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# KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL INTERNAL EVENT STRATEGY

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**F**ew corporate communications methods are as versatile in engaging employees as an internal meeting, and fewer still are as effective in aligning employees with corporate goals and objectives. Whether for 10 or 10,000 employees and partners, internal meetings can help motivate and reward attendees, train them for more demanding roles, learn and understand management strategy and increase their loyalty to the organization.

But ensuring those goals are reached requires careful attention to the planning and execution of meetings. An unmanaged or poorly executed internal meetings strategy can have the opposite of the intended effect on attendees, especially if they feel overburdened by the meetings or if they feel their valuable time is being wasted.

This white paper is designed to help demonstrate the value of internal meetings and illustrate the direct relationship between developing a comprehensive management strategy, executing events successfully, and improving performance in meeting corporate objectives.



## Retention Attention

Engaging employees through internal meetings is as varied an endeavor as it is constant, from small teambuilding and training meetings to annual companywide events. “Events are key to employee’s journey, and how employees engage with the organization,” said Cvent director of enterprise marketing Julie Haddix during a March 2020 webinar hosted by The BTN Group and sponsored by Cvent. Those events, she noted, occur at all stages of employees’ development, “from recruiting to advancement.”

Executed properly, those meetings can play a key role in ensuring those employees remain with the organization. Haddix cited an EventMB poll that indicated 64 percent of 320 internal planners believe internal meetings are a vital tool for employee retention, and CIO magazine has estimated that the cost of replacing a departing employee can be as much as 2.5 times their salary, even without including lost production.

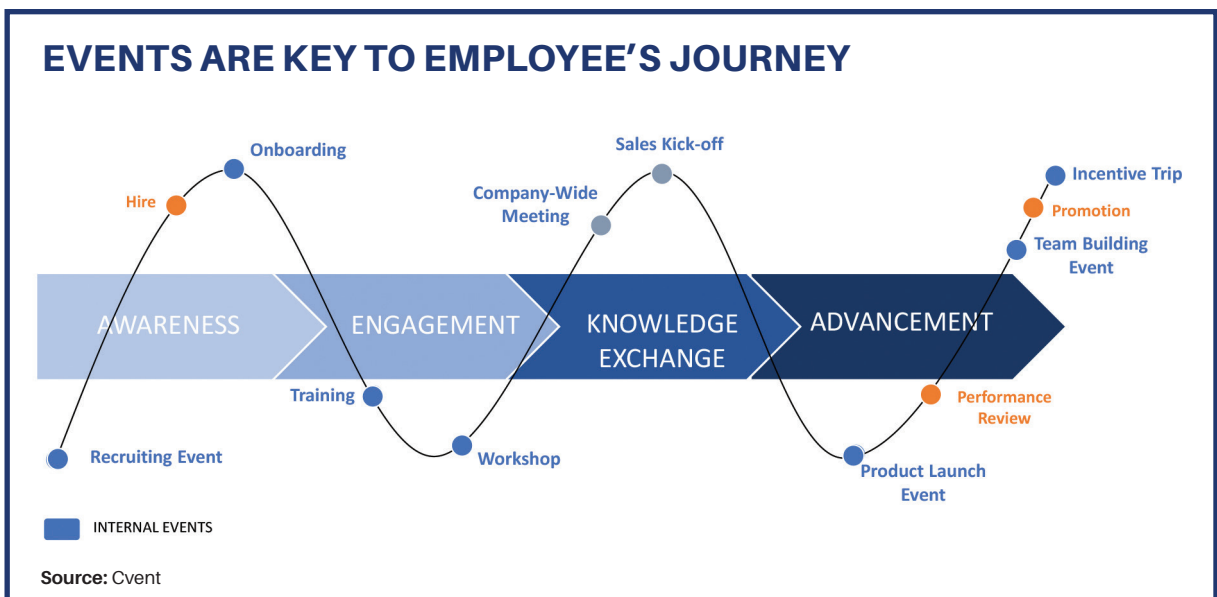
Using meetings to help retain valuable employees can take many forms. Teambuilding events can help them feel more connected to their coworkers. Training events can help given them the tools they need to advance in the organization, and being recognized during a meeting can help increase their satisfaction and loyalty.

But the keys to developing internal events that successfully engage those employees lie with communication with event stakeholders and focusing on interactive, memorable attendee experiences, said Gayle Majeski, director of events and meetings for KPMG.

Contacting key meeting stakeholders at the very beginning of the planning process not only helps “build a trusting relationship,” Majeski said, it also “allows us to make recommendations throughout the planning process.”

The first step, though, is to identify individual stakeholders and their roles in the staging of a given event. “You can’t truly engage your stakeholders until you know who they are and how much influence they have over a particular program,” said Cvent meetings and events manager Allyson Evancheck, who helps to manage the meetings management and technology firm’s internal events, during the webinar.

Those stakeholders will include the meeting owner and the executive who is responsible to staging the event, with whom planners should engage very frequently, Evancheck said, to help set expectations for the event and establish metrics to help measure the event’s success, among other feedback. Other stakeholders include internal sponsors, who typically require less frequent engagement focused on financials, including budgeting and cost savings, as well as meeting





support specialists like corporate communications managers, who she said usually require minimal engagement. Still, “I always think it’s better to overcommunicate and scale back later than have one of your stakeholders ask for an update,” she said.

## Tech and Transparency

Given the volume of internal events a company may have—the largest global companies can annually stage more than 1,000—it is essential to establish a system to track and bring visibility to meeting so that stakeholders can be engaged, said Geert Beherts, head of procurement for Asia and spend journey lead for global travel and meetings for Brussels-based global biopharmaceutical firm UCB. Beherts has deployed a meetings technology platform on which meeting sponsors can register their events, allowing his team to engage with stakeholders while handling procurement and contractual decisions.

“Our technology is used to make sure we have transparency into when events are going on,” Beherts said during the webinar. “We try to streamline across the company, but we have to make sure we are handling all the different needs.”

Like UCB, about 71 percent of 408 travel manager and meeting planner respondents in a 2018 survey by the Global Business Travel Association and Meeting Professionals

International had corporate policies guiding the shopping and booking process for small meetings. Such a move not only mitigates contractual risk in terms of cancellation and helps keep costs down through negotiations, Beherts said, it also allows meeting stakeholders to focus on attendee engagement.

## Redefining Interactivity

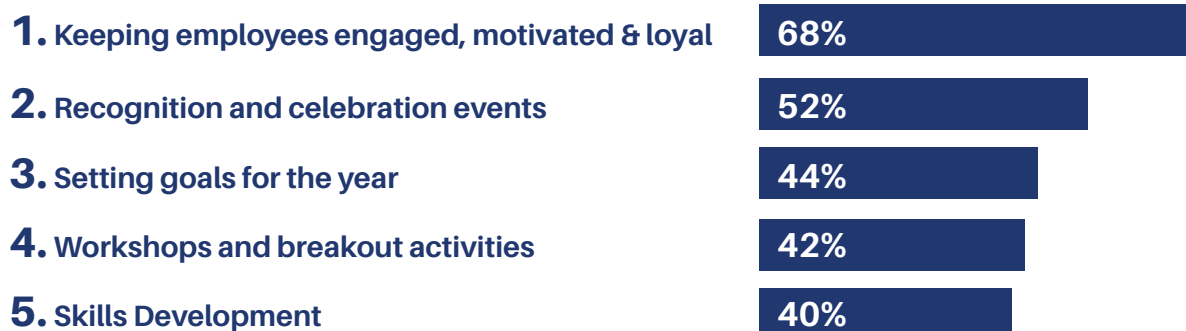
Helping stakeholders engage internal meeting attendees is a process that can begin well before the event, and the form such engagement takes is dependent on the goals the stakeholders want to achieve.

For staff meetings or events designed to impart strategy, Vancouver-based Clear HR Consulting recommends ensuring attendees are equipped before the event with a specific agenda detailing the event’s purpose, topics to be discussed, the amount of time dedicated to each topic and any decisions that have to be made.

Today’s attendee engagement, though, must go beyond that, said Majeski. “Attendees expect a more interactive experience,” she said, noting that nearly all larger internal events make use of meetings apps that offer “more engaging and interactive options” like audience polling and direct questioning of speakers.

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## TOP 5 REASONS ORGANIZATIONS PLAN INTERNAL EVENTS



Source: BTN Group-Cvent “Keys to a Successful Internal Event Strategy” webinar attendee poll, March 2020





John Nawn, founder of meeting planning firm The Perfect Meeting in a 2019 MPI white paper suggested the use of tablets distributed to attendees to share information about themselves and answer questions about different scenarios that can be displayed a large screen to increase interactive engagement.

Majeski noted that diversity and inclusion must be top of mind for an internal event to reach its true value. “When attendees feel their needs have been met,” she said, “they are much more comfortable engaging on a deeper level.”

Long-term employee attendees in particular can be suggested as meeting discussion leaders, Majeski said, as a way to help deliver the event’s message to newer attendees. “I would recommend assigning a long-term employee as a discussion leader or to lead an icebreaker activity,” she said. “Those long-term employees have a unique perspective [and if you] can help position them as thought leaders so they’re engaged, they’ll feel they’ve been heard, and [can] interact with the newer members of the organization.” After the event concludes, following up with key

stakeholders is critical to measure its success using the agreed-upon metrics. Post-event attendee surveys are important not only to gauge the value of the event in meeting the organization’s goals for staging it but also to hear directly from attendees about whether any aspect of the meeting could have been handled more effectively, from the agenda to food choices to timing.

### Conclusion

Internal events are an important, flexible tool in developing and retaining employees, but their value can be maximized only with detailed and frequent communication with meeting stakeholders and attendees alike. Using technology to help raise the visibility of events to the organization’s meeting planners as well as to engage attendees during the event can help to reach these events’ full value. Communicating with attendees can help to ensure a diverse meeting in which all employees feel engaged, and post-event surveys can help to improve the process for future events.

About CVENT, Inc.

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Cvent is a leading meetings, events, and hospitality technology provider with more than 4,300 employees, 27,000 customers, and 300,000 users worldwide. The Cvent Event Cloud offers software solutions to event planners and marketers for online event registration, venue selection, event management and marketing, onsite solutions, and attendee engagement. Cvent’s suite of products automate and simplify the planning process to maximize the impact of events. The Cvent Hospitality Cloud partners with hotels and venues to help them drive group and corporate travel business. Hotels use the Cvent Hospitality Cloud’s digital marketing tools and software solutions to win business through Cvent’s sourcing platforms and to service their customers directly, efficiently and profitably—helping them grow and own their business.

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