

# **CTEoc Regional Advisory Board Meeting**

## **Culinary Arts/Hospitality**

### **Hospitality Breakout**

**January 19, 2018**

The Hacienda

1725 College Avenue

Santa Ana, CA 92706

**Scott Kim:** This is the Hospitality Breakout session. My name is Scott Kim. I was asked to be the facilitator. I have been teaching high school in Garden Grove school district teaching culinary arts. This is my 3rd year. I am a restaurant owner as well and I come from industry. But, as you know, we all get a different callings, so I thought I would try education. And quite recently, I started teaching culinary at Cal Poly Pomona as well. This is our panel and we will start with Laura and if you could just introduce yourself and I think a lot of you have introduced yourself already in the previous session but we will go ahead and start here.

**Laura Holbrook: Wyndam Vacation Ownerships**

**Harriet Porter: Visit Anaheim**

**Dennisse Naval: Double Tree by Hilton**

**Kristen Buhring: Double Tree by Hilton**

**Jhoanna Belfer: Ayres Hotel**

**Jim Shab: Business Expo Center**

**Shashona Reynolds: Mastro's Restaurant**

**Laura Holbrook:** I'm the area recruiter, Laura Holbrook, from Wyndham Vacation Ownership. I've been with the company for 6 years and on a journey with them. And I can go into that a bit more if you're interested in hearing about that. We are looking for sales professionals, marketing professionals, entry-level and we also have the resort side. I represent the entire Orange County area resort, as well as the Queen Mary. We are looking for professionals there as well. Our office is on the 3rd floor on the Queen.

**Shashona Reynolds:** Hi everyone. Shashona Reynolds, Director of Events from Mastro's Steakhouse in Costa Mesa. We are the 3rd largest banquet business in our concept. We just did 3 point 3 million dollars in banquet sales for 2017. We also had the highest sales for the month of December and I've been with Mastro's for 7 ½ years. Prior to that, I worked for the Ritz Carlton and was actually on the corporate side of event planning for a number of years. I run my department with one part-time assistant and as well as my banquet staff with a dedicated banquet captain.

**Jim Shab:** I'm Jim Shab with the Business Expo Center. I'm the Founder and CEO of the company, 8 years now in the industry. I actually come from a childhood of being in the hotel business. My Father had a hotel back in the 50s, 60s and 70s and I didn't realize that I was actually in the hospitality business when I got into this business. I actually emerged from 30 years in the cell phone business and wireless communications business, so I'm a business guy. I'm an entrepreneur. I'm a figure-it-out kind of guy. I'll find a way to make it happen and make it work. Real quick I will tell you. I was left with a 36,000 foot empty building after I got out of the phone business and I turned it into a retail sports center. When the economy crashed, they all left, and I was left with an empty build again. So, I took this empty building and my idea was to turn it into a daily rental business, which is now called the Business Expo Center and it's really morphed itself into an event venue for all occasions. And, we do really well. We are hiring for sales. That's the number one position that we need to fill because that's the nucleus of the business. The more activity we have there, the more demand there will be for other positions. We currently have 3 sales people. We probably need at least 5 to 6. I can actually say we have a pretty strong marketing department that generates more leads than we can handle. I'm proud that we do a great job delivering the message out to the community. We are growing and we support the catering industry. Just so everybody knows, we don't cater, so our business is to support anyone who's having the event where they know caterers and the caterers don't have a location to go to, then they can come to us and we welcome them with open arms. We don't make it about us. We make it about everyone in the industry. I will say one last thing, we did produce an event called Catercon back in 2015 and you can see it at [catercon.com](http://catercon.com). It was my first vertical event that I produced that was actually tied back to bringing attention to caterers in the industry and matching them with organizations, businesses, individuals and anyone who's having an event. They can come and learn and experience both from a conference standpoint. We talk about best practices, for example, if you have food left over, what do you do with it; if you're hiring a catering service at your home; and we teach on that subject of best practices for having events. We promote the caterers who put their services in front of these potential clients. It's a kind of

matchmaking service, if you will. I did it 2 years in a row. We didn't do it last year due to the fact that it's just a lot of work and we're looking for alliances to help us to build the idea of the Catercon event and benefit from it. And until we get that alliance, we're temporarily on-hold.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** Hi, I'm Jhoanna Belfer. I'm Director of Sales for the Ayres Hotel Orange and ALO Hotel. If you're familiar with where the Outlets at Orange and UCI Medical Center are, we're right on that corner. I also help with sales and training for our 22 hotels throughout Southern California and I'm also the VP of Membership for Meeting Professionals International which is an industry association specifically for meetings and events in our Orange County chapter. In terms of your students, I just wanted to quickly say I think that we were talking about the great thing about the hospitality industry is that while everyone may think of hotels and restaurants, it encompasses so much more. It's office management, real estate development, HR. It runs the gamete and we're always looking for people in terms of the hotel itself, in terms of front line entry-level positions, we're always looking for people in housekeeping, front desk. and the hotels that have banquets and catering, as well as sales are always looking for people.

**Kristen Buhring:** I'm Kristen Buhring with Double Tree Irvine Spectrum. We're owned by Pacific Hospitality Group [PHG], which is a company local to Orange County with hotels all over Northern and Southern California, Hawaii, New Orleans, Texas. Our company is unique to education because we offer a management and training program where students come and spend a year with the hotel. They learn the ins and outs of each department in the hotel and they can focus on operations or sales and that's actually what I did fresh out of college, so I would be happy to answer any questions specific to that. My role at Double Tree Irvine is catering sales. I've been there about 2 ½ years and did group coordinating before that and event management.

**Dennisse Naval:** Hi, my name is Dennisse Naval. I'm the Sales Manager at Doubletree Irvine as well. Prior to being a sales manager, I was actually a Director of Operations of another hotel. I've been in operations for 10 years. I remember moving here when I was 21 without any hotel experience and without any work experience at all. Walking into the hotel was something that I fell in love unexpectedly and it was something that was pretty mind blowing because I never really knew how well I fit into this industry. I think the passion of the whole industry and the passion of talking to people and helping people makes it a good fit for me. I would love to be a source of that and even in my role today, I love

shaping people and seeing if they do want to stay and work, I would love to mentor them and share my personal experiences that I believe helped me to get where I am right now.

**Harriet Porter:** Good morning. I'm Harriet Porter, Vice President of Convention Sales at Visit Anaheim. I oversee the team that sells conventions at the Anaheim Convention Center. Prior to that, I was in the hotel business for 20 plus years.

**Scott Kim:** This is really a great networking opportunity, because more than educators listening to industry, I am not going to use the script as much as I thought, but the purpose of this breakout all of the panelists have filled out a Labor Market Survey where they have answered a series of questions which we will go over. Copies are in your packets. The second part, they filled in an entry-level job skills inventory, so they list both potential entry-level jobs and then there's a list of competencies that educators teach. The Panelists have checked if these competencies are necessary or important. So this will be valuable feedback for both sides, so I think we shouldn't think of them as the panelists and us as the audience but maybe as a giant networking group. I think if we just have an open discussion it would be really helpful to everybody to hear the responses to these questions. I think we will with Laura with the first question. What entry-level jobs could students leaving high school or community college be hired for at your company?

**Laura Holbrook:** We offer multiple positions. I represent the resort side and this year we will roll out the hotel groups so we have a very large hotel presence here in Southern California, but for my region in the area that I'm covering, we have tuition reimbursement. We have certification reimbursement. We also offer positions if they are looking to come in on the resort side as guest services, housekeeping, administration, business operations, and control center. We also have positions where if they are looking to be a sales professional and looking to branch out into the real estate area and obtaining a real estate license, we also reimburse them as well. It's a 6 month ongoing program called the Tour Guide and it's offered at the resorts.

**Scott Kim:** If you have an interesting position or you're specifically sourcing a position that's entry-level for a college grad or high school grad and want to speak to that, just jump right in.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** Can I ask a question, I know this is against the rules but how many of you teach sales? I think there is a severe lacking today because if you listen to us, we're looking for sales people and no

one learns sales and how do you get a job in sales if you don't have sales experience? I just wanted to put that out there and let's try and get some sales classes into the classroom.

**Audience:** We did cover that in our retail and merchandising class with a huge focus on customer sales. A majority of the students did go out in a retail environment during internship time, but I think definitely bringing that into a course. It does touch upon customer service but not just totally sales.

**Dennisse Naval:** Because really in this business, you may be a server but you're selling. Everybody sells in this business.

**Harriet Porter:** And you sell yourself when you're applying.

**Shashona Reynolds:** I think a focus on public speaking courses is very important. I know it's standard at all colleges. I don't think on a high school level but really building student's confidence in speaking and approaching others goes hand-in-hand with sales as well.

**Scott Kim:** I have taught hospitality and tourism class, which has a lot of face-to-face and customer service, and it's not a draw for the kids. It's hard to fill the class. I heard a new idea at UCI yesterday, and there are a couple of professors who are trying to link e-sports and video games to learning specific skills. Gaming is a global phenomenon. So, they have a classroom tricked out with all the gear and special chairs and they are going to pilot classes to teach English, using a specific game. Interestingly, there has been some pushback from some of the English department, asking why they would teach a class like that. But, I think they were thinking of their AP students, who have no problems with reading Jane Eyre or The Catcher in the Rye. But it's those kids in the middle who have issues with competency in reading, speaking and writing, who might benefit from this because it's something that interests them. Basically, the project is to create a course outline to be offered in high school and they can take the English class based on this game. There's no research yet so this idea of connecting to this gaming community is really something kind of nifty. But in response to sales, I think as educators have to have these things built into the class. They have to be able to speak in front of somebody. They have to be able to make eye contact with somebody. And if you're older like me then you think, well, of course we all do that, but I think that's something that is missing. I agree and I think that if teachers can focus on those skills more and through things like this, teachers can understand that we do need to make them approachable and they don't want to stand up in front of the class, of course they don't, but they need

to have an alternative, because that's what's going to be needed out there. I think that not just sales but those skills are far more overarching in all areas where they don't have that sort of experience.

**Jim Shab:** I will touch on something that is very important in terms of sales and personality types that are successful in sales. You can train someone that's introverted and they have a very difficult time getting to be successful in sales because it's not an introverted personality type. I know the academic internships don't allow for it, so could there be a shift at the schools to step-up and find a way to either have it funded through organizations like ours that are willing to take on the extroverted type personalities that need the training and need the experience. Most most of us don't want to hire these folks unless they have experience because it's a risk. They need to have some experience, so the question is how can they get trained at the work place? I think they can get trained in the work place if there was some sort of allowance for letting them to learn about sales. The internship programs, and we've been through this do not allow for that. We cannot create revenue from their academic experience, so they are kind of in a difficult position although in event planning you teach them how to make phone calls, follow up calls but we don't have them selling. We just have them making the contact recognizing that's important and understanding that you have to learn how to do that, but sales is important and I think it begins with personality types. How do you want to bring into a class and train? You are just training everyone and I don't think you are going to have the same success and the outcome is not going to be there and then unfortunately for them, the students have been given the completely wrong environment or the wrong position type that they are trying to get into. If they don't have the personality for it and there's enough statistics that show that 80% of sales is made with 20% of the staff. There's a reason behind that and we dissect that and we say how do we get the science out of this and then focus on really being successful at this. I think you have to look at that and say do we have the right people being trained and are there ones out there who can help them and support them? I would say right now, probably not as much as there could be. And I'm not sure how much the schools have an influence in changing some of the dynamics for really what is necessary, which is sales people. They need to learn and get into the work place and there's a huge opportunity for them if they are aligned with the right organization and the right market. It's a big industry; probably one of the highest paying industry you can get into, but if you're successful at it, it is! But, if you're not, then it's not the highest paying industry! I think it is important and resolvable, but how do you learn and grow? We can resolve the issue if we work towards the solution and I don't think right now there's been a solution provided and that's why you don't have what you don't have.

**Audience:** I agree. There's a speech component needed, but what other components would you think should be in a class if it was being taught for sales?

**Harriet Porter:** I think there's a stigma around sales. You often hear, 'I don't want to be a sales person.' I didn't want to be a sales person and I'm not an extrovert but then someone said to me, 'You're selling every day!' What are you talking about? They said, 'Well, when you want to stay out later than 10:30, you're selling your parents on staying out later than 10:30!' Once kids begin to understand that 'Hey this is just applying what I'm already doing but in a more targeted way! It's a whole negotiation.' Turn it around and teach them, do you want to be in a strong position when you want to go buy a car? Yes, you do. So if you know what the sales person is trying to do and the mental games they're playing with you, you are going to get a much better deal because you know what they're doing. I think all of us sitting here, have been to some kind of formal technical sales and negotiation training over our careers whether it's provided by Hilton Company or an outside company for our organization. It's included presentation and proposal skills, which again, leads over to selling yourself in an interview situation. You're basically presenting a proposal of yourself, so this could be a 10-week course. It doesn't have to be a 4 year course, but optional because not everyone wants to be a sales person just like not everyone wants to be a brain surgeon. Not everyone's going to be for that, but I think and this goes behind hospitality. It's just general sales there are so many opportunities for these skills in sales in all industries.

**Kristen Buhning:** To add to Harriet's point too about the stigma of sales. I consider myself a soft-sales person. I think that a lot of people think of sales as this kind of hard hitting thing, but for me over time, it's been all about building relationships with people. I know Jhoanna talked earlier about networking and maybe it's not done solely in the classroom but having students join some of these student networking opportunities to really learn those skills about interpersonal connection outside of your friend group and learning how to leverage that in a business sense. One of the great things about what I do, is I get to work with so many industries so I belong to groups in the wedding industry and the pharma sector but it's very important to keep those relationships strong because I might not get a wedding event for 2 years before I see that event sale come to fruition, But it's learning how to build those relationships and I think that's an important skill to learn as well.

**Audience:** I was just going to tag team to what you said. I'm not a teacher on campus but I think what you're saying on the educational side, is that the educational committee is not about marketing itself. The students are ready-made. We don't get to choose whether they have to take this class for credit. I

think it's only when we get CTE programs that are optional electives and things like this, that you'll see crossover into more of a sales marketing class. And you have to put fliers out about what we offer and promote the class, because some are not automatically filled. But I think that disconnect in education is really prevalent because a majority of the classes the students take, they don't need to learn that skill set and the teachers focus on specific subjects. They are focused on English or History or another subject. I think the CTE crossover helps that concept before they graduate. I think they need to work on the entire concept of teaching real-world skills to classrooms along with academics and teaching technical skills.

**Scott Kim:** This is contrary to the way the system is set up.

**Audience:** It's changing. It's getting better about half way and that is something that California dashboard is impacting and everything that we are doing as far as career readiness. That's the assessment in the state and how the state will rank us based on these criteria that we need to show readiness amongst other things to work on.

**Audience:** Our ROP classes are really great. It's just hard getting students at times unless it's something more concrete like automotive or something that's very tangible. It's hard for the teenagers to wrap their minds around soft skills because they don't understand what it will mean down the road or for a lifelong skill professionally.

**Kristen Buhring:** I think Jim said it best. Every kid wants to make a lot of money.

**Audience:** It's a different generation too. Today, everything is instant gratification. Trying to explain long term goals and successes are hard for them to wrap their minds around. For example, if you go take automotive classes and you get an internship, you might go do a totally different job in a year and start making money. That seems to be more important than developing soft skills that would transfer over to other areas but that is hard just coming up with the type of career that would teach them the skills. It's kind of a challenge.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** I think too finding that industry partner where you can pair the classroom learning with physically going to some place is important. So whether it's the convention center or a restaurant or hotel or an event space because that makes it concrete for them. One of the things that we really enjoyed about having the high school interns that have had come to the hotel is seeing the connection when they finally get it! If they have had the chance to stay at a hotel in the past, they've seen what a

hotel room is like, what checking in is like. Now, they have the chance to see about all the things that go on behind the scenes to make this stuff happen, so that when they walk into the room, it's nice and clean and the pool is nice. It is really important to develop those industry partnerships, and I think most of us and I would say for sure Ayres is open to working with the local high schools and local community colleges because we're obviously looking to fill our workforce and we're always trying to find more people to work at the hotels.

**Audience:** Do any of you take high school interns? Do you work with high school internships?

**Jim Shab:** We have with seniors. I think if they're seniors it's probably more appropriate than if they are just getting into high school. I'm not sure if that's the appropriate role especially for certain positions.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** I think our interns are juniors and seniors.

**Audience:** What about Double Tree?

**Kristen Buhring:** Yes.

**Harriet Porter:** I think you talked about sales curriculum and maybe curriculum for every student would be to required to volunteer hours within different sectors like sales, whatever it is, and in that way they gain work experiences because a lot of parents don't require their kids to hold a job until they graduate college. And then they graduate college with nothing on their resume. I think by having volunteer experiences are important.

**Audience:** Can I just make a comment on that since we do work with interns? We also have a requirement for volunteer hours before graduation for our students and the policy says they cannot work for a for-profit business as a volunteer because it's considered illegal. So I know there are some that do require volunteer hours but I love mentoring or fostering the kids. We have a program that we piloted last year, so we would like to invite you all to it and to work with our students and we also have a career club that just started organically from the students this year. They are having career speakers come out. I think the kids are interested, they just don't know how to connect and do that.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** I think Shashona was talking about getting out and it's as easy as Googling whatever restaurant association or restaurant industry and finding a local chapter and with MPI we would love to be able to help mentor students. I think all of us started somewhere and hopefully are lucky enough to

have moved on and become directors or senior sales people and we are looking for a way to give back to students and if mentoring is something that works, I think that all of us would be receptive to that.

**Audience:** The biggest challenge that we have found is not that people weren't willing to do it, it's the hoops you have to jump through to work closely with students. These are the clearances, background checks, livescans and fingerprinting because there are so many steps you have to go through just to volunteer or have contact with the students. It's just that's the world we live in but I think bureaucracy can be endless.

**Jim Shab:** Do you do any type of assessments with the students to see who is a fit for what you're trying to do?

**Audience:** We do that with students. We do career assessments and use CA Career Zone with the state.

**Jim Shab:** In terms of the direction that they are going to go?

**Audience:** Yes, and then we backwards map from there and try to find them classes and scheduling that will fit in their propensity and tag things in that area.

**Jim Shab:** I know sales was a big topic and I agree that it is a sticking point. I think sales and marketing drives the company, so you have to have both of those components. And then most importantly, is to be successful in your team and not just for anyone on the team because usually, most teams have a percentage that are successful and the rest are not. The 'rest' are usually the personality type that isn't a good fit, at least, that's what I've discovered in 40 years.. There are certain personality types that just don't fit and they don't really want to do what's required to be successful. And it's not what I require, but it's what is required by the position; so, if they are put into a position that they are not really meant for or they are trained for a position where they don't want to do what is needed, they really set themselves up to fail in that position. I think that needs to be looked at more seriously, and more than just training someone.

**Audience:** I think what you're saying is very valid and true but I feel, at teaching the high school, this is a great opportunity for them to figure out the 'ah ha.' Or maybe, this isn't what I thought it was going to be. I think we'll always appreciate opportunities that students could have in the real-world setting, bringing them to that conclusion, before we invest full-time in schooling

**Jhoanna Belfer:** It's our job as employers to see that this not the right fit for this person. So is there something else, within either our particular physical location or within the company or across the board, where they would work better. This person is not a people person, so is there something behind the scenes that they can work on? I think what we've seen with the high school students is that their minds are saying, 'Oh my God! I never thought that somebody has to do that or put that water bottle in the room. I thought it magically appeared. It's amazing!' So for them to be able to come and see all of the work that goes on behind the scenes and finding the thing that they think is super cool and I would love to do that, because not everybody is a natural sales person. I don't think of myself as a natural extrovert and it takes time to develop those skills and the number one thing is getting the exposure and being basically forced to do it. Because nobody wants to do the thing they don't want to do but that's the only way they are going to get better at it.

**Jim Shab:** So, if they allowed for it I would take on any one that was interested to learn about sales and to have the right attitude about what's involved and they are willing to commit to the responsibilities. I'm behind that, 100 percent, in my organization but it doesn't allow for it because we are not a nonprofit, so stepping past that line of right or wrong, we just don't do it. But there has to be a way where it was funded externally or somehow a way to make that possible. I think that would be a really positive thing for the students to have that opportunity versus it being squelched because it's not allowed. They've got to start somewhere to climb up the wall.

**Audience:** I have a comment about that. You made a good point about the students getting out and having that 'ah ha' moment and finding out if the kids are a good fit for a specific market. We are very pathway-focused right now which is fantastic, but I think there also needs to be value given to those one-time classes which can give them the 'ah ha' moment of, 'Oh! I went and took culinary arts and this is not for me. It's not my style!' That has a value also because you hear about students taking the sequence of courses and that you have to stick with it. And they get to the end, and they don't want a career in that field. And high school is the perfect level to find that out. They are either preparing to go to the job market or they are preparing to go to college or both, so why not be able to check some of those things off and figure out this is really where I want to be and am passionate about it? One thing that is a challenge. Fortunately you're all sitting up there very proactive about taking high school students. But it is very challenging to go to an industry and find businesses that will accept high school students. Through ROP work and Title 5 compliant with all of our education codes, our students are covered by Worker's Comp. There's no liability. They are unpaid interns because part of the class. I can't

tell you how hard it is to sell that to businesses because they are think that high school students under 18 and the liability is too risky. But the businesses who get it think it is fantastic So my question for you guys is what do you think would help get through to your industry and maybe others to get them to see the value of taking those high school students? Even if they see red flags, can they trust the program and the instructors who are working in this area?

**Laura Holbrook:** I think there's a big movement right now within corporations especially with the business approach of CSR, Corporate Social Responsibility. Amazon is very successful and making a boat load of money, and they want to be seen as being good citizens. It's a way for companies to effect social changes with their business, practice and profits. We've definitely seen that evolve in the last couple of years where everyone is trying to also be perceived as being good corporate citizens and giving back to the communities. It kind of becomes a PR story so instead of the organization helping you, you're now helping the organization and they would be much more receptive to that. Worth a shot as an approach.

**Scott Kim:** Another suggestion is look at the colleges. They have these programs established and they post them on job boards but the fact is it's an organized program and there are objectives tied to it, so you're responsible as an organization to live up to the objectives for the students. There's the right mentorship going on. But we can't put them to work as free labor, because it doesn't work that way.

**Audience:** We've been doing this for 44 years. We're experts in that so there is all of the documentation and time sheets and objectives and competencies in the curriculum that goes along with this, so, we've got that.

**Jim Shab:** Most businesses I talk to they ask, 'How do you create an internship program?' They aren't even aware of the process. Maybe we should have an internship expo at my center. We could do that and we could bring businesses together. There's a big opportunity. I talked to the counselor at Fullerton College and they thought it would be a great idea to bring together businesses that could learn how to support the internship program; what it looks like; what it means and how you can benefit, even if you aren't supposed to have the benefit. I say I'm not getting free labor, I've put the energy into this and they're getting free training. Once in a while, I find a great intern and if I don't have a position for them at the end of the internship, I always invite them back if they want the job. We would love to have them back because they really stand out. So, companies do get that benefit, even if you aren't promising that, because you cannot promise the interns that internships will lead to a job. But there's a big opportunity for the schools and students and businesses – we just have to come together with the formula. I don't

think it's that difficult to create because I've been doing this for 7 years and average about 25 to 30 interns per semester and it's a pretty vibrant thing that's going on in our business and it brings a lot of energy. I think at the end of the day, I keep saying it's worth it, even though I see the distraction and the training and the retraining. The other thing I would say would be important if possible, is this would be an advantage for a company to be more interested and more involved, and I've actually looked at this and asked, 'Okay, in this short term internship, are they just here for the credit, their 90 or 120 hours? Is this all they care about or are they really interested in learning about what's out there?' And then, we see the students who come and ask to stay for another internship because they are learning so much and they really enjoy and embrace it and engage with it. I'm saying I'm more interested in those types of students who are interested in being there for the longer term because I'm not going through this cycle which is very burdensome to the company, to continuously replace students every 90 to 120 hours. So, if that part could be figured out, that would be helpful. I think Pomona has an 800 hour requirement and then you can break that into different internships, but I think if it's a little longer internship or choosing the right interns for the right fit then, I think you will get more businesses embracing the idea because the turnover is not going to be so high and that's the number one negative thing I have heard from staff. By the time you start training them, they are gone and they are not really even learning because they just learned the fundamentals. And now, they are gone. Businesses have said that they feel the kids only want the credit, not for the real purpose of the internship. I don't think that they are willing to commit to a longer period of time, which would benefit them. Hopefully, we can meet with the schools to resolve this. So maybe that needs to be modified and then the businesses would be more attracted to the program.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** I don't know what you're using in terms of a marketing piece when you're going after industry partners, but maybe reaching out to the people that you are currently working with and getting testimonials about how this internship was a fantastic opportunity with many benefits for the business. Maybe do a one page sheet with testimonials of the benefits of students and the business side. I also think that networking to target companies that would love to be able to get students in whether or not it's something close to your location. I don't know if this matches up with whatever you are teaching the students but being proactive and reaching out to those particular companies to say, 'Hey, we've identified that you would be an awesome company to partner with because of XYZ and whatever you do fits with whatever we do and could we work together.'

**Jim Shab:** Well I think too, maybe Vital Link could be the clearing house. I mean Vital Link just collected all of the people who are partnered with them and said hey these people are taking interns and then that information is shared or like wiseGEEK, here's a list of schools that have kids who want internships and then you would have that list and then maybe you could start there.

**Audience:** Or may be linking with the community college people especially if you're getting calls from the industry itself saying we need people and we can't keep up. I hear that a lot of times too and the way you get people to enroll in your program is that they get that interest initially in ROP, so that would be a good selling point if you could get to the employers to call the community colleges. We are getting so many calls, we can't keep up. We would if we had students who could get that exposure in high school and an interest to continue on to do the certificate program. Maybe that would be a good selling point for industry overall.

**Jim Shab:** I just wanted to say that I have thought about this in the past but it's been introduced here today. I feel like I'm in the right place with you as a panel. When I talk today about the importance of putting businesses together with students and teaching them all of this stuff, I think is really important, so I would be willing to offer anyone that was interested, since I have an expo center, I can do these expos and create events. I would be really interested if there was an interest on your part, whoever is interested in coming together and saying how can we put together some sort of a conference. Training for businesses and interns and to bring together the students and businesses to showcase what they do with the students and who would be interested in finding internships. It would be like a job fair but it's not a job fair, it's an internship fair.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** That would be a fantastic idea.

**Jim Shab:** I would love to do something like that and be the go-to place and we are set up to make that happen. We have I think the perfect place to do that. So it would be great to do that and I would be behind it.

**Audience:** I think that's a wonderful idea. I think our students are a little lost about having them set some goals before they look for their internship. That's something that we do and teach them how to write a resume that makes sense. Before our students go into their internships now, we have only 120 hours like you said, and I understand completely it's not enough. I mean my education completely

opposite. I think I had over 1,000 hours required but they won't do it. I mean it deters from them completing the program. Because I've tried it but I think those are all really good points.

**Jim Shab:** There may be a way to just touch on this because we have had students who we've hired if they were willing to stay longer in the internship and trained to do additional tasks. It's like going to a 4 year college versus the 2 year and without the cost of a 4 year.

**Audience:** Well, if they've carefully chosen their internship site, the chances of them staying are higher. I mean that's the goal. That's my student's goal is for them to get in and get the foot in the door and then they get the job at the end of the day. It's 100 percent of the time, I can say over the past 3 years that they have been offered the job. Not all of them have taken it because it wasn't what they thought it was going to be, but most of them take it. I think part of it is that they understand the opportunity that the internship has provided because we clearly explain that to them.

**Jim Shab:** At one time when I was in the phone business at the end of that career, I said I would never deal with another kid. I said that to myself. I said I am never doing business where there are kids involved. But, I respect these kids more than ever that are the interns because they are academically minded. They are interested. They are motivated. They are more mature. I don't know what it is but there is an engagement that I see from them and you just want to give to them. It's so cool. So, they reversed my thinking.

**Kristen Buhring:** I touched a little bit on my company's management and training program for college grads or even students who are in college. Many companies have programs like that. Hyatt has a general manager grooming program and I know Enterprise Rent-A-Car also has a program and those are paid positions, so what's better than that? They are grooming you to be a top leader while you are getting paid and it's like an internship/job experience and almost a guarantee in your future job market. So you could research those. I can send information about PHG's [Pacific Hospitality Group] manager and training program but really pushing those I think are great experiences for young people as well.

**Shashona Reynolds:** I was going to say there's really nothing wrong with taking an entry-level job in a company that you're really interested in. At Mastro's Steakhouse, we don't have formal internship programs. We are run by a huge company, but to have anyone in our kitchen requires lots of hoops to jump through. That said there's a lot of entry-level positions, server assistants which are bussers, hostess, back of the house dishwashers. And, we promote from within. My current assistant came to me

as a hostess. She started as a hostess and now she's doing sales and she will probably be the next person considered for the next location as a sales manager. She has the potential to make easily 6 figures at 25 years old, so I don't think there's anything wrong with somebody committing to putting in a few years or even a year in an entry-level position and showing that they can be at work on time and they committed to the company and the brand. They can really showcase who they are and they will be ready to be promoted.

**Dennisse Naval:** And I think for a lot of the high school or the college kids, what is most enticing at a job application is the pay.

**Dennisse Naval:** And I think it's like trying to mold them and see more than the entry-level that you're going to get. It's seeing the potential in the job and I think a lot of times that might be interns don't stay. Because they were interned around an entry-level position and that's all they saw. They didn't know the potential beyond that and I think for those of us who offer the internship program, we should be showing and explain to them that this is the first step that you can do, but in the next level, this is potentially what you can do. We need to help them see beyond the current internship and being able to see beyond that is very important.

**Audience:** We see so much entitlement today and they don't want to start at the bottom. I think the parents feed into that as well.

**Audience:** That is a struggle I have in helping students. I can tell them to start working at McDonald's and list all these people who started there, but they tune out.

**Shashona Reynolds:** I almost hate the blanket statement about millennials because my daughter is a millennial. She just graduated college but my assistant is also a millennial but a year older. They have 2 completely different work ethics. My daughter is a little on that entitled side where she is working at a 'job-job' waiting for that great opportunity to go to her career job. I'm telling her, you got to kind of start on the bottom. While my assistant is the one who is willing to put in the hours and work her way up.

**Scott Kim:** Well, I will partner with you on your daughter. My son is like that. They are just waiting for that email to come. They don't look further because they are sure that email is coming. I'm just going to wait for it, instead of taking some practice steps to get wherever they are going to go.

**Audience:** And you know 6 months are going to go by like that, and you are going to kick yourself, because you could have earned money and gained experience and you'd be on your way to the next thing.

**Audience:** Can I ask you to share some of your ways you got started and how it was the right position?

**Kristen Buhring:** I myself I started as a life guard in a timeshare in Palm Springs, but it was one of those things from my family being in the business. I also saw my sister making money and for me, it was 'hey I want to do that!' It was important to be able to admire someone from afar and seeing their step ladder. And I worked at the same location. I was working with a competitor, at Marriott, but I started there and worked with them for 5 years. I started to see my talents and I developed a passion and whether you are starting in the role that you want or you are in a role, all of a sudden you see someone doing something that you want and you go after that.

**Shashona Reynolds:** I was a PR major at Cal State Long Beach working at the Ritz Carlton as a cocktail server in the lounge. An opportunity came up to work in the events department as an assistant. I always knew I wanted to do events but it was kind of a good segue.

**Audience:** Did you finish your college education and did you go to college?

**Laura Holbrook:** I did cosmetology and I also thought I was going to be a nurse until Wyndham hit but I did get massage therapy and physical therapy license.

**Jim Shab:** Do you want me to start from my beginning? I can tell you my work part. I worked with my Father in the hotel business. He had a 70 room hotel in downtown Anaheim called the Valencia Hotel that is no longer there because of the redevelopment of Downtown Disney. I was sent me to military school to reform me when I was like 10 years old. I got really disciplined at 10 and 11. I think I drove to the junior high school and signed myself up for public school and made my way back home. Because I had been in boarding school I was so disciplined, that he had me working in his hotel at 13. I will never forget when I was walking out the door he said, 'By the way you're now the general manager of the hotel! What? And he left me there to manage the hotel at 13 years old, and I was totally capable and so that gave me my confidence. Then, I went to work in the cell phone business after the hotel was gone . I quit my first job because they wanted to take me off of commission only and put me on salary commission and I said I am going to quit because I am going to make less money because I am a producer. I didn't come from a sales background and to touch on that, I didn't come from being an

extrovert either, but I was personable and I had the ability to think about the other person on the other side and just tying it all together. I did really, really well. So, I started the cell phone business which did really well for 30 years. I was chosen by the phone company as their agent of Orange County so I did all the cell phone sales back in the 80s for the phone company and was like the dominant player and I was creative. I found creative ways to build a business and probably have more value to add to mentoring others and by showing them how to be creative and how to find solutions. I built my little phone business idea from \$0 by myself to over \$10 million dollars a year and created a quarter of a billion dollars in sales for the phone company. That's how well I did. Everybody looks at me today and asks why I'm still working. But, I have this big building in Anaheim that I have had as corporate headquarters and when the industry ended I turned it into a sports center. When the economy crashed once again, and all my tenants left, I had to step up and think what am I going to do now? Now, I have turned it into an event center, called the Business Expo Center and I will build opportunities here by bringing companies together. Well that didn't work. Cal State Fullerton has a program where they will develop your marketing plan for you and help you as a business to understand your market and opportunities. After they investigated it and gave me this 3 inch binder report by 5 students who were graduating and they said get out of the business. Your business opportunity is by bringing together those people and create all that at the time. So that's where I'm at. I actually did what they said. Created through being creative and finding a way to find my way out into the world and be via the social media world. It works incredibly well, being on Google in the top listed spot where someone's looking around the county and they are calling us. But, I guess I had to learn the hard way. I had to learn that you don't send quotes out. You don't follow the customer's request because you put yourself in bad positions. All these learning experiences taught me how to grow the business by not being vulnerable, as a company that didn't know really anything about the industry. But now I know enough about the industry where I feel like I can do anything I want to do. I feel that empowerment and we are doing really well but I have a history of building 3 businesses and really feel like I'm the cell phone guy because I was in that for 30 years, but I have been at this for 8 years and then I got to tell you I'm loving every moment and the opportunities. I'm a very positive thinker, so I come from a different place and that's how can we make it work – not why doesn't this work or why we can't do it or we can't compete or have the right colors on the building. It is always something that has nothing to do with anything other than a self-limiting belief. So I had to educate myself about that over the years and here I am today feeling like I am doing this out of passion more than about the money. The money comes, but it's based on the students learning. You just have to be around the right people who can help you get there and it is about that and

it's about your circle of influence. The old saying I've heard many times is, if you're the strongest one in your circle, you need a new circle! You need to be weaker so others will lift you. So I think all of us on this panel could lift students up and this is a circle they need to be in. Circles like ours and if they find passion then they will do well. I'm just an example of that as an entrepreneur.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** I started out working part-time at a hotel while I was going to grad school and was going to grad school to teach. At the time that I graduated there were hardly any full-time jobs and the friends were getting jobs in teaching English at community colleges in another state and I didn't want to do that. So a friend of mine who had been working in the hotel industry for a long time said that there was an assistant position open and that I should apply. I did and I became the office assistant at the Ayres in Costa Mesa. I worked there for 1 ½ years, working hard, showing up on time and doing whatever they asked me to do. And I just moved up from there.

**Kristen Buhring:** I majored in hospitality at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and upon graduating we had to complete 1,000 hours of an internship. So I interned as a sales intern at a small boutique hotel in Morro Bay, California. From there I learned front desk and I worked in food and beverage events. I left there to work in the bar at the Santa Barbara Resort in Santa Barbara. I then was group coordinator and was eager to move up but wasn't ready so my director of sales steered me into this manager-in-training program. I did that job for one year and learned ins and outs of the hotel and then worked in housekeeping, laundry, food and beverage, culinary, spa and upon graduating, I moved down here to Orange County and took a role as a Conference Services Manager at Double Tree Irvine. Since then, I have been working my way up and I'm now a Sales Manager. I have really enjoyed it and would love to help provide guidance to any student.

**Dennisse Naval:** For me, I actually had moved here when I was 21. I was meeting up with a friend who worked in hotels and I walked with her because she was applying and the HR manager asked if I would like to apply too. I said I would. I had only been here two days. They interviewed me and they hired me and I thought this was great. I didn't know it was this easy to get a job. I got in and started at the front desk and I remember talking with some of my front desk peers and although I had never had any experience with working, I've always considered myself to be a go-getter and I realized a lot of the front desk agents have been working there for about 2 or 3 years. A lot of them were part time students and they stayed at a hotel because the hotel worked with their schedule. I talked to my boss after only 6 months into the job to let him know that, even though I hadn't started looking for a job yet, I was going

to be leaving. When he asked me why, I said I didn't want to be at the front desk for 3 years. I said I was a business major and I wasn't sure this was the right place for me. I thought I could do better. I was just letting him know, and I was really lucky when he mentored me and gave me the opportunity for promotion. I have worked my way up and became a Director of Operations at a couple of hotels. I also ended up opening a small business, and because I had a small business on the side, I felt Operations was just way too much to deal with, so I moved to Sales. And I still love it! I actually probably love it more than I did in operations but I love the whole industry and the kind of opportunity it gave me because I didn't even think that was possible. I competed with people who studied here or graduated.

**Harriet Porter:** No similar story. I have a degree in hotel management and applied for those management training programs. You know 3 kids get those and then 5,000 kids don't. I was one of the 5,000, so I started at the front desk and just worked my way up. I would suggest to support everything you can. My dad told me that hospitality was long hours and low pay and that I was crazy. He was right. It's long hours and low pay, and you are never going to get rich quick doing this and I think it's really important for kids who are considering this career to know that. If you don't have that passion, this job is not for you. It's the passion that drives us all to go to work every day, because it's probably not the pay. But it is possible to move up if you have that passion and I mean it doesn't matter if you have the college degree or not. I work with people who graduated high school and started working and I've got someone on my sales team who's a chemical engineer. Go figure. I mean you just love it and I don't think there's a prescribed path for anybody, you just kind of work your way through and if you want it, you can get it.

**Scott Kim:** What is the difference you see between a person right out of high school or a person that has their AA degree?

**Dennisse Naval:** I think for me when I was hiring a lot of entry-level positions, it is how they present professionalism. I think it's easily seen with some people walking in an interview. You'll see somebody wearing jeans and somebody who's well dressed, although it's an entry-level position. You know we're in hospitality and we're in customer service, we represent really good companies, so the look is very important. I think that's one of the things that's overlooked by many people who think that they're only going to apply for a valet job or a bellman job, so they end up walking in without their resume and not being really prepared for that interview.

**Kristen Buhring:** I think it says a lot about your drive. Because by law, you have to go to high school. If someone is pursuing their AA that shows their drive and that they want to better their lives because there are funding that. They are doing that on their own so I would encourage anyone to do that because it just says a lot about your personality and your work ethic.

**Audience:** Regarding the educational aspect I think heard it in the opening a little bit, are there any other opportunities for educational tuition partnership with your organizations because the cost of college is so outrageous? That's such an eye catching thing for students to have possibilities of some sort of tuition assistance. Is there anything like that ,because that's a game changer.

**Laura Holbrook:** We do paid internships and we also have multiple certification reimbursement and they will do a percentage. For Wyndham, because we are so large and we cover such a large area, we state those opportunities in the brochure on the left hand side, there's a website that you can go to and it will dissect everything that we do and what we offer. It will tell them the direction of interest they want to go if those opportunities are in the city they are looking for.

**Scott Kim:** Does anybody on the panel want a Wyndham brochure? You never know.

**Kristen Buhring:** I know our company will put a percentage towards a college education. I think they specifically partner with Brandman University here in Orange County. That's all I know but I know there is some assistance available.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** Ayres has a scholarship program, once a year they basically take applicants and it can be anyone who works for the company, so it could be a housekeeper whose son is looking to go to Cal State Long Beach. As long as you're an employee with the company, you can submit an application for a scholarship. I don't know exactly how many scholarships they award each year but they do that every year. Because we are a smaller company and we're family owned, it's very personable and you get to know people one-on-one. I also have the situation where I can go to my general manager and say 'Hey, I really want to take this class or I really want to get this certification, can you help me or would Ayres be willing to help pay for it?' I think Anaheim's is the Certified Tourism Ambassador program and we pay for our admins to do that program so I think if you know how to make a business case for it, then it would help.

**Audience:** Like credentials and maybe not degrees but gateway credentials to get your foot in the door.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** Yeah as with anything, it's ask and see what happens.

**Audience:** We tell our students all the time, that if you are looking at somebody for work and trying to find an industry you want to go in, start working there and continue to go to school and then start farming opportunities.

**Dennisse Naval:** I had the luxury in Nashville to be able to have interns working there and they loved it so much because they could see the growth that we offered. And they were after that growth. It's one of those things where as long as you can line them up and at least show them that the opportunity exists, I think then they can find where their talents are and help structure those toward their career.

**Audience:** Along with tuition another hot topic for some students is benefits. I know some companies Starbucks and Trader Joes for example, offer healthcare or benefits for a 20-28 hour a week for working student.

**Laura Holbrook:** Ours is based on full time employment. It's one of those situations where again, most are 18 or they are going to college. It's a full time business and they are putting in 32 to 35 hours on the average. We have sales people or professionals who are coming in as tour guides and they are working 20 to 30 hour weeks, but they are still getting benefits. The great thing about Wyndham too, is we are the only company in the industry that offer benefits from their onboarding, as long as they are keeping up their hours.

**Audience:** In addition to association memberships, are there any industry certifications out there that are actually recognized or is that more of an internal thing that you guys do once a student is within the organization and you train them? Because I don't think there are industries that have different certifications for students. I don't know if hospitality has that or not.

**Harriet Porter:** We're very fragmented as an industry. MPI offers a certified meeting planner program. PCMA has a program. HSMAI has a program. We have like a million associations and they all have a program. Jhoanna mentioned a very entry-level program which is a Certified Tourism Ambassador which I believe is up to about 22 cities that are offering that. It's a program for the front line folks, front desk, taxi driver, valet, really entry-level positions. It gives them a larger understanding of what they are a part of and how what they do every day in their job affects so many other people, and that's something put on by the Convention Visitor Bureau. We kind of spearhead that project and I don't know what the cost is. It's not very much but like \$100-\$150 dollars. There are those opportunities and if that's something

that you think students would be interested in, we can make that connection for you to see if we can kind of extend that and offer it to students who would be interested. Beyond that, you can get some more senior certifications like strategic something something and a million acronyms but yes you're right you can be a Certified Health Care Meeting Planner.

**Scott Kim:** Would you say in general something to better yourself with that?

**Harriet Porter:** I think there's a little bit of a hey I'm going to get this certification. And it doesn't necessarily mean just because your friend has it, it's the right thing for you. You do have to be careful that you are picking the right certification for what interests you. I see a lot of people with certifications that actually don't do much for them in their career or their day-to-day job either. They just have it because they can write letters after their name.

**Kristen Buhring:** I think the CTA is a great certification to get. I went through that program probably 5 years ago, but I have renewed it every year. I think anyone who is working in Orange County in this industry would benefit from that. It just kind of keeps you updated and we probably all qualify for it annually because you go to enough places in Orange County that you can log in enough points to make it happen but it does get you out there and kind of familiar with the area. Every year you have to say this is a new venue, but that's the one I think everyone in the hospitality could really benefit from and it's very low cost. I don't know if they have a student program or not.

**Kristen Buhring:** They take you on a little back ground of Orange County through the one day. It's just a few hours session.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** It's like a half-day training and open book exam. It's really easy.

**Harriet Porter:** Age requirement? I don't know. Visit [visitanaheim.com](http://visitanaheim.com) probably has it on there. I don't remember a student one but it's been a few years.

**Jhoanna Belfer:** If there isn't we could probably set something up. Like I say our organization administers that and we are creative and all about spreading the love.

**Scott Kim:** Okay I got the 5 minute warning. We will talk about a couple other things. I came from industry. And if we're an industry and we sit in a meeting like this, at the end there will be action items and we would pursue what was discussed. What I've noticed in education is we all take notes and then we all go our separate ways. No one wants the responsibility and because it's work to create and go

work with Jim and create this symposium next year to decide what to do. So what I would say is to each individual who can trade your business cards with at least one other individual and from my experience in education and not to go against the administration but if you make the personal connection and you wait to get approval from the education side you, it's never going to happen. So you want to kind of put a Band-Aid on it and be like well I talked to my administrator and they said no. Then if you feel good about that then, you're done. But if you want to move forward it is really going to take some feet-on-the-street to make this happen. And I am going to start with Jim and I think that this is something we can do as a district where we have some really solid connections in the industry and that's exactly the problem mentioned. That kid isn't going to want to go to internship, but maybe they should be expected. Look what we did last summer and who are you? What are you doing? It's just kind of been a little haphazard for our district, but I think that's something that our kids really need and it was mentioned in someone's comment, but I think the word for the kids is *to just start*. They just need to take some action and that's on the education side to move them towards these opportunities. Any last comments?

**Audience:** I have one more question. Do you think it would be beneficial to have a class on cultural competence?

**Jhoanna Belfer:** Absolutely. At the front desk and working at a hotel in Anaheim, where we get a lot of international travelers, we hire a lot of very entry-level positions and it's probably their first job. It is a steep learning curve for them to see people who dress differently or those who don't speak English the same way they are used to hearing English. It's about knowing how to speak to someone and to be able to communicate, not just raise your voice or gesture wildly. So I think that's a huge soft-skill to be able to touch on and it helps differentiate a student who can talk to anybody and doesn't feel awkward or has weird notions about other people.

**Dennisse Naval:** Culturally, I think it's really important that we learn how to adapt to the customer who we are dealing with, whether or not we are in sales or the front desk. There are very different ways to adapting to a certain culture and being knowledgeable about that and knowing what's respectful and what's not respectful in certain cultures is very important.

**Scott Kim:** That's very good.

**Jim Shab:** I mean it's called life skills. Cool name but that's the thing that they don't have.

**Audience:** That's one of the things in my class that we have on Friday's down time. I am teaching cultural sensitivity.

**Scott Kim:** And the problem, in education and my estimation, is that it's hard to grade soft-skills. The districts and the state want a number and a grade and that's the problem. Some of these skills they don't have, because you can't grade it. It's not an acronym. It's not like a multiple choice test and a lot of that drives the education system. So, I think that thinking out of the box, or pairing with gaming or whatever it is, where they don't know that they are learning soft skills but we are giving them that experience. I certainly would like to thank the panel. I think these events are great. I wish we did more of them and I hope we all make the steps to connect. Thank you very much.