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150 Profiles: Layne

By Layne

As we mark the 150th anniversary of confederation, The Philanthropist is profiling Canadians from across the non-profit sector and putting a face to 150 individuals who work or volunteer in Canada's social sector.

Name: Layne

Current role in the sector: The Auctionista

Years working and/or volunteering in the non-profit sector: 10 years.



What was your first job in the sector or a defining moment?

I recently shared my story in an interview on CBC's Fresh Air. My defining moment came when I

attended my first fundraising event. I wasn't working in the non-profit industry yet, so had no concept of what happened at such an event. The live auction was run by a cattle auctioneer. While well-meaning, their style and approach was at odds with the mission of the organization and the purpose of the evening. The focus was on moving product rather than inspiring giving. In that moment, the Auctionista concept was born. I was determined to provide a more financially successful, more entertaining, more charity focused approach to the role of auctioneer and MC.

Describe your desk/workspace.

I enjoy a tidy space. Clutter stresses me out. Everything has a designated place. This way, I can focus on doing the best work possible for my clients and not worry where the heck my cue cards are.

What are you reading or following that has expanded your understanding of the non-profit sector?

I follow my clients on Twitter to better understand their mission and programming. I can connect to their cause and be a passionate advocate and voice for them.

For my own professional growth, I recently took an improv class. Improv is great for learning the art of creating more meaningful connections that aren't forced or stilted. Non-profit work is about creating authentic, trusting relationships that inspire and engage – improv has really made this easier for me to create.

Following the class, I started reading books by comedians Ellen Degeneres and Mandy Kaling to continue learning more about improv and stand-up.

What do you think our sector needs to be thinking about?

I work in the world of fundraising events for charities of all sizes. Events can bring in significant revenue.

However, some fundraising events are like a romantic dinner date rather than a vehicle for raising funds.

This needs to change. Organizations need to put the reason for the evening front and centre. When charities invest time, resources and effort to hold such an event, the return on investment needs to be maximized. I want to create an experience where attendees are a bit stunned the next morning by how much they spent but are happy to have made a difference.

Do you know someone we should profile as part of this series? Email us at philanthropistprofiles@gmail.com