



Photo by Michael Nambberger

# A Professional in Three Acts

**Matthias Kindler has learned a lot about what makes great special events, and now he shares it**  
**By Lisa Hurley**

## THE BIGGEST BOOST

“A solid marketing background is what has always helped me the most. If you understand brands and consumers, you can help corporations. If they see that you understand their problems and how to use special events to solve these problems, you are set.”

## GENERATION NEXT

“Helping the next generation has become my greatest passion. When I teach students, I tell them to aspire to become consultants, not suppliers. I teach them to know the past but not to relive it. I tell them to stay curious, and to appreciate the fascinating people in our industry.”

## BIGGER, BETTER—BUT CHEAPER!

“One of the big contradictions of our industry: The more complex and the more important events become, the cheaper and the faster they have to be produced. Sounds crazy, doesn't it?”

**Luck, they say**, is simply preparation meeting opportunity. And that's a fair description of the career of Matthias Kindler. His willingness to travel, work hard and challenge the status quo has evolved into an exciting event business.

Blessed with a natural curiosity, Kindler applied for a scholarship offered in his native Germany to study abroad. “When I heard about a scholarship for graduate school and an MBA, I figured that this would be a great adventure,” he recalls.

He was right. His studies at the University of Georgia in Athens “changed everything,” he says. “I grew up fast, mastered a new language, studied like a horse, partied hard and had the best time of my life. And when I graduated at the top of my class, I could pretty much pick any job.”

As it happened, Apple picked him. “I was the first marketing graduate at Apple in Germany,” he says. “Everybody else was an engineer, a programmer or a salesperson. I was given a lot of responsibility at the age of 26, and I often acted as a liaison to corporate headquarters in Cupertino [Calif.] since I understood both languages and mentalities well.”

Roles at other international corporations followed, broadening his understanding of brand management and large-scale experiential events. But after a few years, his entrepreneurial itch took over and he launched the Kindler Co. He initially offered communications consulting but soon added divisions providing events, promotions and public relations. Over

the years, The Companies, as his firms are known, have produced some 700 projects, including “huge” programs for car manufacturers, media corporations and financial institutions, Kindler says.

But such a hectic work schedule cannot last forever. “If you give everything you have, you can hardly do this job for a lifetime,” Kindler explains, adding with a wink, “So think about early retirement, winning the lottery or teaching.” He has chosen the third route, offering lectures, keynote speeches, and commercial seminars for professional event planners in a program dubbed the MasterClass. “Every year, a few hundred event professionals, mainly from Germany, Switzerland and Austria, study with us,” he says. “By now we are probably the leading supplier for continuous education in that field, and we are planning to take more of it internationally.”

In his sessions, Kindler stresses the need for event professionals to move beyond offering a package of logistics, food and entertainment, instead developing events that serve as strategic business tools. “When I started lecturing about why events need to evolve, many of the established players fought me, saying that my criticism was harmful to the whole industry,” he notes. But today, “It makes me proud to see that many of my former competitors have adopted my ideas and try to push events to the next level. This long-needed change in ‘why we do events’ now shapes our industry.” ●

**MasterClass** [masterclass-event.de](http://masterclass-event.de); [info@masterclass-event.de](mailto:info@masterclass-event.de)