



Join the community

By Jessica Pedemont
Chocolate Artisan

Did you know TAFE has started an alumni association?

It is always a challenge for me to have the right answer when students ask me, "how did you become successful?"

I could answer in the usual way and say "hard work, commitment, passion, a sweet tooth!" But in reality, there is no simple answer because success comes from taking advantage of life's opportunities.

This is why I am so pleased TAFE's Sydney Institute has started a new networking option for our industry; an alumni association.

This is a great initiative for the hospitality industry. Because of the busy nature of our work, we can find it difficult to support each other and to keep in contact. Our hours, casual hiring practices, even our competitiveness can make it hard for us to find ways to develop and foster talent that is just starting out in the industry.

The alumni network at Sydney TAFE offers an avenue for students to find out about the industry from a different perspective – from leaders in our industry and people who have 'made it'. And there are many to learn from; Mark Best from Marque's, Jane Strode of Bistrot and Sean Gray from Sean's Panorama. These are just a few of Sydney TAFE's leading graduates who can really help inspire people considering working in the hospitality industry to take that next step and become a baker, chef, sommelier or barista.

In fact, the Alumni network at Sydney TAFE was inspired by the success of an ambassador program they launched last year as part of their 120-year celebrations. The organisation invited leading graduates, industry partners and teachers to become ambassadors in recognition of their contribution to developing the New South Wales economy, their work in their industry or work in education and training.

People from across the world were contacted and asked to help the organisation celebrate its achievements for the 120th anniversary. Leading lights of the Australian creative industries such as fashion designers Lisa Ho and Alex Perry, Lyndey Milan broadcaster/publisher and yes, even my humble self, were asked to become an ambassador – and I loved it! It was a great chance to see my old teachers again, to meet students (who had a thousand questions) and to increase my own networks.

This is the real value of an alumni; it gives us a chance to reconnect and to work with



Sydney TAFE to advance the profession. The alumni has about 40,000 people on its email list and publishes a monthly newsletter which focuses on the hospitality industry. It has stories about graduates, events in the industry, legislative changes and courses on offer. The university has even started a LinkedIn group and post job notices for anyone who is connected to the network.

So for anyone in the industry, the alumni association is trying to offer a unique free space which we, as employers, can use to reach students and graduates. It is only six-months-

old, but really believe the alumni network will be a great resource for those starting out in the industry and for those of us, who ahem, may be a little further down the track!

If you are a graduate of Sydney TAFE you can join the alumni group via their website sydneytafe.edu.au/alumni or contact them to subscribe to the newsletter.

Web: sydneytafe.edu.au/alumni

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