

The
Delegate Wranglers®

INSIDER

FREELANCER SPECIAL

Dec 2024

We get to know five amazing freelancers and get their take on this wonderful industry of ours...



ALISON HIBBERT



ALICE WATTS



MELANIE THOMAS-LEE



MARTIN COMPTON



MARY LOVE



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People buy into people. And I work hard to ensure everyone – clients, venues, and suppliers – always have an exemplary experience of working with By Parallel.

ALISON HIBBERT

BY **PARALLEL**
EVENTS

THINKING ALONG THE SAME LINES

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Tell us what made you want a career in the event industry?

I was bitten by the bug before my career even started, waiting on tables from the age of 14. I fell in love with the buzz of hospitality. And I had lots of fun as a hotel booker at Expotel back in the day, during the golden era of booking agencies. The fam trips and perks were fabulous. But I felt more inclined to be on the other side of the business. I wanted to be hands-on and deliver experiences, rather than just handling the paperwork.

This led me into various event sales management. I honed skills in event admin, sales, production, and delivery in roles for a broad range of hotels and venues over 15 years, from big conference hotels to boutique independents. During this time, I got this idea of offering something uniquely mine. Because it was clear how clients responded to my personal approach.

So, By Parallel was born 21 years ago. And it's been bringing my signature brand of creativity, professionalism, and attention to detail directly to my clients ever since.

Give us an overview of your expertise and experience, and what sectors your specialise in

By Parallel is about 90% corporate, including high-end professional services, financial services, and associations. Many of our events are in Manchester, where I'm based, and where many of our clients have national or regional HQs. But we're client-driven. So, we work everywhere from London to Dublin to Brighton to Leeds.



I love helping private clients celebrate milestones too. Big birthdays and weddings are high maintenance but really rewarding to plan, especially in some of the stunning venues across the UK and Ireland I've had the pleasure of working with. Many of these clients book me after I've organised an event for the company they work for – and vice versa.

Tell us what made you want a career in the event industry?

We're as hands-on or hands-off as each individual client needs. That could mean free venue finding, sourcing entertainment, event décor, production, or being on-site for supplier co-ordination, making sure everything comes together as it should on the day. Or the whole lot!

This is all achieved so much more effectively when you've got a network of loyal venues and suppliers you've worked with for years, like mine. Because the hospitality and events sectors are all about relationships. People buy into people. And I work hard to ensure everyone - clients, venues, and suppliers – always have an exemplary experience of working with By Parallel.

At the end of the day, putting on the best possible event means creating a seamless and enjoyable process for everyone involved.

What have you learned along the way about doing your job?

Think again if you think this job is all champagne and canapés!



Think again if you think this job is all champagne and canapés! Although I've put the work into building a reputation and venue relationships over the years. So I'm very fortunate it's an added bonus to be winned and dined.

But realistically, it's a million miles an hour, demanding sector. And it's only got tougher post-pandemic, with skills shortages and tighter budgets. Everybody wants more for less! So, I'd say the key piece of advice is to never stop nurturing those relationships.

Clients have endless options these days. So, you need to consistently show you're invested in them. It's the same for your suppliers and venues too. Strengthening these bonds takes time and effort, but the payoff is trust and loyalty. And money can't buy these things.

How have you seen the industry change over the last 4 or 5 years and what do you think lies ahead? Are you see new trends develop?

Well, Christmas events are a case in point. The trend has shifted to earlier dates. Companies no longer want Saturdays or the last weekend before Christmas. They've realised it's a big ask at a time of year when everybody's diaries are bursting with commitments.

Full-on Christmas parties are a big investment. So, my clients want their team members to be engaged, rather than just feeling obliged to show face.



Earlier starts and earlier finishes are also being leveraged for similar reasons, enabling people to enjoy the celebration with everybody else, but be at home by 9 without feeling like a grinch! Summer parties are gaining traction too. They're more relaxed and inclusive, even if the British weather is a gamble!

Inclusivity is a driving force overall. No- and low-alcohol options are a must, and street food is a great way to mix things up for everyone's tastes. Similarly, formal dining is being swapped for exclusive venue hires at funky bars and restaurants.

The ultimate focus is on creating events where everybody, regardless of cultural background and personal preferences, feels excited and included. And it's my job to offer strategic advice to my clients to help them hit the mark.

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I have always believed that a client's message is key and that great client relationships are built on my ability to consistently deliver those messages.

MARTIN COMPTON



Tell us what made you want a career in the event industry?

I fell into conference production after leaving art college, where I studied graphic design. I went for a job interview to be a junior designer at a production company and I'd never heard of one of those before, so I had absolutely no idea what conference production was all about... but my first boss told me that conferences were 'business theatre', and from that moment on I was hooked.

Give us an overview of your expertise and experience, and what sectors your specialise in

After nearly 25 years in agency life the COVID pandemic introduced me to freelancing earlier than I'd planned to make the leap.

But all those various agencies led me to being a multi-skilled Event Content Producer. I specialise as a Video Director/Editor and Presentation Designer, but I also deliver content on-site at events as a Graphics Operator, Show Caller or Stage Manager, which allows me to provide my clients with the complete 'door-to-door' content offering, from concept, through design to delivery.

Typically I'm a B2B, B2C content creative and I've worked across every sector you can imagine from automotive, finance, IT, fashion, pharmaceuticals and even live sport.



Tell us what made you want a career in the event industry?

I have always believed that a client's message is key and that great client relationships are built on my ability to consistently deliver those messages, on time and on-budget. So no matter what I'm doing - creating and delivering content, show calling, stage managing - my day to day role is always to ensure that the client, be that the agency that has contracted me or their end client, is totally happy.

I still think content is still King, now more than ever with people's lives being busier, but also with the extra tech we have to reach our audiences... so on every project I aim to deliver that message as best I can, if I'm creating content, or I make sure that an event runs as smoothly as possible if I'm show calling or stage managing to enable a great experience for the audience.

What have you learned along the way about doing your job?

Take everything in, learn everything you can and say 'yes' to new challenges as often as possible... I've been in the industry for 28 years and I'm still learning because the industry keeps evolving. But also be comfortable to say 'no', take time for yourself, whenever and wherever you can.

Stress in our industry is a killer, so remembering to step back and take a break, whether it's ten minutes here, or a week off there, is really important.



How have you seen the industry change over the last 4 or 5 years and what do you think lies ahead? Are you see new trends develop?

The new delivery methods, which did exist pre-pandemic but which were escalated to new heights because of COVID, have changed everything we do. Experiences and networking - the human factor - are more important than they were before, so my big challenge is how we make content relevant within those 'new' delivery channels.

How do we ensure the company messages are still hitting home with less time to deliver them. I think the tech in our pockets and encouraged post/pre-event connection with the content is probably the way.

The experiences on-site at the in-person element of the event are then ways to tie that message back in whilst delivering a tangible, enjoyable, experience for the delegates.

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The events industry is in a really strong position at the moment. Covid taught people how important face-to-face connections are and I believe that will continue.

ALICE WATTS



The Events Executive

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Tell us what made you want a career in the event industry?

Ever since I was at school I was the first to put my hand up to be on a committee to get things done. I studied drama at university but was more interested in putting on the production than being on stage and I think it all stemmed from there.

I was also involved in the RAG Charities committee at university where we organised some pretty large scale events. I loved coming together with others to create something that guests enjoyed. Both then and now, I always try to take a moment at each event to stand back and take it all in to think 'We made this happen'.

Give us an overview of your expertise and experience, and what sectors your specialise in

I have worked in the event industry for over 20 years. Starting by doing charity events then moving on to associations and corporate events before going freelance 6 years ago.

I specialise in delegate and logistics/project management - particularly within pharma and corporate events. I enjoy all sorts of events but especially ones with more than one element - for example a conference with an awards ceremony.



I also really enjoy incentive events because the guests really appreciate all that you are doing to make their experience the best. My favourite part of all events is arrivals day when the names you have been staring at for months become real people. I've often been emailing some delegates regularly so actually getting to meet them is really lovely

What does your role generally entail for each project?

In a delegate management position, my role starts with the registration site. I have worked a lot with Cvent and Eventsair but also used several other systems and can turn my hand to most things.

Sometimes it will involve creating the registration from scratch but often, by the time I come in as a freelancer, it's more just being a fresh pair of eyes to check it before we go live.

Once delegates are invited and starting to register, I support with any queries they might have. I often also support with travel so booking flights and arranging the transfers on arrival. I liaise with hotels with any queries, visa requests and then closer to the time providing rooming lists and any special requests and requirements.

If I am working on a logistics/project management role then this can start with venue finding based on the clients' requirements for each element of the event, securing the services of a DMC then researching and finalising items such as name badges, room drops, entertainment and anything else that the client asks for!



A lot of either role also includes working closely with clients. That can be updating budgets, creating reports, attending planning meetings and sometimes explaining why what they think they want might not be the best idea.

What have you learned along the way about doing your job?

Something always goes wrong. I regularly give careers talks at schools and universities and this is one of the first things I say.

I think if you know from the beginning that something will go wrong, it's less of an issue when it happens. I have dealt with venues burning down the week before an event, mass strike action, terrorist threats and much more.

I usually take 5 minutes to swear about it then take a deep breath and go 'right, how are we going to sort this out'. The swearing helps.

How have you seen the industry change over the last 4 or 5 years and what do you think lies ahead? Are you see new trends develop?

The events industry is in a really strong position at the moment. Covid taught people how important face-to-face connections are and I believe that will continue.

However the technical and hybrid aspects of events have definitely become more important - particularly for congresses and educational events.



That said, I feel that the events calendar has become quite busy. I have definitely seen people value their time more so it is important to provide real merit in events. Included in that is how important service is.

This is not just from us as event organisers to the delegates but also from our supplier both to us and directly to delegates. Making delegates feel valued, important and looked after is key. Without this they will not have a good impression of the event and are less likely to want to attend again or recommend it to their peers.

Contact Alice here...



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Never underestimate the value of feedback. Post-event insights are a goldmine for learning and improving your craft.

MELANIE THOMAS-LEE



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Tell us what made you want a career in the event industry?

From an early age, I've always been drawn to bringing people together and creating memorable experiences. The event industry felt like a natural fit because it combines creativity, organisation, and the opportunity to make a tangible impact.

I thrive on the energy of seeing a concept come to life from the initial planning stages to the moment the doors open and attendees are fully immersed in the experience. What truly cemented my passion for the industry was realising the diversity it offers. Every event is unique, with its own challenges and opportunities, and I enjoy the dynamic nature of adapting to different clients, industries, and audiences.

For me, no two days are the same, and I love being part of something that constantly evolves. Over the years, I've particularly enjoyed specialising in pharmaceutical events. The complexity of compliance, combined with the chance to facilitate meaningful connections and share critical knowledge, has given my work a sense of purpose.

I find it incredibly rewarding to know that my events contribute to advancing healthcare and improving lives. Ultimately, what drives me is the impact of events—they bring people together, spark ideas, and create lasting impressions. That's why I chose this industry, and it's why I continue to love it.



Give us an overview of your expertise and experience, and what sectors your specialise in

With over 25 years of experience in the event industry, I've built a career specialising in managing pharmaceutical and life sciences events, where compliance and precision are paramount.

My expertise lies in delivering seamless, impactful events that align with complex industry regulations while engaging key stakeholders, such as healthcare professionals and industry leaders. Throughout my career, I've managed everything from large-scale conferences and advisory boards to intimate roundtables and product launches.

I thrive on the intricacies of multi-location events, ensuring that every detail from venue compliance to agenda flow is executed flawlessly.

My ability to navigate the nuances of pharma regulations, including HCP engagement and reporting requirements, sets me apart as a trusted partner for companies in this sector. While I enjoy the challenge of all types of events, my favorite projects involve strategic engagements where events are designed to drive meaningful outcomes.

Whether it's a congress that facilitates critical knowledge-sharing or an internal event that inspires teams, I find purpose in creating experiences that deliver measurable impact. What I love most about this industry is its dynamism—each event presents a new opportunity to learn, innovate, and connect people in ways that leave lasting impressions.



What does your role generally entail for each project?

For each project, my role involves managing the entire event lifecycle, from initial planning to post-event analysis, ensuring a seamless and impactful experience for all stakeholders. It begins with understanding the client's objectives and aligning the event strategy to meet their specific goals.

I collaborate closely with clients to develop a tailored plan that includes venue sourcing, budgeting, agenda design, and compliance considerations—particularly critical in pharmaceutical and life sciences events.

Compliance is a cornerstone of my work. I ensure all aspects of the event adhere to industry regulations, such as HCP engagement and transparency requirements, mitigating risks and safeguarding the client's reputation. During execution, I manage every logistical detail, including vendor coordination, travel arrangements, and attendee communications.

On the event day, I oversee operations—whether in-person, hybrid, or virtual—troubleshooting in real time to ensure a flawless experience. Post-event, I focus on delivering actionable insights by analyzing attendee feedback & event performance metrics. This helps clients measure success and refine strategies for future events.

My role is more than event management—it's about acting as a strategic partner, alleviating the client's stress, & delivering high-impact events that align with their business objectives & leave a lasting impression.



What have you learned along the way about doing your job?

Over 25 years in the event industry have taught me that success lies in preparation, adaptability, and building strong relationships. One of the most valuable lessons is the importance of meticulous planning while remaining flexible. Even the best-laid plans can face unexpected challenges, so having a clear roadmap paired with strong contingency plans is key to staying calm and in control. Another important lesson is the power of communication. Events involve multiple stakeholders, from clients and vendors to attendees and teams.

Clear, consistent communication ensures everyone is aligned, minimising confusion and reducing last-minute issues. For those in the industry, my advice is to focus on understanding your client's objectives and priorities. Every decision—whether about venue, agenda, or technology—should align with their goals.

Also, never underestimate the value of feedback. Post-event insights are a goldmine for learning and improving your craft.

Lastly, invest in your relationships. Build a trusted network of vendors, venues, and collaborators. These relationships will not only save you in a pinch but also elevate the quality of your events.

Remember, the event world is dynamic and fast-paced, but with a proactive mindset and a focus on delivering value, you can consistently create impactful experiences.



How have you seen the industry change over the last 4 or 5 years and what do you think lies ahead? Are you see new trends develop?

Over the last 4–5 years, the event industry has undergone significant transformation, driven largely by technology and shifting audience expectations. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of virtual and hybrid formats, making digital integration a core component of event planning. What once felt like a temporary solution has now become a long-term trend, with clients and attendees expecting flexibility, accessibility, and engaging virtual experiences. Compliance and sustainability have also moved to the forefront.

In industries like pharmaceuticals, ensuring regulatory adherence has become more complex, while clients increasingly demand events that align with environmental and social values.

This dual focus has required event professionals to stay agile and innovative. Looking ahead, personalisation and data-driven decision-making are shaping the future. Attendees expect tailored experiences, and the use of AI and advanced analytics will help planners create events that feel more relevant and impactful.

Additionally, immersive technologies like AR and VR are becoming more prominent, transforming how we engage audiences. The industry is evolving toward creating deeper, more meaningful connections. Events are no longer just gatherings, they're strategic tools for engagement and change.



The future lies in balancing technology with human interaction to deliver experiences that inspire and deliver measurable results.

Contact Melanie here...



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Be a problem solver and I can assure you that clients will be beating a path to hire you!

MARY LOVE

Mary Love
EVENTS

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Tell us what made you want a career in the event industry?

My organizational ease with logistics, naturally hospitable demeanor, and eye for excellence in detail seemed to fit naturally with the demands of the events industry. Mix in my ability to adapt to unforeseen issues with my creative flair and suddenly, I had found my professional niche! I have always been motivated by a sense of accomplishment in my work.

There is no doubt about it, working in the hospitality industry can be incredibly challenging. However, it is the satisfaction that I glean from knowing that I exceeded a client's expectations and "WOW"ed the attendees - despite these challenges - which has kept me successful in this crazy and wonderful field.

Give us an overview of your expertise and experience, and what sectors your specialise in

I am in the unique position of having extensive experience being a vendor of high-end event décor, a director level agency planner, and in the past five years, an onsite event producer for corporate events and luxury travel organizations.

If needed, I am happy to also provide pre-event services such as floorplan generation, run of show schedules, and food & beverage management. I love what I do and I take an immense amount of pride in the quality of the service with I provide.



My favorite type of events are multi-day sales incentive events at a destination location. While I am based in London, my work takes me throughout the EMEA region as well as in the United States. I specialize in promoting a high level of guest engagement and providing VIP level service to senior leaders, celebrity speakers and special invitees.

What does your role generally entail for each project?

My role is anchored in a profound understanding of logistical execution and marketing communications ensuring that each experience is aligned with the preferences of my clients.

Specifically, I excel in the following areas:

- Production and project management – especially serving as the onsite lead of the installation and breakdown of main conference room including staging, lighting, A/V, guest seating, F&B stations, etc
- Vendor management and liaison (including union providers)
- Creative solutions and award-winning aesthetics to make your event look incredible
- Hospitality registration, reception, and guest services
- VIP solutions and management for organizational, upper management, political dignitaries, celebrities, philanthropic benefactors and board members
- Transportation management and travel manifest supervision



What have you learned along the way about doing your job?

As the saying goes “The best laid plans of mice and men oft’ go awry” In my opinion, the most important skill for an onsite event producer or meeting manager to have is adaptability.

After having produced literally thousands of events, I can tell you without fail (and in spite of the most ardent planning), something will go wrong. It always does! Delivery trucks will breakdown; vendors won’t show up on time; guest speakers will be delayed. These are among the myriad of problems that can happen in the hospitality industry.

By rapidly and decisively dealing with these types of issues, a true professional will mitigate damages and if approached creatively enough, can even add to the overall success of the event. Be a problem solver and I can assure you that clients will be beating a path to hire you! .

How have you seen the industry change over the last 4 or 5 years and what do you think lies ahead? Are you see new trends develop?

WOW, now there is a question! Since the end of 2019, let’s see we have been through a global pandemic, the decimation of our industry, the introduction of virtual meetings, the disdain for virtual meetings, the inclination of recruitment agencies to seek out less experience (aka less expensive) employees, the inevitable fallout of organizations desiring/requiring more reliable, seasoned support people, and the list goes on & on.



I personally believe the AI is no longer the future, but the “present” of events. It streamlines my processes for finding venues, helps me establish budgetary parameters based on ROI, and even assists in the creation of thought-provoking content and images for proposals in order to respond effectively to RFP’s

Contact Mary here...



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