

Yvette Vincent, CHTP

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Yvette Vincent was vacationing in New Orleans with her husband and two small children in August 2005. After having a great time on a weeklong trip on the American Queen steamboat (which at the time was owned by Delaware North Companies, Vincent's employer), they had planned to spend the weekend in the Crescent City before flying out on August 29. That, of course was the day Hurricane Katrina made landfall and all plans changed.

Vincent's family learned that flights were cancelling as reports of the storm intensified. Rental cars quickly sold out. So, they made it back onto the American Queen, which got out just before the city closed down. While they were safe, local cell towers went out early that fateful Monday, so there was very little communication or information to provide to the ship's staff regarding the tragedies unfolding for their hometown and families on shore.

Looking back, Vincent is grateful for the skills and compassion of Captain John Duggar, his wife and crew, as well as the insight their professionalism and the whole experience provided her back at work.

"The mindset change in how new technology is developed and funded has my interest. Open Source has been around for some time, but the rise of crowd funding is producing or expanding some new game changers: Adapteva is working through low power, consumer priced supercomputing; Oculus Rift can change not only the gaming experience, but also associate training and consumer experiences; and 3D printing has unlimited possibilities."

"This experience taught me that people come first, and IT can be used to provide geographically disperse business continuity to support both customer and associate needs," says Vincent.

An open book to her friends, family and co-workers, Vincent is an adept networker and collaborator, as was made clear during one of her favorite projects, the selection of a reservation system, which required working with a variety of hospitality leaders.

"This involved obtaining requirements and buy-in across many departments, both vertically and horizontally: setting selection criteria, creating data standards and new system procedures, and developing sustainable processes and standards bodies to maintain them and drive system value," she says. The implementation was a collaborative effort.

Vincent got to her leadership role in the hospitality industry through technology. "I had worked in IT application developer positions for non-customer facing technology, so the move into a hospitality IT position where the technology would also benefit the customer directly sounded exciting," she remembers of her move 17 years ago. "This is still the best part of the industry to me. I get to impact technology to make the guest experience even better."

When Vincent graduated from college with a computer degree, she hadn't worked with personal computers or the Internet, as both those technologies were new at the time. A curious lifelong learner, she has adapted and stayed ahead of the curve, in part through activities with associations such as HFTP and HTNG. Looking forward, she's particularly interested in crowdfunding, Open Source and other ways that new technology is being funded.

Whether at work or off-the-clock, Vincent jumps in with both feet. Before becoming a mom, she competed in international style ballroom and Latin dancing with an amateur partner. Whether on vacation or at the office, she's clear in her focus: "The best piece of advice I ever got was to always stay true to my opinions, support them with objectivity and fact, and don't get discouraged if others don't agree." *