FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ...

Setting Goals and Objectives

By Marilyn Barrett

Both new and veteran tourism team members are working for their communities all of the time — formally, on specific projects and informally, promoting the community during other business and personal occasions. To help every team member make all of his or her efforts more effective, each must focus on the team's goals.

Because you already accept and understand the legislative authority and limitations on your job (described in the Sea Grant publication *Introducing...The Position of Tourist Commissioner*), you recognize that your goals and objectives must be set and tackled as a team. Meet with the rest of your tourism team and put your mission statement, in black and white, before you. Use it to set goals and objectives, and success is probable.

What's the Difference Between Goal and Objective?

A goal is a broad description of a desired end result. State it vividly and clearly, in detail. Your goal should motivate the whole team. One tourism team's goal might be to develop an annual art festival promoting local artists. Another may set a goal for increasing the recreational use of a local lake. A third might decide that opening an antebellum landmark for tourists is a goal.

Your goal might not involve a specific attraction. It may be to increase attendance at a festival or familiarize state residents with a community specialty like Cajun food or Indian customs.

By discussing your goal realistically, your team members will all have the same vision so that later disappointments will be reduced. When you achieve a goal you'll say, "This is a dream come true." A failed goal is a fantasy, entertaining but unproductive. Don't set a goal of a three-day art festival with thousands of visitors when the area is actually able to support a one-day show for a couple of hundred in the local fire station.

Divide Into Objectives

The best way to achieve a goal is to break it down into **objectives — do-able tasks to achieve the goal** — and then devise a plan of action to accomplish them (See Figure 1). It may take several steps or projects to complete an objective.

For example, a child's goal may be to get food. He can divide the goal into objectives: 1. to find cookies, 2. to take them and eat them. The child may accomplish the first objective by observing his mother for a while. Once he discovers that his quarry is in a jar on the top shelf of a cupboard, he must add another objective: get to that top cupboard shelf in order to get into the cookie jar. Flexibility is important. You, like the child, may have to add or change objectives before you achieve your goal.
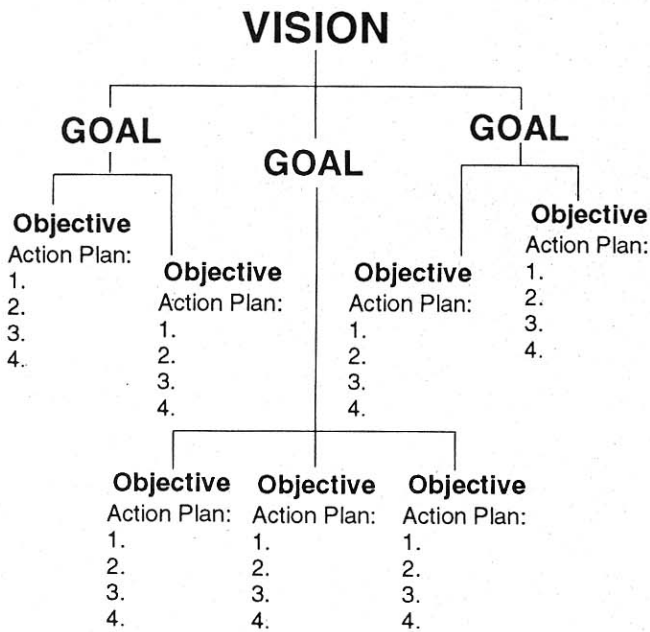
VISION

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VISION
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Objective  Objective  Objective
Action Plan: Action Plan: Action Plan:
1.        1.        1.
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Figure 1: The relationship of goals to objectives.

Although there are many ways to achieve an objective, it is important to choose the action plan that is feasible, technically possible, and at a price you are willing to pay. For example, the child could coyly ask a sibling or his mother for a cookie, or howl until someone bribes his silence with a cookie, or drag a chair to the counter, climb up and take a cookie, or snatch a cookie away from a person eating one. If experience has shown the child that he is ignored when he howls, that alternative is not feasible. A child who can't climb will not use a chair to get to the cookie jar, and if the cost of snatching the cookie from another is painful, the child may select a less costly action plan.

Why Make A Specific Plan?

Why not set a goal and have everyone work on it? Most commissioners are involved in lots of projects, and their tourism efforts are often made while doing other business. A defined focus and specific plans to accomplish your objectives is the best way to succeed because:

■ Whole communities and people's livelihoods are at stake.

■ Planning allows you to carefully consider each step in the process, anticipating some of the obstacles and setting objectives to overcome them.

■ Tasks can be delegated so that some team members can work independently on one objective, others on another, while everyone has a clear idea of how his or her efforts fit into others' projects. You won't step on other people's toes or duplicate efforts.

■ Your objectives provide a mechanism to evaluate the process regularly. You can change course as necessary.

■ Team members are less likely to become discouraged with a clear focus and a time frame.

Match Team Members To Objectives

To accomplish your objectives, use each team member as wisely as you would use a particular tool or computer program. Each individual has particular strengths and weaknesses besides the business acumen, social connections, or public spirit that led him or her to become a team member. Try to define each team member by the descriptions below and analyze the objective and the action plan to match particular personalities with certain types of tasks. By using these characteristics in your individual team members, your objectives will be more easily accomplished.

■ **Initiators** suggests new ideas, provides a definition of a problem, suggests specific procedures. They are the realistic visionaries, the stimulators or igniters.

■ **Elaborators** are skilled in clarifying, giving details. They can envision results, pinpoint alternatives, fine-tune the idea, define every step of a task. They realistically see flaws as well.

■ **Communicators** are facilitators. Besides helping team members understand one another's ideas, communicators help the rest of the community understand the team's plan. They are perceptive, objective interpreters of feedback who help the team work together, with a minimum of discord. These "way-smoothers" also handle public relations.

■ **Coordinators** ensure that the group activity remains focused on an objective so that unnecessary activity is kept to a minimum. They can condense material so that it is clear, and intuitively connect factors to allow new insights to emerge. They can put together ideas, sense relationships between ideas and suggestions, and suggest cooperation between team members with related ideas or projects.

■ **Researchers** seek information — just the facts. These people know where to find resources, who to call, what to ask, and when information is relevant. No detail is too small for these organized, tenacious sleuths. They are excellent record-keepers.

- **Topic Experts** have sufficient experience or topical knowledge to know when more research is needed. They can evaluate the information already on hand and suggest categories for researchers to explore. Many team members are topic experts by vocation in accommodations, transportation, insurance, banking, state agencies etc.
- **Analyzers** logically break the goal down into objectives, and clearly see a detailed plan to achieve each. The best ones can envision a variety of tasks and group conditions in diverse settings.
- **Managers** organize people and tasks. Groups work best with a leader or manager who can guide the group toward completing each objective in a manner acceptable to all. This strong, organized diplomat seldom shows an ego but he or she is acknowledged and respected for leadership. Each objective may have a manager or your team leader may serve as the manager of all projects. (Adapted from task accomplishment skills described in *Leadership Enhancement For the Active Retired*, Edited by Carol Schultz & Philip Olson, Center on Rural Elderly, Kansas City, Missouri, 1991.)

Go for the Goal

Bringing these individual strengths to the table, your team together will devise each objective's action plan by diagnosing the existing situation in relation to your goal. The diagnosis defines problems and needs that become objectives. Each time you achieve an objective, you will diagnose the situation again, and go on to another objective or set new ones.

Example: A Marketing Goal

The Cameron 1992 Marketing Action Plan's goal was to increase the number of visitors annually spending at least one day in Cameron Parish to 275,000, an increase of approximately 25,000 from 1991. Their partner, the Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitor's Bureau in Calcasieu Parish, sought increased overnight business for their hotel and restaurant operations. Partnership was possible because Calcasieu had the more developed accommodation facilities and Cameron, the extensive nature attractions. To achieve this goal, the tourism team set four specific objectives for 1992:

1. To boost the number of visitors to Cameron Parish wildlife refuges by 10 percent

2. To attract at least 20,000 new day-visitors to Cameron Parish beaches

3. To persuade at least 1,000 birders to stay overnight in Cameron or neighboring Calcasieu

parishes in conjunction with birding activities in Cameron Parish.

4. To persuade at least 500 RV'ers or campers to stay overnight in Cameron Parish.

To achieve the four objectives, the Cameron team selected seven actions that were feasible, technically possible, and within its budget. During planning, the team decided upon a separate set of actions for each objective, then noticed duplication. The same action could bring results to more than one objective. Follow the Cameron example by planning actions for each objective and then compare them. You may then see ways to combine efforts.

The Partnership's Actions

A. Advertisements were placed in regional and national vacation-travel magazines promoting the area and accommodations. These served three objectives 1, 3, and 4.

B. Promotional brochures focusing on the Creole Nature Trail (a driving tour) and incidentally containing a calendar of the year's festivals were sent to anyone responding to the magazine advertisements. Persons attending trade shows and conventions at a civic center in the area also received one. These served all four objectives.

C. Cameron joined with other parishes to produce a birding guide. This free booklet described birding opportunities in Cameron, Calcasieu, Beauregard, and Jefferson Davis parishes. One of the ads in a birding magazine offered this guide to ad respondents as a free gift. Many visitors came as a result, fulfilling objectives 1 and 3.

D. Marketers made direct sales pitches about the beaches, nature areas and festivals to motor coach tour operators, trade show developers, and convention planners, targeting objectives 1 and 2.

E. The team used the addresses from the refuges' and attractions' registration books to send a direct-mail invitation to come again to all former visitors, contributing to all four objectives.

F. Cameron hosted the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association's convention. The team members used personal selling and public relations during meal time, conducted tours, supplied brochures, and used all hospitality skills to encourage these writers to select Cameron Parish for a feature. One dinner was hosted on Holly Beach. The articles resulting from this hospitality assisted the completion of all four objectives.

G. Since many of the RV'ers are senior citizens and retirees who travel south during the fall and winter and north during the spring and summer, the team sent representatives to an American Association of Retired Persons convention in San Antonio to promote the area. They used personal selling, distributed the brochure, and contacted senior citizen groups in Louisiana to promote their area. These efforts were dedicated primarily to objective 4, although objectives 1 and 2 benefited also.

The end of 1992 showed a definite increase in the number of visitors to Cameron Parish. Because they put numbers into their marketing objectives and provided a mechanism to track visitors, the Cameron Parish tourism team was able to evaluate their efforts. By comparing the number of persons who registered at the Cameron Parish wildlife refuges in 1991 with the total for 1992, they could easily see whether they had achieved objective 1. Records at the area campgrounds and hotel registrations were similarly helpful in analyzing attendance improvement for objectives 3 and 4. The weak point in the project was achieving and evaluating achievement of objective 2. Beach users are day visitors, often traveling on impulse. They do not read specific magazines to learn about good locations, nor do they register at the beach.

Example: A Development Goal

Sue and Harry Hebert in the City of Plaquemine restored an old landmark and then realized that by sharing it with others, they could stimulate historical tourism to Plaquemine and the restoration of other downtown landmarks. Some of their objectives were reused as each building was restored; others apply to elements of the overall project:

1. To secure funds for restoration and renovation.
2. To secure community support for the project.
3. To learn what types of buildings or history draw tourists.
4. To attract history buffs to the community for an overnight stay.

The actions needed to achieve these objectives are varied and the results, much more difficult to evaluate. The Heberts helped the owners of subsequent restoration projects using the lessons they learned in the first.

A. The Heberts looked for the possibilities of private, state, and federal grants as well as a local bank loan to help pay for restoration. Objective 1 was accomplished in part in 1982 because the state was seeking tourist attractions to enhance and lengthen

visits to the '83-84 Worlds Fair in New Orleans. Don't be afraid to use another's goal if it will help your project. In the process, the team learned about the Louisiana Department of Culture and Tourism, a state agency which can help, and about the Louisiana Travel Promotion Association, a trade association of people just like themselves. These contacts helped them with their efforts of objectives 3 and 4.

B. Skills and particular restoration services were sought from local people on a barter/trade as well as a regular contract basis. By involving people within the community they made progress on objectives 1 and 2.

C. The tourism team convinced town government to form an historic district, and established a historical commission which works along with the tourism team. Evaluation of achievement of objective 2 has been made in part on the basis of the rate at which membership in this commission has grown and by continued individual interest in developing downtown buildings. Formation of a district like this can bring forward people who might subscribe to historical or historical travel magazines. Their publications are important to objectives 3 and 4.

D. Visits to historical attractions in other parts of Louisiana provided ideas for restoration, information about the target markets for historical sites, and gave them a networking outlet. As a result, they revised or added actions under all four objectives.

Sometimes a lesson is learned while trying to achieve objectives. The Heberts and their team members learned that the owners of each building also have to make a substantial personal investment — and it might mean debt for several years before profits emerge.

Some of Plaquemine's objectives are not yet accomplished. They may:

■ Make direct contact at tour shows with historical tour leaders and major bus tour planners to learn about potential target markets while trying to sell these tour promoters on the Plaquemine site.

■ Subscribe to a couple of historical or travel magazines to learn about the types of articles and therefore the type of audience the magazine targets.

■ Plan a familiarization tour. Once they have completed a larger portion of their historical district, they can invite historical travel writers or tour operators to spend a weekend in their district.

Because developing a whole town as an attraction is long, expensive, and arduous, continued community support is an important objective requiring continuing

attention. The team might consider some of these actions to keep up community interest:

- To involve the children by presenting a local history unit in appropriate classes at each school
- To encourage the historical commission to sponsor historical programs about state or regional history with a local tie-in
- To establish an adoption program for each historical site or a room or portion of each site. In it a civic group or a club would take maintenance or perhaps even restoration responsibility for one room of a building on contractual basis.

Your Goal Strategy

Although your team might have the same goal as the Cameron or Plaquemine team, you might set different objectives or plan different actions to accomplish them. No particular plan is ideal. Note, however, that in both cases, the team made a list of objectives which could all contribute to achievement of the goal. They then tried several different strategies, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes separately, to accomplish these. They use team members skills too. In Plaquemine, Sue's analyzing, initiating, and communicating skills have been used while Harry is an excellent coordinator. Select actions that match your team members' strengths.

Evaluate Regularly

To determine that an objective has been achieved, you must evaluate. The most unbiased way to do this is to compare what you have done with a pre-set standard or with another team's similar accomplishments. Because measurement makes evaluation easier to see, try to set your objectives in a measurable manner, as Cameron did. This is easiest when you are setting attendance or marketing goals. Developmental goals can be evaluated by including a time limit or anticipated calendar of progress. If a time estimate is impossible to make, set a check-up deadline to come together and evaluate the work. Sometimes a goal contains a time frame—for instance "double attendance at the strawberry festival in two years."

Your team is going to experience some failures and some surprises. Marketing goals are the easiest to define and evaluate; developmental strategies are slower and more complicated.

Remember that the team is made up of a wide range of people. It's impossible for everyone to do a perfect job every time. Remind yourselves often that you are volunteers and that you are a team. This means that each of you has made a commitment to donate time, energy, and expertise toward achieving common goals. Uphold your commitment to the team and to the project. Be patient. Set goals, divide them into do-able objectives, and plot strategies to accomplish them. And when you falter, reset your goals, and begin the process again.

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