

## **Making Membership Stronger**

They say every successful venture starts with a good plan. The Incentive Gift Card Council is following this advice, and has come up with a 3-year strategic plan that will not only entrench its members' position in the industry, but that will also help position the organization as the place to go for information about gift card sales, trends and legislation.

"We get a new president and board of directors every year, and our goal is to keep the momentum going year-round with a solid strategic plan," says Rich Killian, IGCC's president. "That's where we spell out our golden objectives on paper, and then push those throughout the year."

The effort pays off handsomely for IGCC, whose leadership for years found themselves huddled around a table in January asking, "What are we going to do this year?" With strong forward motion already working on their side from 2006, the group is confident that 2007 will be a progressive, productive year.

For the upcoming year, IGCC's executive vice president Cindy Mielke says the group has made good strides toward revising its mission statement, identifying six key objectives, and outlining goals that need to be accomplished in order to meet those objectives. "We've taken a sampling of the board and members at large and come together to craft a mission statement for our group," says Mielke. "When a new board takes over in the fall of this year, it will have a template to work from that past officers put together. That will be invaluable."

New IGCC initiatives include the New York Incentive, Rewards and Recognition Expo and Conference, in Manhattan in May. The event replaces one that had been running for 50 years, but that came into financial difficulties last year. "We worked very closely with the operators of this new incentive show," says Killian, "and are very pleased with the results."

The IGCC is expecting a great turnout for the Incentive Marketing Association's July Executive Summit, where IGCC's vice president of education Rebekka Rea has two great sessions planned, in addition to a Membership meeting. Concluding its 2006-2007 business year, IGCC's Annual Membership Meeting will be held in Chicago in September at McCormick Place, followed by IMA's Annual Meeting and Networking Reception.

Right now, Killian says the IGCC is also working to upgrade its Web site and make it even more informative for members and consumers. Soon, the group's online home will feature a compilation of white papers, articles, statistics and legislative information that everyone can use to run their incentive programs better. "We want to act as a very strong library for retailers and for employers who are giving gift cards," says Killian, "and to serve as a resource in helping them meet their goals."

IGCC board member Nancy Serrato says the group has accomplished a lot in the last 18 months, thanks to its members' willingness to work together to advance the gift card industry. Expect to see more progress in the future, says Serrato. "IGCC's members may be competitors, but we all realize how important it is to come together and focus on common goals," Serrato says. "We take a strategic approach to spreading the word about using gift cards in the workforce and in the incentive marketplace, and it's very effective."