That! Event expects to see a variety of different trends that will have an impact on their business over the next few years. These trends include Pinterest Brides, DIY Brides, recreating styles that have already happened in a fresh way, and electronics and computerization trends such as lighting, special effects, digital projection, and digital mapping. DIY and Pinterest Brides will have a negative impact on the industry because things will be overdone as many people are not great at editing things themselves. When brides do things themselves, there is often too many patterns or textures, or a centerpiece that is too busy. A way around this clutter is to use neutral tones to tone done the variety a DIY bride wants. This will create a less elegant, sleek, clean-cut and high-fashioned environment for events. In order to tackle this trend, as professionals, Top That! Event needs to edit where other

individuals do not know how. Another way to adapt to this trend is to add to the inventory in the warehouse to be able to suit the palate of multiple tastes, and selling items more often as trends change. In terms of the electronic and computerization trends, the way to adapt to this is to hire the right people. If Top That! Event educates themselves on these new trends and hire the right people who have expertise in certain fields; they will be able to present this trend to their advantage. Getting a very diverse and knowledgeable team, who brings different types of expertise to the table, will provide a well-rounded team that will be successful in a business plan.

G. MANAGER INTERVIEWS

A. MARK EPHRAIM – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,

Interview: August 4, 2015 12:00 PM Top That! Event

Mark Ephraim has been in the event business for over 48 years. He started working in a flower shop when he was sixteen years old, in Redford, Michigan. This flower shop was called Gigi's Floral Fashions, which was the largest wedding florist in the state of Michigan at the time. Gigi's Floral Fashion did about 35 to 50 weddings a year. Mark started by helping set up various parties and



events, while he learned to become a floral designer. Over the years working at Gigi's, Mark became a certified wedding consultant. Mark had the privilege of working in various flower shops where he learned everything he needed to know about the floral industry. After seven years of working at Gigi's, Mark became a manager, where he had fifteen designers and 50 part-time employees working under him. Mark was taught how to buy floral, purchase for large quantity events, how to multitask, how to

organize, and how to dispatch a wedding and organize deliveries. This management position allowed Mark to realize that he wanted to work in the event industry. Mark was attending Wayne State University, in the school of business, where he planned to pursue a law degree. His father had wanted him to be a lawyer. Upon realizing his passion was with events, Mark dropped out of college to become a partner in Gigi's Floral Fashion. Unfortunately, the flower shop burnt down, and was not able to rehabilitate due to not having the proper insurance. Mark then moved from flower shop to flower shop, where he finally wound up in a flower shop in a very affluent neighborhood in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, which ultimately inspired him to open his own shop. In 1986, Mark opened up his own flower shop in West Bloomfield, Michigan. He named the flower shop Brandy's Flowers and Gifts, which he named after his daughter. Mark was a great floral designer and knows a great deal about the floral industry, but he wasn't very familiar with the business aspect of running a business. Due to this flaw, Mark ended up selling his business to one of his employees whom worked under him. This employee decided to keep the same name, and ran the company into the ground. This was particularly heartbreaking for Mark since it was his first business and he dedicated it to his daughter. Mark's only regret is not stipulating that the employee should change the name of this business. After selling Brandy's, Mark went to work for one of his friends who were a corporate event planner at Professional Event Planners in 1991. Throughout the next ten years, Mark designed, planned and produced major corporate events for major corporations such as GM, 3M, Chrysler and Masco. Mark learned a great deal about the corporate world and what it took to plan a corporate event. In 2000, Mark created MPE in Livonia, Michigan, which he named after himself. He intended that MPE should be an all-inclusive event planning, designing, and production company. Mark met a gentleman from COBO hall who basically kept MPE in business by consistently sending Mark clients. MPE did a great combination of weddings and corporate events, by doing over 200 events a year. These events

ranged from social weddings to reunions to fundraising galas to award banquets. Mark discovered that sometimes it is much easier to work for someone else than own a company since you have all the responsibility working for yourself. During the ten years that MPE operated, Mark became great friends with Todd Lloyd, who owned the national company Chair Covers & Linens. Due to a drastically changing industry, Mark found a need to change the way he did business. This led to the combination of Chair Covers & Linens and MPE. Mark sold MPE to Todd in January of 2011. MPE became Top That! Event where Todd and Mark remained partners. Mark has done over 25,000 events in his career in the event industry. In 2013, Mark became a wedding officiant, per the request of one of his clients asking him to perform their ceremony. Mark discovered that being an ordained minister has offered him great spiritual and emotional rewards. Mark plans on ending his career solely being a wedding officiant. Mark has recently decided he is going to write a book to share his knowledge on the event industry, and how his career took place. To date, Mark only has a few regrets. Mark regrets not finishing college. Mark believes that education is the key to success and you absolutely need the education in order to have an advantage within this industry. Mark definitely thinks that if he had the opportunity to do anything different he would become more educated in order to help him eliminate many of the financial, business, and management mistakes the he made along the way. Mark was forced to learn by trial and error as opposed to being educated on these concepts. Mark has discovered that he enjoys so many things about the event industry. His favorite thing is that he gets to see the end product of any event. He loves standing back and hearing the client say how much better the outcome was than they ever imagined it to be. Client amazement is the best part about this job. You truly have the opportunity to make people become heroes to their bosses. Mark has also always loved the floral aspects of events. He enjoys making floral designs and arrangements for various clients. Mark's least favorite thing about this position is the hours that this career path requires. This career took him away

from his family, but these crazy hours have allowed him to provide for his family. Mark loves social and corporate events equally, but both for unique reasons. He enjoys that you are able to be a part of the most important day in someone's life, as well as bringing a dream the client has to life in social weddings. Mark loves that you are essentially the tool that corporate events are using to communicate the purpose of the event to the guests. In terms of advice, Mark believes that people should get as much education as possible and constantly continue your education when the opportunity is presented. His advice goes on to say that you should find a business model, such as a business type, that you would like to develop after. Once you have found this model, you should research it extensively in order to learn from the best and most successful businesses to emulate from. You should gain knowledge from the most successful individuals you know. You should know what you want and have a very strong business plan based on extensive research to succeed. The special events industry has been very rewarding and very good to Mark despite the lack of a college degree. It has made him proud of what he does, and he has the gratification of watching the hospitality and event industry develop from barley nothing to what it is now. He believes you can make a good living in this industry and have a very rewarding career.

B. BRITTANY WOOD-TAYLOR – PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

Interview: July 21, 2015 at Top That! Event



Brittany pursued a Bachelor's degree in Technical Theater where she received a role being a technical theater leader for over ten years.

Brittany also pursued a minor in Business Administration. Brittany began her career at West Virginia Public Theater where she became the assistant

company manager. In this role, she basically was in charge of all hospitality aspects of the actors and

theater team. She made sure the beds were made, transportation to and from the airport and rehearsals were taken care of, the kitchen was stalked with the proper utensils, and did grocery shopping. She then moved on to Purple Rose where she became an assistant manager. She had the opportunity to have a full contract for two full years, which was a very rare occurrence. Generally, in theater, contracts are on a show-to-show basis or for about six months at a time. During this time, Brittany had the opportunity to travel around the country with the company to places such as New York City and San Francisco. Brittany truly loved working in theater, but it was definitely an exhausting career. Brittany became so burnt out that she almost had a stroke from the stress of her job at the age of 22. At this time in her life, she knew she needed a break from theater. She then moved on to Top That! Event where she is now the production supervisor. She has the responsibilities of managing the warehouse, production crew, and repair or manages the inventory. Brittany came to Top That! Event because she desperately needed a new job. This role is the closest thing she could find relative to her degree that was outside of theater. When Brittany came to Top That! Event, she started out as production crew, stepped us as a manager when Todd passed, and then got promoted to manager when the original manager left the company. Although she loves her job at Top That! Event, she would go back to working in theater in a heartbeat. Brittany would do a few things differently to-date if she had the option. She would undoubtedly trust her instincts to allow her success to happen and not be afraid to be successful. She would definitely lose her fear of success. Brittany is no longer afraid to fail, she is afraid to succeed. Brittany enjoys the technical aspects of her job the most, meaning that she is able to figure out the technical specifications. This could include how to put a backdrop up in an hour, or how to hang a chandelier when the power is over 300 feet away from the desired location. She absolutely loves taking the technical aspect of any job and making it beautiful. She enjoys the bureaucracy, bottom lines, and profit sector of this job the least. Brittany believes that the most

challenging aspect of her position is managing so many different personalities. Everyone who works in the warehouse has a different personality and a different way of learning. She has found the solution of not being herself at work. She is whom she needs to be in order to get the job done; she believes that is just being professional, not being fake. Brittany had some very helpful advice to share with someone who is entering the business world. This advice includes ironing your clothes, learning how to dress your body type in a professional manner, and be well manicured. Brittany consistently goes back to a quote by Isaac Newton, "tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy."

C. HANNAH CREGG – EVENT MANAGER

Interview: July 13, 2015 at Top That! Event

Hannah, is a Ferris State Alumni who knew from high school that event planning was her career of choice. She studied Business, Hotel and Resort, Food and Beverage, and Event Management. Before Ferris she attended Grand Rapids Community College and had many years' experience working in restaurants and hotels. Before her career at Top That! Event, Hannah worked at the local Buffalo Wild Wings in Big



Rapids, multiple fine dining golf courses such as Thousand Oaks, and started off as a recreation intern for Omni Hotels. If she could change anything about her current position it would be to allow more time off because of the type of industry we choose to work in there are long demanding hours. At times she finds it challenging to balance work life and personal life but she makes sure to take time for herself by taking personal time off and vacationing. One thing that she would do differently would be to take more time to discover what exactly what she wanted to do instead of jumping right into her career so she could have had a more diverse career background. She thoroughly enjoys working at Top

That! Event because every day is different. There is a large variety of styles and traditions while working in the event industry that challenge Hannah to execute the best events possible. A piece of advice she would give to someone entering the business would be to never stop asking questions and to gain as much experience as you can.

D. LISA GEBHART- EVENT MANAGER

Interview: July 13, 2015 at Top That! Event



Lisa attended Western Michigan University where she studied Fashion Merchandising with a Management minor. She was always active with events and planned events for sorority, Alpha Xi Delta. Before her career at Top That! Event she did visual merchandising at department stores. She worked for Ann Taylor

Loft, Coach, and Winston Retail Solutions doing visual merchandising for many brands like Lucky, Polo, and The North Face. She found an internship with TTE and was instantly hired afterwards.

If she could do something differently she would not have gone to school for fashion and got a general business degree after working in the fashion industry she realized it was not her forte. A few challenges she encounters is having a many bosses with various opinions, and managing time with clients. She is working on finding the balance with meetings, ant the cut-off point. Though she faces these challenges she works hard to try to please everybody so things can run smoothly but also so she can provide the events of people's dreams. Unfortunately in the event industry there are long demanding hours which at times can be unenjoyable and Lisa wishes she could have more time off. She enjoys planning from the very beginning to end of an event to see how the whole thing plays out even though it is challenging and stressful. A plus of the job is she gets to travel all over. She likes traveling because it

familiarizes her with the area. A few pieces of advice she would give to anyone entering the business would be to grab life by the horns, be prepared for what you are getting into, you must be passionate and understand the business.

E. STEVEN COLE – PRODUCTION MANAGER

Interview: July 15, 2015 at Top That! Event

Straight out of high school Steven became a licensed broker and salesman in the state of New York. He started in events in New York City and it came to him naturally he then began to produce small and big events for large and small corporations. Five years into the industry he knew this was the right path for him. Before coming to TTE, Steven along with



two other colleagues founded Cutting Edge Elite NYC where he was the Director of Operations for seven years. As the director he was in charge of staffing and production for New York, Miami, and Los Angeles. He overseen 500+ staff, logistic operations and advanced development. He also worked at Dan Taylor Incorporated as an Event Coordinator until the owner passed away. As the production manager it is his responsibility to provide policies and procedures for each individual item, and vehicle in order to provide the best services and to be able to remain functioning and at the top of the industry. He sets a daily routine for staff that ranges from janitorial, vehicle maintenance, and back of house organization. He has trust in team to be able to work independently without supervision due to the many tasks at hand.

Security measures are instilled to make sure that while in the field never leave truck or products

unattended, utilize the production sheet and to always double check the products for each event. At the end of each night the warehouse must be locked and all exits cleared in case of an emergency. (See example of Production Sheets in Appendix) If he could change anything about his current position it would be to expand the Metro Detroit market to have bigger influence in a larger market place and to be able to be multifunctioning on the various levels of the hospitality industry. A few challenges that he faces are the last minute curveballs that are unavoidable and that his position is not scalable. Which challenges him to expand his knowledge base. The production of an event is not a one person job and everyone on the team needs to be cross trained to be able to carry out and execute the events due to events being seasonal and changing by the trends. Steven enjoys drawing on his past experiences to eliminate problems onsite for example, caring and preparing of props, etc. He finds personal reward and benefit from this by being able to better assist TTE as well as to help to improve upon the events as a whole. Some advice he would give to someone entering the business would be to absorb as much as they can from as many people as they can. Reserve judgement in order to form your own opinions because it is easy to mimic predecessors (career duplication). Do not be afraid to be an individual in the hospitality industry.

H. PERSONAL ASSESMENT

While working here at Top That! Event I have been challenged to avert from my old ways. It is of the upmost importance to be on time. During my internship we had to manage our time through Google Calendars as well as the daily hours of operation. I was also challenged by the various vendors and venues because no every time did our hours of operation add up. A few new disciplines I learned were to always ask questions and the six questions to always ask when answering the phone. I was always encouraged to ask questions if I did not know the answer or to obtain the correct information from clients, vendors, and venues. Mark, strongly emphasized to always ask Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How when answering the phones. Also I learned to document everything because it is easy for the lines of communication to get interrupted. When out in the field time is of the essence because we have strict deadlines to meet to ensure that we are completed before the event begins. For each event we follow the production schedule and in some cases the event timeline too.

Before I started my internship I had a premeditated vision of what I thought my process would be like. When I came to TTE I was blown away by how much information that I received in the first few weeks. I wanted to go into events and not plan weddings but after spending the past three months working on various events I would not mind planning weddings in the future. Though there have been demanding hours, arduous labor, and stress the event industry is definitely where I am supposed to be. I have seen the production, business, and execution of events and it is everything I hoped for plus more. This internship has definitely reinforced what I want to do for a living.

Throughout the past three months I have acquired many new skills that will help to benefit me in the future. I gained an understanding of Google, Party Track, Social Tables, Execeo, and Asana. Google is utilized for all aspects in the company. It is used as a form of communication and scheduling of events. Party Tracks is used to manage and maintain orders for each event. The event, production,

and stationary managers are the main users of Party Track. As an intern I was trained on how to input customer information, make payment as well as create line item list for each event. Social Tables is an online database that the event managers use to create floor plans for events. All you need to know is the dimensions of the room and use the icons to build various options for event set up. (See Social Table Floor Plan in Appendix.) Execeo is an online system of communication that TTE uses to communicate nationwide with all branches of Top That! Event and Chair Covers & Linens. Asana is a task manager that is used to create projects and deadlines. I used Asana for my social media trend projects. (See Social Media Posts in Appendix)

In the hospitality industry imagination is key! Creativity is virtually limitless and there is so much room to create an event of your dreams. While working events, I was allowed room to add my own personal touch to an event while setting up tables. I specifically remember the Domenichini Wedding where the bride had several pieces that had to be set on the table and I had to use my skills to make sure everything that the client paid for was placed and that every table was uniform. I also got the opportunity to work with the floral director where she taught me about the different types of flowers as well as she taught me that every flower is different and needs to be treated as such. They vary in price, size, quantity, weight and even in care. Before each wedding at TTE we set up a sample show of what each table will look like for the day of their event. At this time is when the bride puts the final touches on every detail from floral, centerpieces, and linens. This allowed for myself and Kayla the freedom to be creative and design pieces that we believed brides would like. One thing I enjoy about the hospitality industry is the networking aspect of it. It is a giant web of people and you are always meeting new people and learning new things. There is always an opportunity to network. While at TTE I have met people from all walks of life, I also met several alumni of Ferris State that I got the opportunity to work with.

One technique that I have learned is to not be afraid of being yourself, it is easy to lose yourself to the industry. Also communication is key! Throughout the whole process this has been reiterated to me several times, actually it has been drilled in my mind. I believe that these two techniques will improve my ability to be a successful manager. These skills will help add to the skills I already possess. I believe that my internship learning experience could have been more beneficial by eliminating the amount of down time. There were times where I had days where I had absolutely nothing to do. I also believe that the internship program could be more structured, due to Todd Lloyd passing away and the merging of the two companies the internship program as a whole was placed on the back burner. At times Kayla and I were unsure who was even in charge of us or who to report to during our process. It felt like a tug of war game at times too.

The most positive aspect of my internship experience was setting up the various events and seeing the end result. It was extremely rewarding to see all the work that goes into the event and knowing you helped to provide that experience. I also enjoyed working with Kayla, without Kayla I believe that my whole experience would have been different. We were there to support each other every step of the way from the good and bad points. Ultimately the best experience for me was being able to plan and execute my fraternity brother's wedding, which I was able to attend too. While sitting at dinner I was just in awe of seeing how the tent décor came together and I received many compliments.

There were not too many negative aspects of my experience. Some negatives would be the demanding hours of the industry. I definitely did not realize it until I actually had to do a set up and strike all in the same day then work early the next morning at my part time job. Another negative would be the personality clashes, everyone has their own way of doing things as well as their own

business styles. There were times where egos and personalities came to head which created tensions in the work places. There is also generation gaps which can lead to the tension.

A few suggestions I would make for improving this internship learning experience would be to have a more structured, and hands on program which I believe would be beneficial for a young event planner. Also to have one set supervisor to provide training instead of on the spot training that may not be thorough due to the hectic work environment. Overall this internship has been an amazing experience and I am glad to have worked at Top That! Event for Summer 2015.



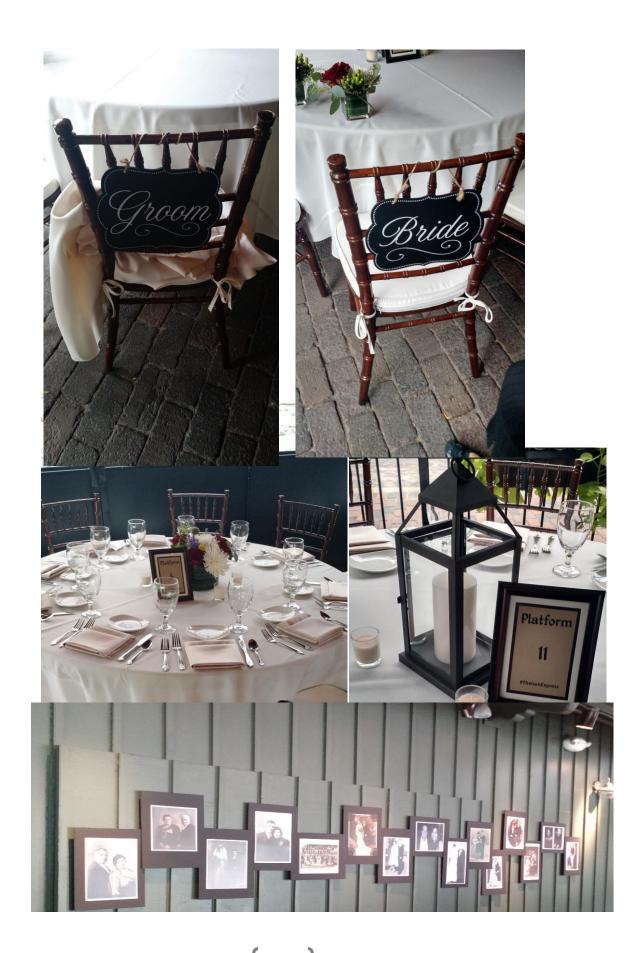
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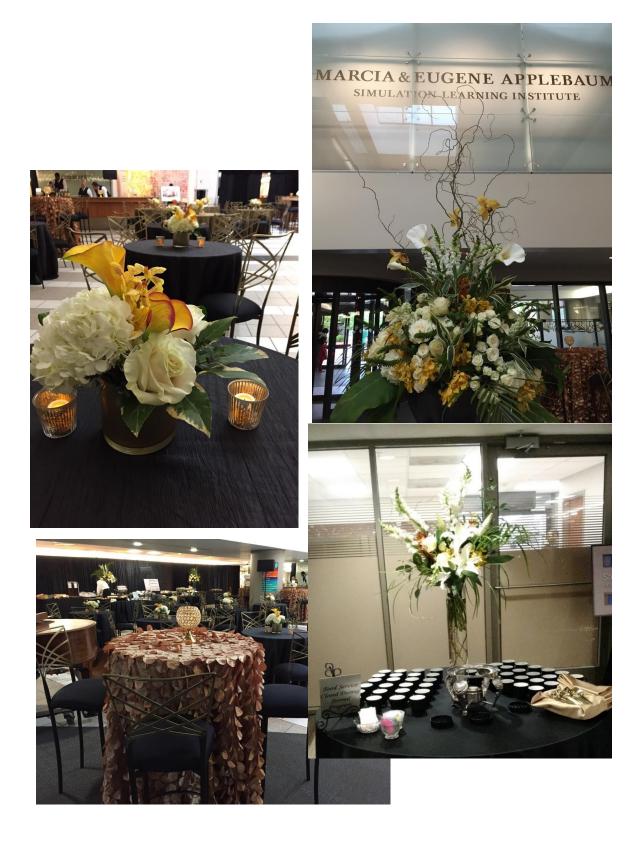






























SOCIAL MEDIA COLLAGES





