

HOW TRAINING SHAPED OUR CAREERS

Our co-founders, Julia and Charlotte discuss the impact training has had on their respective careers and how it continues to influence their agency values.

Why do you believe training is essential in the work place?

We believe it is imperative that our teams have access to the full picture of our business: what it is, why it exists and what its goals are. We spend a lot of time telling our story and discussing our vision as we want our employees and contractors to understand not only what is expected of them in the day to day of working in a busy event agency but also what they are trying to achieve (as individuals and as part of the wider team) and why. But more than that, we want them to be just as engaged and impassioned as us. We are in the events business because it continues to move and excite us! Storytelling plays such an important role in imparting this knowledge, so we try to build this into our training materials and sessions. We find storytelling really brings training to life and endures long after people leave the learning environment.

Talk about the most powerful training you have experienced.

Meaningful and thoughtful training programmes, expertly delivered, have a tangible effect on the workforce. The best training we experienced is where the trainer has taken time to learn and understand the rationale behind the requirement to train. Both of our co-founders have a strong customer service background, and that has been a natural foundation from which our training programme builds. Our trainers [Top Deck] understand our motivation and take the time to learn about our journey, challenge our thinking and facilitate our requirements.

Have you ever worked in an environment where training wasn't the priority?

The nature of our career journeys so far has been such that this has not been an issue (always having worked in City Professional Services firms). However, we have certainly noted the difference in training methods and the opportunities to develop, incentivise and engage which transcend the training room. Training should be a continual journey, accessible to all, which encourages an individual to continue their learning journey of their own volition. We try to be mindful of this methodology when we are building some of our event (particularly incentive) experiences. Training that can motivate as well as educate is where we should be aiming. Leaving people with a feeling is far more powerful than telling them about something...

How does a lack of training affect the work place?

Where training is not part of the core people strategy, we have seen a trend for teams to stagnate. If you do not put in place a structure to enable your people to progress in their career journey, you are not only limiting their development but you are also shooting yourself in the foot! Without training you have no mechanism to benchmark, appraise and reward your teams. If you are not able to reward high-performing individuals, and if a meritocracy isn't encouraged, talented personnel quickly become disenchanted and disengaged, while mediocre performers can hide in the collective contribution. It is a lose-lose scenario and one that we have been very focused on avoiding.



Talk about the most inspirational leader you have worked for

Having worked for (and continuing to work with) established and prestigious Professional Services firms puts us in a privileged position of having easy access to high quality training and leadership. Leaders who truly have a passion for what they do are the ones that have had the most profound effect on us. The old adage holds true - you don't leave an employer, you leave a boss. We try to be inspirational in our working day and to foster open relationships which allow for everyone to thrive. This means that our own training journey never ends, and we are constantly striving to deepen our knowledge of the industry, trends, client operations and of ourselves.

How does training improve your business?

Hudson Webb was set up in response to our co-founders spotting an opportunity to deliver a personable yet professional service to a niche client base. We deal almost exclusively with professional service and corporate businesses who have a level of expectation around service and delivery. Our co-founders have getting on for 30 years of experience in this sector between them. It is in our DNA. Our business growth has been deliberately and carefully managed to ensure that we will never dilute this offering. All our personnel understand the need to actively demonstrate their abilities in this area and we heavily invest in training as part of this process.

How do your team respond to training?

Event professionals are, by definition, unique individuals with a very particular skill set. Always thinking, they are highly personable, pragmatic and critical thinkers who plan for every eventuality. However, we expect our team to go the extra mile and to be the best of the best. Recruitment and development is obviously key to ensuring that we attract and retain the finest personnel and training is a key part of this programme, so we heavily invest in our people values and bring this to life with our training programme. We also recognise that there is often not a “one size fits all” solution to training, as people absorb and process information in different ways. We need our teams to work collaboratively but we also empower them to make key operational decisions independently. Training is key to this approach and if you can get it right it really pays dividends – we have had some fantastic results.

How do you keep the training alive with your team on a day to day basis?

We have found the easiest way to keep the skills which the team learns in training alive on a day-to-day basis is to ensure that the key messages delivered during training ring true to our core brand values, and that those values are aligned to our business strategy. Focussed team members who are united in common goals undoubtedly outperform their peers. The knock-on effect is a happy working environment with a growth mindset – perfect for generating new and innovative solutions for our clients!

On-the-job training is a continued part of how we continue to develop our people. This might be as simple as shadowing one of the senior team, or it could be trusting people to make their own decisions on the basis that you either succeed or you learn! Providing a safe framework for individuals to operate in is key to their ongoing development.

What is your brand vision for 2019 and beyond?

Brand strategy underpins our position in the market and marks our point of difference. We partner with discerning venues and clients, ensuring the highest levels of satisfaction and never diluting the quality of our offering. Working with our clients and suppliers in a symbiotic and sympathetic way, whilst still taking a commercial approach, allows us to cultivate longstanding relationships which endure.

What role does training and development have in your plans?

Messaging our brand strategy to the outside world requires continued investment. Working with a like-minded training consultancy like Top Deck means finding new and engaging ways of delivering training – a perfect fit for our requirements!

This article was first published by Top Deck Consultancy in April 2019.



Julia Hudson
julia@hudsonwebb.co.uk



Charlotte Webb
charlotte@hudsonwebb.co.uk