CELC 2020

Report

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# Table of Contents

*Acknowledgements* ......................................................................................................................... 3

*Sessions* ............................................................................................................................................. 3

*Personal Takebacks* ............................................................................................................................ 8
Acknowledgements

Once again, I would like to thank the ESSS Executives for selecting me to go to another conference. I really enjoy networking, making connections, meeting new people and learning from others and there is really is no better place to do that than at a conference like CELC. Being highly motivated to move up within the ESSS, VP External being the next position I would like to achieve, I found that the sessions I attended, together with the interactions I had with other people, were extremely helpful in terms of informing me of what I would need to do in order to achieve the VP External position in the upcoming election. Sitting in on the VP External stream and GA also helped give me an idea of what the role of VP External is like and what sorts of policies and changes they discuss and implement to help improve their respective engineering societies.

Sessions

The sessions that I attended at CELC were Brand and Elevator Pitch, Leadership Stream Introduction, the Entrepreneurship Panel, Versatility in Career, Bringing Strengths to the Table, Taking Action, Advocating for Members, Actualize, Strategize and Overcome, Leveraging Interpersonal and Social Skills to Diversify Career in Engineering, Life as an Executive, Lollipop Moments, Mental Health, Dealing with Student Apathy, Risk Assessment and Planning, and Conflict Resolution. On top of these sessions, I also attended two roundtable sessions that talked about Motivation and Crisis Scenarios.

Brand and Elevator Pitch

This session mainly involved selling oneself in order to convince others that they are the right person for the job, whether that is applying for a job or running in an election. I learned how to thread things together, relating position to personality to qualifications. Connecting things such as job experience, personal hobbies, clubs, achievements and personal skills to the position that is being applied for is extremely beneficial. It also helps to do the research behind the position or company that is being applied for. Three key questions I learned to ask myself are “Who do I want to help or inspire?”, “Who will benefit from my work?” and “Why do I enjoy the work that I am doing?”
Leadership Stream Introduction

This session did not necessarily go into specifics. It mainly discussed what the other sessions in the leadership would be about and gave a brief overview of each session. My key takeaway from this session is to always keep learning from those around me and to apply what I learned to my own personal involvements and life.

Entrepreneurship Panel

Listening to the experiences of the entrepreneurs on this panel gave me an idea of what I need to do in order to be successful, whether it is being in a VP role in the ESSS or running my own start-up. My key takeaways from this panel were to know and understand what my strengths are, knowing how to handle both good and bad situations, taking advantage of each situation that is presented, being a team player and prepared, listening to others, treating those that you work with respect and being willing to accept failure. These are skills that I can transfer to the role of VP External should I be elected.

Versatility in Career

This session mainly applied to students mainly looking for a co-op or those looking for a job after graduation. However, I did take away some important information that will be super helpful in accomplishing my goals. Being a VP External will require tons of networking and socializing. Connecting with many people will require interaction with people from many backgrounds. When connecting with these people, it helps to understand the different inclusion and diversity strategies, people’s perceptions of things, and how the culture is being changed constantly. It also helps to know, especially when being a head delegate a conference like CELC, when some sort of discrimination or harassment has occurred. Knowing how to speak up, take action and find a resolution is key to resolving these incidents. Finding a great support team will also be super beneficial through both the good times and the bad.

Bringing Strengths to the Table

Knowing personal strengths and how to bring those to the table is what I learned how to do from this session. Being able to determine which certain skill sets are vital to a position is a great skill to have. A way to keep learning and improving oneself is to stay dedicated to extra curricular activities and hobbies, retain all good things that were learned from those activities, and bringing those skills to the table. This will help me become a leader that can expand the skill sets of the people that I work with, while improving my own skills as well.
Taking Action

This was a three part session in which we learned and were asked to plan an event. Some events are harder to plan than others, but the basic steps are still relatively the same. When planning an event, it is important to brand the event first. Determine the purpose of the event, find the targeted audience, and convey the benefits of hosting the event. The next thing to do is to plan a budget and find sponsors for the event. Having a reliable budget plan to follow is great and extremely helpful, but finding sponsors for the event will help allocate resources from the budget to areas that will receive as much support from the sponsors. Targeting and reaching out to more than one sponsor is recommended. The last step is making sure the event runs smoothly once it starts. Being flexible, efficient, and able to put out fires where needed is key when hosting events. Following these steps is the best way to host and run a successful event.

Advocating for Members

A VP External should know how to advocate for the members they represent. They would have to represent the interest of the members, voice their concerns, ensure fair treatment for the students, improve the services that are offered and available to them. Certain issues that may arise are university challenges, such as campus life, and injustices students may face. Once an issue is discovered, the next step is to do research on the issue and find a solution to the problem. It is important that the solution isn’t unrealistic and is possible to achieve. Knowing who the stakeholders involved are, such as who are the allies and who needs to be convinced in order to gain their support. Choosing an appropriate means of campaigning together with a strong action plan is important as well. The planning is just as important if not more than the execution. Communication after the plan has been executed is vital as well. It is important to keep the people that are being advocated for informed, regardless of whether the goal was achieved or not.

Actualize, Strategize and Overcome

This session discussed the steps that needed to be taken in order to be successful. It mainly centered about how to be successful in a career but there was important information that I took away from this session that would be super helpful for when I run for VP External. Building a gameplan around a set goal to be achieved is a key takeaway. Visualizing what I want to achieve will help me in the planning and execution stages. But it is also important to be adjustable in terms of planning and execution. It is also important to be professional, analytical, open minded, have good problem solving skills, be organized and have excellent communication as well.
Leveraging Interpersonal and Social Skills to Diversify Engineering Career

This session is another one that was directed more towards a career in engineering but there were certain takeaways from this session as well that I thought would be beneficial for my campaign. My main takeaway was the steps I can take to further improve my social skills. Being honest with who I am and what I want to achieve is the first step towards this. People who aren’t honest with themselves will have trouble later in life. Communication in terms of understanding the perspectives of other people is essential as well. Being confident in everything that I do will be helpful too. By confidently owning up to a mistake and accepting the consequences of it, the result will be increased credibility with those you work with. Accountability ties into this as well. Having emotional intelligence and awareness, such as self awareness, self management, self motivation, empathy and handling relationships is important too. Lastly, having a positive outlook in everything that I do is a great way to make sure that success is attained.

Life as an Executive

I thought this session would explain what life would be like as an executive on a student society, but it was actually about what life is like holding an executive position in a company. I was still able to take away information with regard to how to be successful as a VP External. Looking for allies inside and outside of the student society is my main takeaway from this. Since being a VP External means having to work with other VP Externals from other schools, being able to network is key to be able to do this. Another good takeaway from this session was to not be afraid to take chances.

Lollipop Moments

This session talked about how the smallest and simplest of actions can have a long lasting effect on another person’s life. The person doing the action may not even realize the impact their deed has had on the other. What I gained from this session was that every single person’s contribution is helpful. They don’t necessarily have to be in a position of authority to make a difference. If I am elected as a VP External, I will listen to suggestions and inputs of everyone around me, and put those into consideration when thinking about how I can further improve the lives of everyone I am representing.
**Mental Health**

There were many things that I took away from this session. The first are the myths behind mental illness. The first myth is that mental health is not a real illness. In fact, 1 in 5 Canadians suffer from mental illness. The second is that people with mental illness are over-reactive, highly sensitive and are responsible for their own condition. People with mental illness are 11.8 times more likely to be victimized more than the general population. The third myth is that mental illness only affects adults and young people cannot experience illness. The fourth is that people feel pressured to hide the fact that they suffer from mental illness. The fifth is that recovery is not possible once diagnosed with mental illness. The opposite is true, in which that everyone diagnosed with mental illness can recover with the proper treatment. The last myth is that a pill is better than therapy for mental illness. Pills help but they are not meant to replace professional help.

Stress and anxiety have a bigger impact on academic performances than extracurricular activities. Finding ways to help students deal with this would be very beneficial to the university. Ways to help with the stigma proper sleep practices, a self-care routine, maintaining a healthy diet, exercising daily, and being mindful of language surrounding mental health.

**Dealing with Student Apathy**

Apathy can cause reduced action initiation and a lack of opportunities. It is frustrating to feel as a leader. Apathy can look like a decrease in voter turnout, event turnout, low survey responses, and social media engagement. It can be an increase in reports of loneliness, mental wellness services, and vocal minority criticism. The best ways to combat student apathy are to pick the right battles, find the root cause, get rid of assumptions, tailor and target towards the audience that doesn’t care, have a cohesive brand and effective streamline methods, check privileges and biases, and to work towards inclusion and not just diversity.

**Risk Assessment and Planning**

Risks are situation that involve exposure to danger. Some risks that ESSS may have to deal with are financial and reputational risks. The ways to identify risks before hand are to conduct a feasibility study before the event such as examining the timeline and budget, together with considering the legal implications such as permits. It also helps to brainstorm with others, reflect on previous events, and contact those involved with those past events.

There are 4 efficient ways to mitigate the risks as well. The first is to avoid the risk to begin with. If there is a path to avoid the risk, take it. The second is to transfer the risk. Risks with lower probability should be taken over the risks with a higher chance of occurring. The third is to accept the risk. The cost of taking the risk may be the better financial option over finding a path that mitigates the risk. The last is to simply limit the exposure to the risks.
involved. It helps to identify what types of risk are relevant to the event and find ways to mitigate them, such as having participants fill out a risk assessment form.

**Conflict Resolution**

Some strategies involved with conflict resolution include separating people from the problem, focus on the interests not the position, and to manage emotions. There are also principles involved when resolving conflict. It is important to respect people as human beings, respect the interests and power of the other, trying to give the benefit of the doubt, doing anything possible to build trust. The acronym BANTA, which stands for best alternative to negotiate agreement, is a good thing to remember as well.

**Personal Takebacks**

Most of the information I took back involved how I can be the best student leader I can. Since I’m running for VP External in the upcoming election, I want to make sure that I possess the best qualities that will help me succeed in that position.

I found that the Brand and Elevator Pitch session was extremely helpful, especially for when I start my campaign and I need to sell myself to the student body. The Bringing Strengths to the Table session will help me reflect on myself and know how to acknowledge what I can bring to the VP External position and what I can learn from it. The Leveraging Interpersonal and Social Skills to Diversify Engineering Career was extremely helpful in terms of how to communicate with others in different environments.

The rest of the sessions helped me prepare myself if I were to be elected to the role of VP External. The sessions taught me how to handle various situations, whether that is from planning an event, mitigating risks, or dealing with conflict. They also taught me the skills I would need to further practice and develop in order to succeed, such as communicating, networking, and working with a team. It is my goal to be able to apply these skills to the VP External position if were to be elected, in order to further improve ESSS as a whole.