

How to ensure a successful 2017 kick-off meeting

By [Kim Currin](#)

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American businessman, Alan Lakein, is quoted as saying; "Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now." As we look forward to 2017, and begin to plan how to do things better, faster and with a greater customer focus, the question arises: how can this be achieved?



To obtain employee buy-in, and ensure that the entire organisation is entering the new year with aligned goals and objectives, a successful kick-off meeting is essential. Companies must ensure that relevant annual strategies are clearly set down and targets for sales and budgets are set.

At the meeting, management should maintain an open-minded attitude and allow opportunities for discussion. Don't make the mistake of telling staff what to do, *involve them* in the process, hold a group discussion; this way your workforce will trust that the strategy has been developed with all of its input in mind.

Setting the tone

Kick-off meetings/conferences can set the tone for the rest of the year. They provide the opportunity for management to share company goals, while setting targets for sales and other staff. Ensuring everyone knows, from the beginning of the year, what is expected of them bolsters their ability to deliver. In the first quarter, staff usually feel motivated and rested; this energy must be capitalised on.

Meetings should be held early on in January and must have a certain level of entertainment value, keeping attendees interested. Stick to short and sharp presentations with plenty of time for interaction. Bring in some expert speakers on related topics, including a skills development angle. This will vary the sessions and aid in avoiding boredom.

Importance of planning

Sound planning is crucial. Critical elements include subject matter, topics, logistics and arrangements. The available meeting budget should be decided in the planning stage, and will determine the extent of the event.



Sessions should be scheduled according to energy levels; early weekday mornings are better for involved points, while lighter subjects should be handled after lunch when energy and concentration dips. Try incorporating some physical movement after lunch, to wake attendees up again before delving into the next topic. It is also important to include some time for delegates to interact with each other, whether to discuss topics or unwind.

During the planning process, these six steps are key to success:

1. Setting *meeting objectives* is essential; set clear goals at the onset.
2. The *selection of topics and speakers* must relate to these goals, form part of an agenda to follow and provide a benchmark to determine return on investment.
3. *Choosing a venue* entails considering the logistics relating to meeting the programme, the number of delegates, and ease of access.
4. To bring some excitement to the meeting, it's important to *assign a theme*, tied to the objectives identified. This stimulates staff interest and gives the meeting a brand to identify with.
5. Most importantly, *start early* – don't leave the arrangements to the last minute; and
6. *Choose a reputable event company* that can take care of the logistics, while staff concentrate on the meeting messages.

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