



# Backwards Planning

One of the largest tasks an organization will encounter is planning an event. The key to success is having a plan of action to accomplish every task that must be accomplished to assure a great event. The most effective method of planning an event is to start from the day of the event, working back to the present day. By looking at a timetable to get things accomplished, you will be more apt to schedule completion dates more realistically and have a successful event.

## PROCESS

1. Make a list of tasks that must be completed before the program. Include:
  - publicity and advertising pieces
  - space reservations
  - travel arrangements and accommodations
  - all other details
2. Using a calendar, start with the last task before the program.
3. Write it on your planning calendar and consider its components. If there are component tasks, which need to be completed by specific dates, work backwards with them and plug them into the calendar.
4. Proceed with the next to the last task to be completed, and so on until you have worked up to the most immediate task.
5. After all deadlines are decided upon, delegate tasks to team members.

By working backwards before you ever start to go forward, you run less chance of overlooking an important component or realizing that you have eight major tasks to complete by tomorrow. This process of careful preplanning gives you a better chance for allowing time to complete the tasks efficiently and effectively.

## AN EXAMPLE

To see backwards planning in action, let's propose that a fictional group (Concerned Collegiates, a.k.a. CC) is organizing a yearly banquet (Dinner with the Concerned). The first task CC has to do is brainstorm what kind of banquet they'd like to have. Would they like to rent a huge ballroom and spend hours decorating it, or would they prefer to have a small hall that needs few decorations?

After CC has made up a list of tasks that they need to accomplish to make this a great banquet, they need to set a date. Let's suppose that today is September 1. CC would like to have the event on November 1. So, starting from November 1, CC schedules completion dates for each task, working back to September 1. After they have scheduled their entire banquet process, CC will then assign various tasks to their members (for instance, someone will have to reserve the ballroom or hall. Another member will be in charge of arranging for food service. A third member will be in charge of contacting interested parties and selling them tickets, etc.). This way, no single member is in charge of the entire banquet and every member is contributing to this big event. By simply following their plan of action, CC is able to stage a great banquet and have each of its members feel as if they did their part.

For more information on organization and personal development skills in the SOAR series, stop by or call UNL Student Involvement, 200 Nebraska Union, 472-2454; or 300 Nebraska East Union, 472-1780. Staff members will be happy to assist you and answer your questions.

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