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## EMBRACE YOUR INNER STORYTELLER TO SET TRENDS THAT SET YOU APART

Whether you know it or not, as catering and event professionals your job is less about feeding people and setting up spaces to host their celebrations, and more about transporting guests to new places. Through food, beverages, décor, and experiences, you are storytellers. And as storytellers, you have the unique ability to become trendsetters. To show you what I mean, I'm going to do some storytelling of my own.

### Once Upon a Time...

During my early college years in the mid-90s, I didn't eat like a normal college student. That's because I was going to school full time while working full time for a global benefits consulting firm. Granted, I was on the lowest rung of the ladder, working in the company print room, but I was still privy to the amazing benefits granted to all employees. Top on the list: eating like a queen.

I'm talking free food and free beverages all day, every day. Our break room refrigerators were stocked with soda, juice, and water. And morning and afternoon snacks were swapped in and out daily. The catered cafeteria offered hot breakfasts and lunches, pastries and cereal in the morning, and a sandwich bar, salad bar, two soups, and varying desserts—in the afternoons. If you worked a late shift, no worries, the fridges were filled so you could heat up leftovers.

No one ever wanted to leave campus, and friends always wanted to visit. To say my expectations were set high at such a young age was an extreme understatement—followed by extreme disappointment when I went on to work for other companies who barely provided free office supplies.

### A Bar-Raising Event

But the bar was raised even higher when I attended my first company party. To accommodate the hundreds of employees and their plus ones, an entire hotel rented out and transformed into the ultimate tropical luau, making guests feel as if they stepped out of the Midwest and right onto the islands of Hawaii.

Keep in mind, this was circa 1996 or 1997, and I was maybe 18 or 19. Aside from weddings, I had never seen this level of detail put into any party. Having later in life attended a real luau on my honeymoon in Oahu, I'm almost sorry to say the food at the corporate party was far superior. And keeping in tradition with the corporate culture, all food and beverages—liquor included—was free. *The latter a big plus being under 21 and not getting carded, but I digress.*

