

PROFILE: NANCY HAYS, NANCY HAYS ENTERTAINMENT

Tell us a little about your company.

Nancy Hays Entertainment, Inc. specializes in producing celebrity talent for corporate, association and charitable events as well as specialty dance programs, DVDs and CDs. I formed my own company in 1993 so I would have employment compatible with my goals professionally (as a producer and artist) and personally (as a wife and mother of four).

How did you get involved with IACEP?

Dick Smith invited me to become a founding member of IACEP. Dick is one of my personal heroes, so of course I said "Yes" immediately. I also thought it would be a wonderful organization to be a part of, and it would help me to reconnect with industry friends, old and new.

What drew you to the industry?

It was the perfect combination of my passion and my educational background. I studied business and advertising at U of I and Northwestern, both as an undergraduate and graduate student, but it was the entertainment industry that was my true passion. Determined to have a career somewhere in the entertainment business, I thought this was the perfect fit. I also got lucky and was hired by what I thought was the best company in the business at that time, Jack Morton Productions.

What was your first industry job?

Account Manger for the Chicago office of Jack Morton Productions in the summer of 1984.

What one thing would you like people to know about corporate entertainment producing that you suspect they might not realize?

The most successful, happy and well balanced people in the industry don't necessarily work for the biggest companies.

Are you impressed with the evolution of corporate entertainment: the speed, the pace and/or the transition? How do you keep up?

The evolution of the corporate entertainment business has been both positive and negative. There has been an erosion of ethics and a disin-

ter mediation of producers by the internet that does not necessarily mean buyers are getting better entertainment or service. It's unfortunate, but an inevitable reality of our business. In today's environment, we do the best that we can to educate clients and make sure we work with loyal buyers who value our services. The evolution of the internet and Web 2.0 has been great for artists though, who want to reach their audi-



ence more directly and pro-actively manage their own careers. I keep up to the best of my ability by constantly trying to educate myself about changes taking place and attending educational events like those IACEP offers.

What are your hopes for the next year in your professional life? What's your most challenging hurdle in 2009?

My hopes are to "weather" the storm and retain our current clients, dig deeper to find new clients we can serve well in a down economy, and to expand the bookings of Nancy Hays as a speaker on topics that address the current challenges of corporate America.

Who has been your greatest inspiration or influence professionally?

Jack Morton, who was my personal mentor. I was fortunate to spend lots of time with Jack during company meetings and called him for advice during my early career. His photo still hangs above my desk and his "handbook" for sales is still as relevant today as it was in the 1980s. I re-read passages from it whenever I get ready to make "cold calls" or need an extra boost.

Who is the best boss you ever had in the industry?

Bill Kahn, my boss at JMP for many years, is still my business colleague and personal friend today. Bill knew how to manage me better than anyone because he always understood my strengths and believed in me. He empowered me to do my job and never wavered in his faith that I would do it right even when I had doubts myself.

If you could give someone just getting started in corporate entertainment production one thing that he or she should be sure not to miss, what would that be?

Never take for granted the gift of a good and loyal client. They are hard to replace and everyone is looking for them. Savor all the great shows and take the time to enjoy every minute of the ride.

Of course life has no "do-overs", but if it did, what one thing would you do differently in the industry?

I would be a better manager and mentor to young people in the industry along the way. Between my clients, my performing pursuits, my husband and my four kids, I don't have spare time to nurture the industry's young. Too bad, because I would have liked to.

What would you like to produce if there are no parameters, or no guidelines from the corporate office (of a client)?

I would like to work with legendary artists or personalities who have changed the face of the business and whose artistry will live long after they pass away (most of whom do not currently perform for private events, or are out of the price range budgetwise). Artists who have defined