

# Not just any goal will do – set the right lifecycle goals for your chapter

All chapters need goals, milestones that drive them to improve performance and continue to deliver value to their membership.



Do these goals sound like ones you've set for your chapter?

- **Revenue.** Doubling non-dues revenue in the next two years.
- **Membership.** Adding 50 new members in 2019. Or, getting 80 percent of your members to renew for another year.
- **Programing.** Positive feedback for more than 90 percent of your programs.

Take a look at your goals from the past several years. What trends do you see? Did you meet most of them? Miss them by a little? A lot? If you missed, maybe the goals weren't the right ones for your chapter, based on your needs and where your chapter is in its lifecycle.

A chapter lifecycle tends to include the following five buckets. (There may be some overlap.) Which one of these sound like where you are currently? Which describes where you want to be? And, perhaps some of these more specific lifecycle focused goals would be better suited to your chapter.

- **Building.** These chapters are typically under five years old. Goals for building chapters should focus on increasing membership and developing a board. They could include:

- *Creating the right board.* This is the right time to determine the skills you need and find the members to step into these roles.
- *Determining the board culture.* What



interpersonal abilities do your board members need to have? Are they innate emotional abilities or are they interpersonal skills that could they be taught? This is a good time to add a board retreat goal. Hold a retreat to give your Board time alone to get to know each other and learn to work together more effectively.

- *Forming your committees.* Which board roles need committees to support them? Once you know that, determine the types of people you need and how you'll find them.

- **Growing.** These chapters are more than five years old. Time for those things you keep talking about but keep putting off. Goals for these chapters could include:

- *Strengthening chapter structure.* Create processes and documentation for board responsibilities and transitions, sponsorship, and membership value propositions.
- *Growing attendance.* Perhaps the same 25 people attend your meetings. How can you keep those 25 people but bring in 25 new ones each month?
- *Developing a programming calendar.* Start holding different types of events. Set the schedule months ahead. Publish your calendar, to get members and prospects used to looking at it to just confirm an event they already know about.

- **Stable.** One of the more common buckets, these chapters have had, approximately, the same number of members for years. Everyone is comfortable. This is the time to drive your chapter

to be higher performing and more engaging. If not, your members may get bored and choose to go elsewhere. Consider:

- *Stretching some of your existing goals.* Look at your membership, attendance, and sponsorship numbers. How can you get to twice your current rate or even more?
- *Shoring up your finances.* What do you need to do to ensure your chapter is financially sound for the long-term?
- *Developing a mentoring program.* Foster the next generation of members and leaders. Connect those new in their careers with more experienced members.

- **High-Performing.** These chapters continue to experience growth. They hold great programs, have solid event attendance, and robust sponsorship programs. Put the gas pedal to the floor and go even further. Goals for these chapters could include:

- *Learning what members want.* Are you meeting their needs? Maybe you're missing the mark somewhere. Survey them to find out how you're doing.
- *Adding more and different types of events.* Is there something you've been dying to try? Now's the time.
- *Attracting best-in-industry sponsors.* Go after that "it" sponsor. As a high-performing chapter, you have the members and programs they'll want to be associated with.
- *Redesigning your website.* If it's been a few years, it's time for a refresh to maintain and increase your online engagement.
- *Developing a content strategy.* Many



chapters, even high-performing ones, don't have content strategies. Write some blogs, white papers, and thought leadership pieces. Try some video marketing and testimonials. Do those things you didn't have the resources for previously.

could cause you to lose more members and keep others from joining. Create a campaign to share the value the board has received throughout their membership via email, website, social media.

• **Recovery.** These chapters have seen membership drop significantly and they're probably in dire financial straits. It's not too late. Chapters in recovery could consider the following:

- *Getting to the root cause of the decline.* Is something in your industry or the market affecting people's ability to join? Find out.
- *Setting micro goals.* Don't try to fix it all at once. Determine your end goal and set smaller goals to get there. Aim for three new members in a month versus 50 for the year. Improve meeting attendance. Bring in one new sponsor per quarter.
- *Getting back to basics.* What's the value of the chapter to members? Are you still meeting your mission and vision?
- *Focusing on morale boosting.* Remaining members may be in lousy moods, which

### **Not sure what your goals should be?**

Reach out to high performing chapters. How did they become as successful as they are? Ask their board members to review your chapter, to provide feedback and recommend goals. What are they doing that could work for your chapter? You could also bring in a neutral third party to review your chapter and provide objective feedback.

Don't set goals just to make your board feel good when they reach an abstract milestone or depressed when they miss them. The right goals benefit the chapter, your members, and the industry you support, and they can take you from where you are to where you want to be.

