



AN *IGNITE* INITIATIVE

The tumult of the last three years has provided our industry with the opportunity to hit the reset button. It's time to reflect on and redefine the value of business events.

THE PANELISTS

LAST NOVEMBER, *Ignite* presented a panel discussion at the PCMA Canada East Canadian Innovation Conference in Niagara Falls. The topic was What's my Value? It promised to explore current business practices and identify key areas of reform that need to be addressed as an industry and as individuals.

Panelists Lisa Zivontsis, CMP, DES, owner of The Event Partner in Toronto; Natalie Lowe, CMM, owner of Celebrate Niagara and co-founder of The Sustainable Events Forum; and Matthew Byrne, CSEP, president and founder of Byrne Production Services in Cambridge, Ont., led the audience through a lively discussion that hit on topics such as salaries, pricing of services, the RFP process and idea theft.

It became clear early in the session that we had hit a nerve. These were issues that planners and suppliers had clearly been struggling with and there was a palpable sense of relief that they were being addressed.



Natalie Lowe



Matthew Byrne



Lisa Zivontsis

The session ran over time and the conversation continued throughout the rest of the conference as attendees shared their personal stories of how they have grappled with defending and articulating their worth. **Inspired by the passion sparked at that session, *Ignite* is launching the Worth It initiative.**

The program of magazine features, social media spotlights, webinars and roundtables is intended to keep the dialog going and drive change toward a more transparent, equitable and collaborative business environment for all members of the event industry.

Stay tuned to our magazine, website, social channels and newsletters to hear the latest—and share your point of view. In the meantime, to kick things off, here's a recap of the insights of the speakers from the discussion that got the ball rolling... →





On declaring your value

How many times have you negotiated a contract with a hotel and you got that rate down? And you got those really amazing protective clauses in? Did you tell anyone you did that? Or did you just deliver the final contract for signature to your boss or to your client and say, well, here you go. Or did you say, hey, they started at this rate, and I got them down to this? Did you go through that bullet point list and why it's great? — **Lisa Zivontsis**

The only way our clients can appreciate us is if we actually tell them everything that we've done for them. Being a martyr serves no one, right? We need to tell our clients, this is what I went through in order to make this look seamless for you. And everything that I did behind the scenes. It's so important.

— **Natalie Lowe**

I want to change how our clients' events create value. And I want to change how we as professionals who service those events, create our own value. Statistics about billions of dollars spent on events and marketing, all over the globe. And when I look at a number like that, I go, why aren't we creating more? And, that's my big thing right now is whatever I can do to communicate value and grow more value in this industry.

— **Matthew Byrne**

On charging for time

Our time is valuable, and we need to start assigning value. About 10 years ago, we had a big legal conference coming to Niagara. We gave them the whole pitch. The person in charge called me and said they were going to do the conference themselves. I said, "Here's the bill for my time and effort." And she said, "Absolutely. Here's the cheque."

— **Natalie Lowe**



On changing the mindset

About two years into working independently, I was having a discussion with a colleague of mine. I said, "I'm really lucky, because every time I have a hole in my schedule, something comes along." She stopped me and she slapped my hand. She said, "You've got to stop using words like lucky. You're capable. You do great work. People are talking about that and they're spreading the word."

She was right. Everything I was getting was on word of mouth... But I was still using words

like lucky. It was an a-ha moment for me, where I had to start thinking about what kind of language I use to describe what I do and what my abilities are.

So think about what you do and what you're great at. What value do you bring to your clients or the company that you work for? And make sure that you're using the language that describes that and not falling back on those words like lucky or fortunate.

— **Lisa Zivontsis**

On the RFP process

I heard a great sales quote: “Give away the why for free, but sell the how.” And we constantly in this industry give away the how....Let’s go to a marketing company and ask them to do work for free. We’ll get laughed out of the room. But we do it in this industry. How many of you have had a client say, “as part of this RFP response, we would like you to show us what your work-through plan is from day one. And what’s your communication plan?” And we do it [before we sign on the dotted line or are given any money]. We have to get to the point as an industry where we say, “No, we’re just not going to do that.”
— Matthew Byrne

On Setting Rates

I’ve been through burnout and that’s never a place I want to be in again. And part of that, for me, is putting my rates up so that I’m making what I should be making and not feeling like I have to take on more work than I can handle in order to make a living. It’s being okay with turning something away. — Lisa Zivontsis

On making change

If we begin to act like we have value, and if you support and express your value, you give permission to me to do the same. And vice versa, if you discount yourself, then I become discounted in the marketplace as well. And that’s where I think we need to protect our own self-esteem and our own self value. We need to work as an industry to protect our overall value. At the end of the day, our value is what the market will bear. And I think we need to test that more. — Natalie Lowe

On Discounts

I’m certainly guilty of, in the past, where I’ve thrown on an extra light or done a couple of extra hours of work or said, yes, sure, I’ll re-render that with a new logo, no problem. All of those things are business decisions. But I need to track it specifically. I need to put a price to it. And if I want to discount it, I need to say, “Here’s the line in your bill where I took off \$150,000 of fees. But just remember next time, it’s \$150,000.”
— Matthew Byrne

