

BEST MEETING
PROFESSIONAL

Aaron Wolowiec, MSA, CAE, CMP, CTA

OWNER AND CEO; EVENT GARDE; KALAMAZOO

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LESSON LEARNED: "There's nothing more uncomfortable than opening the doors to a general session and watching participants flow in only to discover that attendance has far outpaced historical projections. You quickly learn what it means to be a leader—apologizing to members and guests, helping hotel staff drop and set tables, and asking kitchen staff to prepare another 40 meals on the fly."

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ON CHALLENGES: "I launched Event Garde because I was passionate about the work. I strived to gain exposure to a broader array of associations and to become more nimble in prototyping unique professional development experiences. I couldn't have anticipated the time and resources needed to simply manage the business. For me, the operational tasks have presented the greatest learning curve."

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FOND MEMORY: "I've worked with a number of reality stars, including Bill Rancic from 'The Apprentice' and Daymond John from 'Shark Tank.' It's fun and interesting when client work allows you to collaborate with high-profile entertainers from stage and screen. The most telling and memorable moments, however, are generally those last 10 minutes before the doors open."

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BEST SKILLS: "The one skill that regularly tops my list is uncanny attention to detail. It's difficult to deliver a superior product to our clients and their stakeholders without it."

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ON HIS ROLE: "I'm a learning strategist and meetings coach for trade associations and membership societies. Committed to the latest research and trends on learning, intentional networking environments and meaningful transfer exercises, I launched Event Garde, a professional development consultancy, in 2011."

