

CAREER

IDEA WATCH ▶

Declare a deadline. If you really want to get something done or meet a certain personal goal, set a deadline, says Dan Ariely, a professor of psychology and behavioral economics at Duke University, who was interviewed for a story on the topic in *The New York Times*. "Publicly committing to meeting a deadline is a powerful motivator because it puts your reputation on the line," the story notes. Even large projects that seem they could go on for months (think: planning an event) can benefit from deadlines. People respond well to deadlines because meeting them gives people a sense of achievement. "It's a good way to keep score," Ariely says.

Q & A



Robert Desautels, CMP

President, Event Service Professionals Association

Interview by Mari Shirley

Robert Desautels is a busy man. Not only has he been the senior manager of convention services for Visit Indy, the Indianapolis Convention and Visitors Association, for the past 22 years, but he also is president of the Event Service Professionals Association, which serves convention services managers in hotels, convention centers and other meeting venues. The organization celebrated its 25th anniversary this year in Orlando, Fla., at its annual conference. Themed "Perfecting the Art of Event Service," the conference had its highest attendance in several years. As part of his new position, Desautels helps plan the annual conference and other ESPA events. We talked with him about his new role, the future of ESPA and the importance of CVBs.

Q: As ESPA president, what are you hoping to accomplish during your tenure?

It is my hope, and more importantly our board's desire, to increase exposure of ESPA. We want to expand our efforts to encourage and obtain membership of universities and colleges engaged in tourism management education. Letting students in these programs know there is a link to the service industry is very valuable to both the student and our members. We also want to give insight on educational and networking offerings to our membership.

Q: Are there any changes you hope to see implemented in the organization?

I want to enact a formal code of ethics in order to give both credence and awareness that adherence to a standard of good moral values and judgment is important to the proper conducting of business. Also, we want to put together a program of education, interaction and networking opportunities at our 2014 ESPA Conference in Boston next January that will further encourage attendance and provide

THIS AND THAT:

Robert Desautels

> **Biggest Mentor:** The former president of the Indianapolis CVA, William K. McGowan Jr. "His interest in the city—making it a true destination, not just a location to sell—provided me a sense of pride in helping make the city of Indianapolis a viable and valuable destination [for groups]."

> **What He Loves About His Job:** "I feel that what I do has a purpose beyond that of being an economic source for my needs. Making our city and the products and services of real value to our visitors is an important part of why I love doing what I do."

> **Travel Must-Haves:** An iPad and a device he uses to pack shirts. "It separates small packing items for easy use when arriving at your destination. It eliminates a lot of packing and repacking."

> **Most Inspired By:** "People whose actions are done honestly and without regard to personal gain."

> **Favorite Music:** Frank Sinatra, Chicago, Billy Joel and John Williams

> **Favorite Book:** "April 1865: The Month That Saved America"

> **Favorite Quote:** "It's not our job to do all the good in the world; just that which we can."

—St. Mother Theodore Guerin, Foundress, Sisters of Providence

educational opportunities attuned to today's issues that resonate with our membership.

Q: What are you looking for in a host city or venue?

A hotel that offers both a general session room large enough for our group as a whole and breakout rooms for the various educational sessions. Also, a location that offers plentiful opportunities for off-site networking.

Q: What are some new things you're trying at events?

We are engaging with more meeting planners we invite to join us in roundtable discussions. Also, we're using game-type activities to test our skills and knowledge of the industry we serve as well as interactive sessions, icebreaker sessions and live Twitter contests.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Still promoting my city. But I must admit, I am nearing retirement.

Q: When that time comes, will you be able to completely step away from the industry?

It is my desire to continue to stay involved in the industry even in retirement. I'm hopeful to assist as a volunteer in this industry and for my city, Indianapolis, in the future. To me, my city and the growth it has made to provide a good tourism product makes it a joy to volunteer, I hope, for years to come.

Q: What's your best advice for a fellow event planner?

Engage the service entity—be that a CVB service professional or a single location service manager—at the outset of your planning schedule. Successfully engaging such people will save the meeting planner time, effort and money. It will also bring about more options from which the planner can choose.