

Candidate;

ROBERTA JOHNSON

Position:

Department of the Army

Director, University Event Mgt, Executive Services/ Protocol

KSA # 1 Knowledge of Event Management, Executive Services Planning and Protocol functions.

In my current position as an event designer at Ridgewells in Bethesda, Maryland, I work on planning procedures, polices and implementation of events, and executive services including many related practices and protocol principles. I have developed a strong and loyal following of clients who depend on my judgment to produce large and important events to entertain, honor and inform the attendees.

I manage important social and corporate events such as weddings, private social affairs, corporate seminars, board meetings, retirement and funeral receptions. I am often the single contact for my clients and am involved in multiple activities such as ordering of food, logistics management and staffing requirements. Due to seasonal peaks, I make use of a substantial amount of record keeping, delegation of duties to subordinates and have developed an awareness of client needs and expectation. Logistics is a key factor in my profession and I have had to coordinate jobs as far away as Portland Maine, Charlottesville, Virginia. and Easton, Maryland.

I have been the direct contact for many clients such as Law Firms, Schools and Universities, and Government Contractors for over long periods of time. As key contact for General Dynamics over the past 5 years, I have worked through changes such as renovations and increasing need for more staff and services. I have maintained a business relationship with the National Defense University and have planned many key events on their behalf inside and externally for the past ten years. I have honed my protocol skills during the production and planning of events at United States Government buildings and Institutions such as the Supreme Court, Library of Congress, Rayburn, Longworth and Canon House Office Buildings, The Smithsonian Museums, The State Department and many Washington Embassies.

KSA # 2 Ability to evaluate, educate, train components and individuals in all aspects of Event Management, Executive Services and Protocol.

I started my professional career in management at Marriott Corporation, then Daka Inc. Both companies were structured corporate environments where I supervised Union employees. I was held accountable for management practices, which I had to follow that concerned definitive procedures, guidelines for training, and instituting polices, and procedures. I have always been in supervisory positions throughout my 20 year career.

During the last 15 years in event planning and catering at Ridgewells, I have been directly responsible for managing event staff at functions. It is my job to evaluate clients needs and desires according to problems with limitations of space, environmental activities, last minute changes in guest counts, staffing and external challenges. I advise on-site staff on how to maximize productivity and attain goals to produce a successful event. I started my career catering and planning small functions and advanced to larger social, corporate and protocol events utilizing guidance from senior level staff members. As I grew in my abilities and developed more expertise, I often advised less experienced staff members.

When I achieved my goal of over \$1,000,000.00 in sales per year, I was awarded my own sales assistant. Over the past nine years I have been responsible for training six sales associates who have come to me with little or no experience. I am responsible for all aspects of teaching, recruiting and facilitating the advancement of these associates. They have all been promoted and are currently productive employees and advancing in their own careers at Ridgewells.

My assistant works with me directly and takes on daily and routine activities in order to help me during times when I am out of the office. I continuously offer my assistants explanations of all event management, executive services and protocol procedures. I have prepared guidelines in menu planning for kosher events and established practices and principals utilized by 20 Ridgewells event designers. I have maintained my stature as the "Top Producer," at Ridgewells over the past eight years. This designation comes with the responsibility for training and developing leadership skills as well as being the person many new staff seek out when they have questions.

KSA # 3 Ability to interpret and apply national and international rules pertaining to traditional and formal diplomatic customs and courtesies for visiting VIP's.

Throughout my 15-year career at Ridgewells and during my tenure as the Assistant Director of Food Service at New York's Museum of Modern Art, The Natural History Museum at the Smithsonian Institution of Washington DC and in my private life, I have been exposed to international dignitaries with special needs, diplomatic privileges and protocol requirements. While working with Embassies and planning dinners at the State Department, I have worked directly with Ambassadors from Portugal, Russia, Uzbekistan, The Czech Republic, Israel, Thailand, South Africa, Cyprus, Turkey and the Netherlands. I have repeatedly worked with Military Attaches and Social Secretaries on high-level dinners and receptions. On one of four separate occasions, I served organized functions to entertain the Queen and additional members of the Thai Royal Family. At the United States Department of State, I worked directly with the Protocol department for a number of events including one to entertain the Greek Orthodox Patriarch from Constantinople that was hosted by Madeline Albright. I also worked on Presidential Inaugural Events and attended White House Staffers planning sessions as well as providing food and beverages for both Presidents Bush and Clinton.

I have learned about many customs and have become aware that no small detail can be overlooked. At a recent meeting, for example, held at the Italian Embassy to plan a National Defense University International Fellows dinner that occurred as recently on June 9, 2004. I questioned the proposed color of the table linens and was informed by the Italian General it was not important to him or the Embassy. The representative from NDU had suggested the color purple because it was the school color. However, my repeated questioning of Italian customs caused the Italian General to reveal that the color purple is a "funeral color", in Italy. Fortunately, we were able to change the linen selection to prevent embarrassment to our hosts.

While working at museums, I was often called upon to prepare receptions and dinners for International dignitaries and donors. In my personal life, I grew up in an area where many of my friends and neighbors came from other countries. I learned about and was exposed to many different cultures from an early age. Both my father and my husband were born and grew up abroad. My husband's parents published a National Endowment for Democracy funded magazine in Russian, which was distributed in the former Soviet Union. In addition, my mother in-law was the manager of the Russian Desk at Radio Liberty and my father in-law was a professor of Russian History and considered an expert in his field. Czech Ambassador Rita Klimova, Oleg Kalugin the former KGB General, Members of the Russian Parliament Galina Starovojtova, Roald Sagdeyev, the former head of the Soviet Space Research program and his wife Susan Eisenhower, the former President's granddaughter, as well as many high ranking diplomatic officials were frequent guests in their home.

KSA # 4 Availability to communicate in writing to prepare formal letters of invitation, visitors itinerary/scheduling, conferences/meeting agenda, and to prepare reports of official high-level meetings.

As an event designer at Ridgewells caterers my daily activities include preparing written proposals and responses to "Requests for Proposals, (RFP's), from government, private industry, corporate, private

meeting and social event planners. I am responsible for answering RFP's while developing a skilled, comprehensive and professional proposal. I am often competing with as many as ten other caterers and create bids based on what is included in the proposals

. For example, I was solely responsible for submitting and winning a bid on an event for the Survivors Reunion at the National Holocaust Memorial museum. The bid involved developing a plan to serve breakfast, lunch and dinner to 5000 guests. This event alone produced a volume of more than \$500, 000 in revenue for my company.

I often compile and organize descriptions of services that run into many different areas of event planning and logistical management. I create a vision of an event within a designated space and describe thematic decorations, lighting, technical equipment, musical arrangements, and multiple activities.

I am called upon to furnish vendors and assist with preparation of formal invitations. I meet with clients to discuss limitations of space and required attendance and to help to organize a priority list of attendees. I often help out of town clients with selecting activities for visiting spouses of corporate board members and foreign dignitaries. Last October, for example, I was selected to plan and manage a Dessert Ball at the Meridian International Center. Meridian is a nonprofit group which works with Embassies and other institutions to produce and circulate art and cultural exhibitions from around the world. The ball was co-chaired by the spouses of two United States Senators. There were small dinners preceding the Ball held at 35 Washington Embassies. In preparing for the evening, I represented all of the 35 embassies in my proposal by designating all food including beverages and desserts. Occasionally, I am asked to provide written debriefing information after an event. At this time, I reconsider the scope and venue of the previous event for the purpose of maintaining the interest of guests for the future.

I have served for two years as a board member for the Montgomery Child Care Association during 2001 and 2002. This association is a Nonprofit Childcare organization operating 9 centers in Montgomery County Maryland. In 2002, I also served as the Board Secretary. While participating in these organizations, I also wrote official reports.

KSA # 5 Skill in developing methods, practices and techniques for event management planning, executive services and protocol procedures.

In my current position as an event planner and designer, I am constantly aware of the need to streamline functions and delegate responsibilities. I handle multiple events that often occur at the same time. In these situations, I appoint a trusted individual to follow through on many details that involve scheduling, setup, breakdown, and site requirements. Duty rosters, vendor information forms, room diagrams and many other aids are presented along with details in writing for my subordinates to review and utilize in my absence.

On several occasions, my direct assistants who I personally trained received a promotion after two years. As a result, I have had to train new hires who work for me directly as well as advise other less experienced staff. I have established practices and procedures in training in order to eliminate errors when compiling menus. For example, there are special requirements for serving kosher and Halal foods for religious Jews and Muslims. I provide advice on holidays restrictions such as Ramadan, Passover and Lent. I have used my knowledge of ethnic foods and varied travel experience to provide menu planning guidance based upon the country of origin to select appropriate menus.

For daily operations including executive services, I have currently been working with one of my highest volume clients at General Dynamics as they have expanded into their new corporate headquarters to determine what additional services are needed. The new space includes a large auditorium/conferencing center with room for 94 attendees as well as 23 separate conference rooms, a board room and an employee cafe serving lunch for all employees and visitors at the center.

I have worked with my client as well as building managers, engineers and architects to determine service requirement for a kitchen and pantry setup. I have also consulted on determining corporate staffing and facilitation of reservation guidelines for conference facilities.

KSA # 6 Ability to plan, prepare and execute all aspects of menu planning and budget/cost estimates for official events.

My primary focus for the last 15 years at Ridgewells has been the preparation, planning and execution of budgeting which goes into each specific event. I am responsible for estimating costs and working within all guidelines specified by my company and clients. When there are changes made in planning for an event that has already been priced, I have the responsibility to inform the client and justify cost differentials. When preparing cost estimates, I ascertain the level of importance of service, food, entertainment and other factors to determine where the allotted moneys will go. Each endeavor has priorities that are based upon social, corporate and protocol requirements that influence price. I am expected to produce an event that meets these guidelines. My experience, relationships with vendors and creativity can have a major impact on the direction of an event. My knowledge and experience have often helped set me apart from competition and create valuable relationships with my clients.

My menu planning skills began when working in restaurants at an early age. I have worked as a dishwasher, food assistant, server and manager. I am a skilled cook and enjoy preparing a wide variety of ethnic and gourmet food. In my formal studies at Queens College of City University of New York, I majored in Home Economics with a focus on food and nutrition. My course work included classes in menu planning as well as experimental food sciences. These experiences gave me insight into proper temperature, techniques and chemical reactions of foods. I have found this knowledge extremely valuable when planning menus for large, outdoor venues or events where there was insufficient kitchen space.

I have been a member of Le Dames de Escoffier and numerous informal gourmet-cooking groups. I have attended two National Caterer's Association Conventions and four Special Event Conventions. I was a speaker at the NCA Conventions on two separate occasions. I have led a seminar on, "How to build and manage a sales volume exceeding two million dollars." In addition, I was the lead speaker in a round table discussion about the challenges of kosher catering.