

FEATURE
RISING STARS

They may not have hit the national events scene yet, but keep an eye out—these up-and-comers are already making their mark on the industry, according to the industry veterans we quizzed.

Read up on some of bright, shining stars that are on the rise.

RISING STARS

by Ann Turner



GRETCHEN CULVER

Owner, Rocket Science Weddings and Events
MINNEAPOLIS

Although she pursued Art History in college, she also loved planning parties and weddings for friends. It wasn't until after college, when friend suggested she apply for a catering coordinator job that she thought event planning could actually be a career. She landed the job with Wildside Caterers running their wedding and special events venue, and eventually worked on larger scale events such as the NHL All Star game. She has also worked at hotels and at an industry-leading wedding service company before starting her own business in 2009. "Rocket Science Weddings and Events is an out-of-this-world event planning company focused on hip and high-end weddings," she says. Her weddings have been featured in magazines and on TV, and she recently won the ISES Star Award for Best Wedding 2011.



JANINE DUPREE

Account Manager, First Protocol
NEW YORK

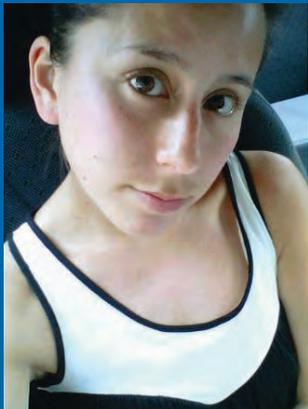
Janine Dupree's professional experience ranges from sports marketing to corporate investment banking events which has allowed her to gain a valuable understanding of the corporate client environment. During her tenure with First Protocol, she has assisted in expanding the portfolio of clients from the pitch process to full event execution. Janine holds an M.S. degree in Travel and Tourism Management from New York University's Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism, and Sports Management, and a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Michigan. "Janine has made dramatic leaps over the years she's been with me," says Maureen Ryan-Fable of First Protocol. "She has brilliantly handled our toughest clients with stellar results."



LINDSAY FULTZ

CEO/President, Middle Child New Media
LOS ANGELES

If you're a user of social media, you've probably already come across Lindsay Fultz. She's everywhere. Fultz got her start in the events industry at a backdrop rental company as their manager of sales and New Media Marketing, successfully transitioning the marketing department from 100 percent traditional advertising to the world of new media. Fultz recently embraced her entrepreneurial spirit by creating Middle Child New Media. "I am a middle child and middle children are notorious for devising creative ways to stand out among the crowd, be seen and be heard and get the attention and recognition they deserve. The way I see it, every brand and business is a middle child and needs to quickly distinguish themselves. I help brands do that." She continues to be a part of the events industry by speaking at event industry conferences and trade shows and hosting social media lounges at these events.



SARAH HINES, DMCP

Director of Meeting and Event Services, Accent on Indianapolis
INDIANAPOLIS

Sarah Hines is a live wire. After graduating with a dual marketing and distribution degree, she was a part-time instructor teaching business communication for two years, then worked as a marketing specialist for an IT company where she started an events division. That's when she realized that the events bug had bit and she moved to Accent on Indianapolis, a destination management company where she has been for two years. Hines is currently serving her third year on the local ISES board. In addition, she has served as chair of the Indiana Chapter of Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's gala event. +>>>



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HUNTER LOWDER

Director of Hospitality, Holman Ranch
CARMEL VALLEY, CA

Lowder started her career in academia as a teacher, but she quickly discovered that her love of all things hospitality would lead her in another direction. In 2006, her parents purchased historic Holman Ranch in Carmel Valley. Established in 1928, Holman Ranch has been hosting weddings and events since it was established. Lowder and her family embarked upon a complete restoration of the historic working ranch and have brought it back to its original splendor. Today, Lowder wears many hats, from salesperson to event planner to manager of the ranch's wine and olive oil businesses. "I love the fast pace of the hospitality business and being a little bit of a counselor, friend and peer to my clients," she says.

LIZ NEWMAN

Event Planner, Interactive Entertainment Concepts
NEW YORK CITY

A graduate from a special program at the University of Massachusetts in Event Planning and Public Relations, Newman is a whiz at client and guest services, sales, marketing, event planning and management. At 15 years old, she landed her first internship at a fashion magazine, helping to plan their national sales convention. Following the internship, she worked for Marriott, the NHL, a hospitality management company, a radio station and an event production company. She was chosen to participate in the Walt Disney Company's college program, and asked to extend her work with Disney. Now a full-time event planner in New York City, she has started her own charity and a networking group in New York. "Instead of giving 100 percent every day, I strive to give 150 percent. I love this industry and can't wait to climb up it to the very top," she says.



KARISSA PAXTON

Co-Owner, Coastside Couture
SAN FRANCISCO

Karissa Paxton's background in hotel and restaurant hospitality served her well when she co-founded Coastside Couture nearly two years ago. Her company is quickly becoming Monterey Bay's leading event planning, design and concierge service. Paxton's fresh approach to working with clients is to listen to their vision and needs but also make sure each event engages the guests' five senses. She gives back to the community by serving on numerous nonprofit boards and committees, and is a founding board member of Monterey Bay Wedding and Event Professionals.

CAROLYN RAY

Education Director, Event Leadership Institute
MONTREAL

Just before Ray's third birthday, her mother bought her a copy of Meredith Brokaw's *Penny Whistle Party Planner*. Little did she know that this book would be the beginning of an ever-growing passion for all things event-related. Twenty-some years later, she continues to work on a wide range of events from parties to fundraisers to weddings and everything in between. In fact, she focused her Master's thesis on the need for more education and professional standards in the event industry. Today, Ray is the education director for the Event Leadership Institute, a new venture that provides progressive education, training and insights by and for event professionals. "She's incredibly smart beyond her years, and has written a 46 page thesis on the special events industry for school about standards and certification within the industry," commented Howard Givner, founder of the Event Leadership Institute. +>>>





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REGINALD ROBERSON

President, Lavish Events
LOS ANGELES, LAS VEGAS

The special event bug bit Reggie Roberson at the age of five, when he helped his Grandmother plan vacations and family events. Today, he's at the helm of his own company, and is having the time of his life. Of course, in between those times, he gained experience producing events for non-profits, foundations and friends while working in corporate America. His clients include many Fortune 500 companies as well as social events. "Reggie is extremely resourceful. He always finds unique opportunities and delivers great results for his clients regardless of the scope, scale or budget of the event," says Branden Chapman of the Event Solutions Advisory Board.

C. AARON SAYRE

Director of Creative Services
HELLO FLORIDA

Aaron Sayre began his special events journey with his college newspaper, when he answered an ad for a part-time warehouse and setup position for a décor company. He was soon offered a full time position with the company and spent the next five years honing his skills as an operations manager and a purchasing manager. In 2005, Aaron was recruited by Hello Florida Orlando for an integral position in their Creative Department, where he helped design and operate over 300 creative events per year. In 2010, Aaron was named Creative Director of the Year by *Event Solutions Magazine*.



MARC SILVERSTONE

Principal, Equilibrium Events
NEW YORK AND FLORIDA

Just a few months old, Equilibrium Events works primarily with extremely high-end social, and select corporate accounts. Its founder, Marc Silverstone, is also planning to become the go-to planner for upscale same sex weddings. Silverstone got his start working for the New York City mayor's office in community outreach, where he started volunteering in the event department. He eventually became the director of events for the department. From there he moved on to other event industry jobs, until he decided to take the plunge and start his own company. "My passion is to create one-of-a-kind experiences," he says.

ALINA TER-OGANESIAN

Production Coordinator, Extraordinary Events
SHERMAN OAKS, CA

In 2008, Alina Ter-oganesian was invited to a private party for about 1,500 guests. When she naturally pitched in to help the on-site planning staff, they asked if she'd like to work on their next event. Three years later, she's been involved in the coordination and production of non-profit, corporate and social events, ranging in size and scope from small dinner parties to major multi-million dollar concert events for hundreds of guests. Some of the companies and entertainers she's worked with include Sean "P Diddy" Combs, Britney Spears and The Black Eyed Peas. "She is amazing and will be a star of tomorrow," says Andrea Michaels of Extraordinary Events. **ES**

