



Editor's Corner:

Increasing Attendance

Time is more precious than even money....we are time impoverished....volunteerism is down. These statements are heard all the time and they are the explanation used so often for the drop in attendance at so many chamber events and activities - even board meetings!

Knowing that others are encountering the same problem is comforting, but here are a couple of ideas used by some Chambers to help build the numbers at networking events, seminars, and all types of chamber meetings. A little creativity goes a long way, so use these few ideas to spin others, and why not run an article in your newsletter offering a prize for the best idea submitted that would encourage members to become more involved?

Since so many Chamber members are dedicated to attend their civic club meetings (Kiwanis, Rotary, ABWA etc.), why not share a meeting? In **Geneva, NY**, (population 16,000 with 650+ members) when it came time to schedule the workshop "How to Grow Your Business Through Chamber Membership" as a prelude to their upcoming Community Awareness Membership Campaign, Chamber President **Rob Gladden** capitalized on the fact that so many of the community's business leaders were Rotarians who faithfully attend their monthly luncheon so why not share the meeting? Why not take this captive audience and add to it attendees from through-out the community who learned of the workshop via the Chamber newsletter and area media. It worked!

Other ideas that have helped with attendance range from cash door prizes that are only awarded to those in attendance (entire membership roster is in the fish bowl, one name is drawn but the individual must be present to win or the money rolls over to the next event); to after hours events that involve the whole family since so many business people want to be more Chamber-involved but will not take more time away from their family; to consistent emails from the Chamber office to each member reminding them of meeting dates and times.

If you have found some ways to pump up attendance at your event, please send them to me and they will be shared with everyone in an upcoming issue of this newsletter.

Targeted Member Benefit: High Tech and/or Internet Accessing Community

The above title applies to just about everywhere, but to continue on with the series of articles I promised in the last CDS newsletter ("Identifying Need - Filling Need = Make Sale, a.k.a. Targeting Chamber Member Benefits to the Needs of the Community = More Members"), let's overview the value of a Chamber having a comprehensive web site.

A successful Chamber must have a comprehensive website that is a complete source of community and business information. It becomes a vital and very valuable member benefits when it also details and promotes its members with a searchable business guide directory; includes enhanced member listings including a business description, logo and hyper-links to their website and email addresses; and has bonus features such as display advertising and location maps, etc.

Whether you have your site designed locally by one of your members or access one of the many companies nationwide who provide these services, the more comprehensive and easy to use your site is, the more it becomes a tangible and valuable member benefit. It also can be a profit center for the chamber.

Targeted Member Benefit: Rapidly Growing Area

Some communities nationwide are having a large population growth and there is an influx of relocating newcomers including retirees with both time and in many cases, significant financial resources. When the Chamber and its members identify this and gears itself towards this market segment, it can be rewarding in many ways.

For example, Madison, MS a suburb of Jackson with population of 16,000 and **Madison The City Chamber** has membership of over 600. This Chamber identified that due to economic growth and a very pro-active retiree attraction program, there is a demand for an average of 200 newcomer packets each month. As the information bureau for the community, the Chamber stepped in with its corps of volunteers who compile and deliver relocation newcomer packets to all those with new utility hook-ups. The packet contains in-depth community information as well as Chamber member information. Only Chamber members can supply their promotional material such as fliers, magnets, key chains, discount coupons, etc. for the packets, in this case for free, but other Chambers charge for this service.

Newcomer packets provided by the Chamber of Commerce are a service to the community and keep spending local, but they are also a great member benefit: what business wouldn't want to access the initial buying habits of and be promoted to 200 new community residents and families monthly?

**Targeted Member Benefit:
High Tourism Community**

Chambers that serve communities with much tourism have a multitude of opportunities to promote their members, not only in the hospitality ranks, but also in service and retail. Obviously Chambers should continually strive to increase tourism to your community through participating in mass marketing and advertising publicity programs on a regional/state/national level and through trade shows etc.

Once in your community, the Chamber can help direct much of the spending by tourists and conventioners through a variety of avenues:

- Brochure racks at prime locations through-out the area that contain Chamber member menus, brochures etc. Some Chambers, such as in the Catskills, NY maintain and refill the racks with member only brochures for a small monthly fee. Others, like Geneva, NY have a central visitor center on the lake with display boards and kiosks on which Chamber members only may participate, as well as a fee based kiosk center right at the foot of the interstate highway exit targeting 3.3 million passers-by.
- Specialty publications such as dining and lodging guides and convention planners' guides are produced in high quantity and contain Chamber member listings and ads. Even if you are required to list all businesses because of funding or city requirements, you still can make these high volume advertising vehicles a Chamber member benefit by putting Chamber members only in larger or bold print and/or giving much more detail (description, hours, directions, etc.) to Chamber members that is not given to non-members.
- Visitor Coupon Books are particularly effective in a community with a large attraction that thousands are drawn to and marketed to, i.e. a casino/gaming facility.

REMEMBER: Most businesses are not members because they don't understand why they should be members...so instead of doing "membership drives" shouldn't you be doing "Community Awareness Programs?" Give me a call and let's talk about it!

ALSO: Check out our website: www.chamberdevelopment.com

One example is a booklet produced by the Chamber and the local "shopper" newspaper that contains member ads and discount coupons. It is distributed by the thousands at the local casino, by tour operators and at the many local newspaper distribution sites.

**Targeted Member Benefit:
Suburban Chamber Small Business Ad Program**

Members of chambers everywhere, not just in the suburbs, want to secure as much advertising possible at the lowest possible price. Small businesses located in the shadow of major metropolitan areas find it especially hard to afford advertising at reasonable rates. Print advertising from "big city" newspapers is cost prohibitive. In these cases especially, Chambers who provide low cost advertising to their members are providing a most valuable member benefit. Display ads in the Chamber newsletter or an insert/tab to the local "shopper/weekly" newspaper are ways the Chamber can help its members get its message out to a broader audience than they could afford to do on their own (thus it is a valued member benefit and a measurable answer to the question: what can the Chamber do for me?).

There is Always a Right Way & a Wrong Way to Succeed

Two Jesuit priests both wanted a cigarette while they prayed. They decided to ask their bishop for permission.



prayed and I asked if I could pray while I smoke!" his friend replied.

The first asked but was told no. A little while later he spotted his friend smoking. "Why did the Bishop allow you to smoke and not me?" he asked. "Because you asked if you could smoke while you

Joan Testa
Chamber Development Services, Inc.
P.O. Box 612611, Dallas, TX 75261-2611
Toll Free Pager/Voice Mail (888) 502-3323
e-mail: joan@chamberdevelopment.com

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 444
BEDFORD, TX
ZIP CODE 76021

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED