



Editor's Corner:

What a Personal Touch!

It takes a lot to impress me, but boy was I ever surprised to receive an embossed note from my home chamber.

Inside was a hand written note (obviously scribbled written by the author) that reminded me how long I have been a member "and we appreciate it. Please let me know if we can help. Thanks, Larry Darlarge."

Even as dedicated to the Chamber as I am, after filling up the gas tank, buying airline tickets that have skyrocketed in price, etc.,... even I wonder if renewing my membership is necessary.

Larry has done me in! Is it because I am flattered that he took the time to write a personal note, (after all, he is president of the county college district, a very distinguished and busy position) as well as the Chamber's Chairman of the Board? Or is it because the HEB Chamber is really showing its true desire to be of help to members and keep them?

So off will go my renewal check, spurred on by what we all want: personal attention and a relationship with an organization that really cares!

I challenge all of you to pick up the phone and make two calls:

one to Larry to congratulate him on being an exemplary board chair (817-515-6200) and next to your chair to follow his example!

Oh, by the way, the staff also believes in the personal touch too: two days after I sent in my payment, Mary Frazier, president of the HEB Chamber called me to personally thank me for renewing my membership.

More on Retention

As part of the CDS Community Awareness Membership Recruitment and Retention Program that I facilitate for client Chambers who want to increase their membership numbers and retain those members, for the year following the implementation of the program, I interact with the Chamber. Here is a letter I recently received from **Wally Hart, president of the Fulton County NY Chamber** (population 56,000, 900+ members:

March 15, 2005

Joan,

Thanks for the reminder. Let me give you an update on our Chamber retention program. I have hired a new staff person to assist with obtaining new members and more specifically retaining members.

We are visiting every member prior to their renewal notice on a monthly basis and not just the ones that joined last year. Beginning in January we went to a monthly anniversary billing as opposed to a January and June billing that lumped 450 in each period and made it impossible to contact.

We have created a database that gives us the member's renewal two months prior to billing. We then check the data base to see if we have had "substantial" contact with the member, ie: attended functions, networking, articles in the newsletter, attended seminars, sponsored events, participates in insurance program, advertises with us in some way.

If they have done none of the above either Amy, (new staff) or I personally visit and ask three questions: Why are they members? What do they need for their business to succeed or grow? What do they want from the Chamber to make that happen? We have had a great response, mostly shock that we are actually coming to them.

So thanks to you we are on the right path to real member retention and participation. Amy has only been here for 6 weeks so she hit the ground running. The membership committee continues to grow and they are helping us contact the members. Of course things aren't perfect and we are not the largest Chamber in the State, yet, but we are doing a better job for our members.

I hope you are a proud parent!

wally

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"Committed to the economic vitality and quality of life in the community."

Keep up the good work, Wally. I could not be more proud!