

Career Profile

Nicole Lee, Sales & Marketing Manager

By: Lauren Kerhoulas, Student Career Leader

Laurier alum, Nicole Lee is a prime example of how a strong educational background, extensive volunteer experience and a passion for sports can lead to success. Since childhood, Nicole has held competitive sports in high esteem and still continues to today. Participation in sport has played a predominant role in Nicole's life as the energy, enthusiasm and excitement of the game inspired her to pursue a career in a comparable environment. Her interests in creative design, ambition to develop new promotional concepts and personable demeanour have made sales and marketing an ideal vocation.



Nicole graduated from Wilfrid Laurier University in May of 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in kinesiology & physical education, with the business administration option. Upon graduation, Nicole attended Ohio University where she received her Masters of Business Administration in Winter 2004 and her Masters of Sports Administration in Spring of 2005. Despite Nicole's incredible accomplishments, it was not until her fourth and final year at Laurier when she established her future academic objectives and career aspirations within the Sports Administration industry. During her undergrad experience, Nicole worked with Laurier Athletics. Her involvement was quite beneficial as she came to realize that there were more opportunities within sports and event marketing than she had initially anticipated. Nicole's commitment to Laurier Athletics inspired her to work on the East West Bowl and Vanier Cup, which offered her additional experience in the field of sports and event planning.

Currently, Nicole is a Sales and Marketing Manager for the Michelob ULTRA Open: Anheuser Busch's LPGA event at Kingsmill Resort & Spa. Her day-to-day undertakings involve selling corporate sponsorships for this premier event on the LPGA Tour. To execute this event, Nicole works with a purse of \$2.2 million, and orchestrates attendance of 60,000 patrons and 15,000 volunteers! Leading up to event day is a full-time job as Nicole also manages over 70 sponsor client accounts, co-ordinates all creative artwork used in tournament marketing and liaises with Busch Media Group for all TV, Radio, Print and Internet promotions. As a 'Jill-of-all-trades', Nicole also oversees details related to special events prior to, during and following tournament week ranging from fashion shows, sponsor galas, awards dinners to volunteer appreciation dinners. There are many stakeholders in an event of this calibre and Nicole works with a team to ensure everyone experiences high-quality standards at this world-class event.

Nicole reports that the most enjoyable aspect of her work is having the opportunity to create new concepts and ideas to ultimately advance and improve the event. Her most significant challenges include identifying non-traditional advertising opportunities for her sponsors as companies are moving towards more interactive marketing techniques. Another obstacle within the field is maintaining an energized persona while selling to and seeking new sponsors after frequent prospect rejection. Despite these challenges, Nicole describes the incredible sense of accomplishment experienced at the end of the day as she watches the final championship putt made on the 18th green.

With this in mind, Nicole provides three important words for students who aim to pursue this career path: Patience, Persistence and Passion. Patience is essential in breaking into such a competitive industry as it is quite challenging and takes time. In order for an entrant to further their chances, obtaining adequate experience is crucial in getting into a graduate program or an entry-level position. Volunteering and unpaid internships are generally the only way to acquire such in-depth experience. Persistence applies to the motivation and drive required to ensure success. Nicole emphasizes the fact that sport administration is a competitive industry and at some point, everyone is rejected. Nicole urges students, "to stay focused,

keep networking and always take advantage of learning opportunities." Passion is also extremely important in pursuing a career such as sports administration. The industry requires one to work long hours, receive little pay at times, and possibly be relocated from family/friends. With the consideration of these commitments, Nicole highlights the idea that "you have to be passionate for what you do because if you don't love it, you'll leave it".

Along with the volunteer and internship positions, a sufficient educational background in business, specifically in finance, marketing, operations and economics, is critical as sports are essentially a business. Thus acquiring such knowledge may further ones chances of entering the industry. This educational background will also encourage others in the field to regard you as a more credible source.

Nicole stresses the reality that finding a career that corresponds with one's interests can be a discouraging and difficult process. Throughout her experiences and journey toward success, Nicole has been lucky to have absolute support from her family and friends. With final inspiring words, Nicole explains, "It is very easy to get caught up in the competitiveness of the 'corporate environment', however, at the end of the day it should always be about balance and the people that are most important to you."

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