

## FLAG: FIVE-STEP METHOD

### **Head: How to Set the Bar**

Deck/Intro: The first step in effective event planning is defining goals. Problem is, there are so many possible goal-setting paths to follow. How do you choose the right one? How do you prioritize among many? And, most important, does the goal drive the event, or does the event drive the goal? Try the following five steps to setting and defining measurable goals that align with your corporate objectives and serve as a barometer to gauge the success of your next event.

#### **1. Look at Your Corporate Objectives**

First things first: What does your company need and want to accomplish in the coming year? If your management hasn't articulated the annual priorities for you, you can uncover some yourself by reading your company's annual report. If your company doesn't issue an annual report, look to analyst coverage, business-media coverage, and even the text of executive speeches to glean direction. How can your event program support those objectives? Remember: the objective is the broad business outcome your company wants, such as to improve client retention. A strategy is the approach you will use with your events to work toward that outcome, such as delivering value-added information to at-risk, high-potential customers. The goal is a quantifiable result that your event will deliver, such as attracting 50 percent of the at-risk, high-potential pool to your event.

#### **2. Share your Annual Goals with Senior Management**

Based on what you learned about your company's annual goals, present to your executive team the annual event goals you've established to support them. These are what you expect to accomplish with events this year: business-improvement goals such as revenue impact, improved profitability, cost savings, or promotion value; and marketing-communications goals such as brand development, networking, or product positioning.

#### **3. Listen to Your Stakeholders**

Armed with management's buy-in, explore how your annual goals will drill down to group or business-line objectives for the year. Marketing, sales, senior management, or other constituents within your company each have goals they need to achieve, and you can align your event goals with theirs. For example, if product marketing has a new product launching in November, can you attract 20 top editors to a media event around the launch timeframe? Be cautious about stakeholders' goals tied to sales figures: A soirée for your dealer network won't show immediate sales impact. So think of what else you can measure and glean from your dealer group at such an event.

#### **4. Meet the Other Marketing Minds**

As the event approaches, look for ways to capitalize on current marketing campaigns. Event guests are likely to be aware of current offers and messages in market, so your event goals should support — and be supported by — the messages being broadcast from your marketing brethren. Establish goals connected to these offers, such as on-site sign-ups.

#### **5. Measure and Report**

At each event, be sure you have mechanisms in place well beforehand for measuring against your established goals. At-event measurement can be tricky, as tempting as it may be to pull out a survey when your attendees are all in one spot. Instead, you can gauge attendee impact from their actions taken, which are bound to come later. For marketing-communications goals, survey or e-mail attendees after the event. In either case, what you measure must show how well you did or did not meet your specific event goals. Once you've analyzed the data, present the results along with an action plan based on the findings.

Sources: Skip Cox, Exhibit Surveys Inc., Red Bank, NJ, and Ed Jones, Constellation Communication Corp., Dunwoody, GA