

Focus On...



Amanda Gourgue

Chief Meeting Revolutionist for
Meetings Revolution

Amanda Gourgue, CMP, will present two sessions on July 26 at the World Education Congress in Vancouver: “CSR Selling Strategy” from 8:30-9:45 a.m. and “LEED, Follow or Get Out of the Way” from 3:30-5 p.m. She will also conduct green meetings coaching in the Resource Exchange Room.

Eight-year-old Amanda Gourgue couldn't care less about Mickey Mouse. She was too busy ogling her hotel room.

“It was my first trip to Walt Disney World,” Gourgue recalls. “I walked into the Polynesian Resort and was blown away. I knew right there and then that I wanted to work in hotels.”

She wasted no time getting started. At 16, she landed a housekeeping job at the Sheraton Portsmouth, and ever since then, Gourgue's career has been a back-of-house fun run: dishwasher, banquet manager, convention services manager, meeting concierge—even a stint at her beloved Disney World Resort (for the Grand Floridian Resort and Spa).

During, between and around this budding career, Gourgue earned a bachelor's degree in hospitality from Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I., and a certificate in meeting management from Northeastern University in Boston. Her career flourished, and she hired on with an independent event planner before accepting the job of events director for a Boston archeological association.

But Gourgue couldn't help feeling off kilter. Something was missing. It was October 2007, and she was planning the annual conference for her architects.

“I realized that the program was going to be at least 65 pages,

and I had to print at least 4,500 copies,” she says. “I personally was going to be responsible for killing a small forest.”

Gourgue resigned from the association two weeks after the annual meeting and founded Meeting Revolution, a consulting firm for green events and services. It combines Gourgue's two loves: great events and green events.

She began educating herself in everything green, giving speeches and facilitating discussions with industry executives. She strode into boardrooms and extolled the value of green. She applied to the U.S. Green Building Council and began studying the organization's LEED certification. Gourgue then tested her knowledge, becoming the first CMP to earn LEED AP (accredited professional) status.

“There is so much more to this topic than just tips and hints about being green,” Gourgue says. “Every day is a challenge because companies focus on budget first and don't want to hear about anything green. We must consider how to strategically integrate CSR into company values and see how meetings and events play an important part in communicating those values.”

—JESSIE STATES

Five Things to Know About LEED Certification

1. The U.S. Green Building Council has a great tool for meeting planners and suppliers called the *Green Venue Guide*. Visit www.usgbc.org.
2. The Proximity Hotel in North Carolina was the first hotel to receive LEED Platinum certification in new construction. Of the materials in the building, 46 percent were sourced regionally, and most of the furniture was made within 18 miles of the site.
3. The Orchard Garden Hotel was California's first LEED-certified hotel and features bicycle stalls for employees and guests. Employees can use a guest room shower.
4. Nationals Park in Washington, D.C.—the first Major League Baseball stadium to be LEED certified—is located on a former brownfield that once housed warehouses, light-industrial businesses and a trash-transfer station.
5. As of January, 40 lodging properties have achieved LEED certification, and an additional 900 have registered with LEED and are working toward certification. Non-lodging hospitality projects, mainly conference and convention centers, represent another area of growth: 17 such properties are currently LEED certified, and an additional 85 are pursuing certification.