

GENERATION

NEXT

2017 AWARDS



# The Venue Cheerleader

Gen Next “Social Butterfly” award winner John Ciolfi is a people-person

by BRAD WEISSBERG

“Vote 4 the truly inspirational JOHN CIOLFI for the 2017 @Venues2Day Generation Next Awards!” — PAULA ABDUL

It's not usual that a Gen Next nominee gets a celebrity endorsement, but John Ciolfi, 30, is not your everyday venue marketing manager. With celebrity friends in his corner, it's no wonder that John Ciolfi, 30, is a superstar at work.

Ciolfi didn't intend to get into the venue industry. It came to him.

“My twin brother and I started coaching cheerleading in 2005 at the same high school we cheered at,” explained Ciolfi, marketing manager for SMG at Dunkin' Donuts Center (DDC) & Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence, about how he got hooked into his job. “Paula Abdul was working on a cheerleading project with SMG and the DDC in the beginning of summer 2013. They were looking for local people in the state with knowledge and experience in the cheerleading industry. In March of 2013, our high school team won the state championship, which gave my twin brother Jesse and I some local exposure. DDC called us in for an interview with Paula, and we began working on the cheerleading project with her and the team throughout the summer of 2013.”

Ciolfi never left. Once the project was concluded, he was hired fulltime as an assistant in the marketing department. “My duties were very light,” said Ciolfi. “My director told me the most important thing to do at the time was build relationships with other people.” Relationship building is what Ciolfi is all about and he was off to the races. “I met with people at the radio stations, the TV stations and the hospitality associations, and I got familiar with the people I'd be working with on a day-to-day basis.”

Sensing a star in the making, Ciolfi's bosses quickly grew his responsibilities. “I worked closely with the operations department, box-office and security. I spread myself all over to meet as many people as I could and learn about the building and the business.”

Relationship building worked well for Ciolfi; after two short years he was promoted to marketing manager.

Ciolfi markets every show at DDC and the convention center. He helps create radio and TV spots. “Coming to work is fun for me,” said Ciolfi. “I've met so many great people

throughout the years. I love media buying, promotions with radio and TV stations; I love working with our Convention & Visitors Bureau on high profile events; I love NCAA events, I love wrestling, I love everything this industry has brought through these doors.”

Adding more power to his celebrity rolodex, Ciolfi befriended Miss Rhode Island and Miss Rhode Island Teen USA, and he calls on them regularly to introduce the circus or be a celebrity judge for Monster Jam.

Ciolfi has also been instrumental in building DDC’s social media presence. “I’ve had to teach everyone in the building how important social media is,” he said. “Social media is the leading way to reach out to people. Through networking and the people we know, we’ve seen the numbers grow year-over-year, and I find that to be very important in this industry.”

Ciolfi and Lisa D’Ercole, the creative service manager, introduced SnapChat to the DDC and taught everyone in the building how to use it. They also coached the board of directors. “They are a little older and we needed to teach them about the importance of social media,” he said with his infectious laugh.

Ciolfi and D’Ercole report to Cheryl Cohen, DDC’s director of marketing, booking and PR. “I can’t say enough nice things about John,” said Cohen. “I call him ‘best ever’ because he truly is the best ever. He is such a hands-on, get in there, get it done type of person and is extremely easy to work with. He thinks a step ahead of everybody and makes changes without getting rattled on the fly, which is extremely valuable in this industry.”

“He’s excelled and taken on a lot of responsibility,” she said. “As I’ve taken on new roles, I’ve shifted a lot of what I used to do to John and he’s learned it all quickly. He is so well respected in the local community, everybody loves him. The people he deals with on a national level adore him as well.”

“He amazes me with the way he just takes things on,” she said, recalling the time when there was a 400-person meet-and-greet VIP package for a Luke Bryan show. “No one realized how big this was when we booked the show, and when the time came to plan it, John

realized we didn’t have the a space for an event that big before the main show. He took the initiative to go to the Hilton Hotel next door, arrange it with them, and the VIP reception

went off without a hitch. John saw to every little detail. Luke and his people, not to mention the fans, were all thrilled with the event.”

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# CONGRATULATIONS JOHN CIOLFI marketing manager on receiving the 2017 Generation Next & Social Butterfly AWARDS



From your friends





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Event nights are Ciolfi's favorite nights. "The building comes to life, the staff is all together, we work really hard and it all pays off when we see the fans having the time of their lives."


Ciolfi's attitude is refreshing on all levels. When asked about his least favorite part of his job, he struggled to come up with anything. "When you open your mind to learning new things, I don't think you can ever have a bad time," he said. "I can't think of a time I left this building without a smile on my face."

Other than winning *Venues Today's* Gen Next award, "This is crazy. I can't believe I am even having this conversation. I have read *Venues Today* every month since I started here." Ciolfi is most proud of an event he started from the ground up called Stars With Guitars. "We just had our second one. The

event gets bigger and better every year. We just made history with the largest guitar-pull ever in New England."

Ciolfi sits on the Statewide Local Organizing Committee and currently works on many high profile Request For Proposal projects for the city and state. He also recently hosted several national journalists and acted as PR ambassador for the state. This past year, he was awarded the Stars of the Industry Volunteer of the Year award from the Rhode Island Hospitality Association.

Ciolfi said he's found a home in DDC and has no plans to leave anytime soon. "SMG is a great company to work for, and the people I work with are like my family," he said. "If an opportunity came my way to move up, I'd consider it, for sure, but for now I'm quite happy."


Talented, happy and adored. Three cheers for that. 

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certain tasks take minutes instead of hours and she gets to spend more times with her kids. It was a fulfilling moment."

It's not often Chia goofs up, but the one time he did taught him a valuable lesson. "I was just two years in when I accidentally deleted every account for one of our major venue management clients. Everything went offline for about half an hour. Luckily our technical team was able to restore it all." Having learned from the fumble, Chia always reads things at least three times now before taking action.

As his career grows, Chia can't wait to see what will be invented next for venue software.

"I think it will be exciting to see what technology will become available in the next 10 years," he said, and added, "I'd like to be a part of that." 

## Congratulations to our SMG marketing leaders for winning the 2017 Generation Next Award



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