



Happy New Year! It is my honor to serve as your Chair of the 2020 IFEA Foundation Board. I also will have the pleasure to work with IFEA President & CEO, Steve Schmader, CFEE, the IFEA staff and more importantly, you - the dedicated event professionals who make up the IFEA membership during the coming months. With this new role within IFEA, I totally understand that my main responsibility as IFEA Foundation Board Chair is to generate funds for IFEA and our worthy Scholarship Programs. You will probably hear plenty of “sales pitches” from me during the year, but I thought I would save those for a later date!

Instead, I would like us to take this time to reflect, plan and set goals for 2020 as we start a new decade. Like many of you, I have set personal and professional goals. Sadly, my personal goals very rarely change from year to year – exercise more, eat healthy, less stress and more time with the family. Already this year, I haven’t made it to the gym once and I ate a piece of blueberry pie for lunch today.

Professionally, my goals typically change from year to year based on trends, economic environment, and such. These goals may be monetary, staff inclusion and development, or finding a way to improve a process.

I’m sure most of you have also met a staff to review your events from this past year, analyzing everything from revenue, expenses, attendance, marketing, and media coverage. Based on those discoveries it will help map out your direction for 2020.

That’s terrific, but how about your goals as it pertains to the annual organization memberships you pay to be a part of? Most of us just pay the annual dues and maybe attend a function or two. Are you really leveraging your memberships to the fullest?

First, let’s not refer to it as “dues.” Instead let’s refer to it as an investment. We should not be paying a membership fee if we don’t expect a return on investment. This is comparable to an event sponsor. Very few corporations are giving us money out of the goodness of the heart. They expect something in return. It may be exposure, new customers, tickets, etc. Nothing frustrates me more than a sponsor that does not leverage the partnership and the assets they have paid for.

The same should hold true for us as IFEA members. We should set goals, no matter how simple or basic, to better leverage our membership. Are we as members taking full advantage of what IFEA has to offer? My guess is all of us could leverage our association a little better in 2020.

Networking

I have never met a group of professionals more willing to share. It’s like a large (and dare I say dysfunctional) family. We all have experienced successes and failures. When you attend the Annual IFEA Convention, set a goal to meet five new people. Even if you are not able to attend the Convention, don’t be afraid to email a staff or association member. You will be greeted like the long-lost uncle who hasn’t attended a family function in years, with open arms.

Webinars

IFEA brings the classroom to you. This is a low-cost, efficient way to learn from industry leaders on a variety of topics. You save on travel costs and several staff members can gather around the computer.

Newsletters and Magazines

Take time to read the IFEA newsletters and magazines. They have articles on the latest trends and happenings in the event industry. Understand you may not read every single article, but my guess is you will find at least one article of interest in every issue if you just make time to read.

Professional Products and Resources

IFEA offers a myriad of resources that can assist your organization. Below are just a few examples:

- Job Bank
- Economic Impact Study
- Safety, Security and Risk Management Audit
- Sponsorship Audit

Here’s my hope: just maybe this year you realize there’s more to IFEA than you were aware of or have taken advantage. And just maybe, when you hear that “sales pitch” you are more inclined to support an organization that provided tremendous value for your investment.

Here’s to a successful 2020!

Kevin Grothe

IFEA Foundation Board Chair
Vice President of Sponsorships
Memphis in May International Festival
Memphis, TN