



Editor's Corner: "An Overview: It's Not Your Grandfather's Chamber - The Changing Face of Membership Development"

Every month I struggle while composing this newsletter, trying to be sure to share with you the information that will be of most value. Rather than just pitch my successes with clients and their membership growth programs, this small publication shares ideas proven to improve Chambers while also providing information to help you facilitate your membership growth process.

The title above is the lead article in an excellent digest from the Western Association of Chamber Executives titled: "Membership Development for Chambers - From Start to Finish" with a foreword entitled: "The Constantly Evolving Business of Membership Development".

What does this newsletter and the "Changing Face of Membership Development" have to do with one another? Well, for one thing, I thank WACE for reaffirming to me that I am not alone in the thinking that neither the Chamber industry nor those of us who are consultants to the industry, can do things the way we did years ago. Let's be honest - many of you hired or still do hire membership consultants because they provide a means to an end: lots of members/dollars quick and easy. You made money, we made money. Everyone was happy until a year later when the retention issue came up (unless you hired them back every year so no-one caught on to the drop issue). You still did not have a membership development program, just last year's membership drive records so do another drive this year...on and on and on.

Only one problem for me on this scenario....I am too old and too set in my ways to do this in-and out, slam bang, rah-rah fundraising approach to membership. Yes, I still love the big commissions it paid me, but it just doesn't mean as much as feeling good about what I do. I feel good when I know that working with a Chamber to spread their message makes a difference...long term as well as for the first year. If it's a win-win for them and the member, it's a win-win for me. And honestly, I like to win and only do two quality programs a month because it takes me weeks to analyze, write and prepare a membership development program (rather than a few days to set up a telemarketing membership blitz). Let's be honest, the **best way to sell and keep** a new member is for them to understand why membership is an investment and not a donation, and they use it. Retention is highest with members who have had nurturing, preferably from their peer sponsors. If a blitz results in many many hundreds of new members in just a few days, especially with some participants recruiting 10-20 or more new members, was the Chamber message the reason they joined (or salesmanship) and will the recruiter nurture that many new members the fragile first year or can/will staff do it all?

It is up to you.....is this what you want? Am I out in left field with this "share the message" concept? Is this what you want and will consider for your future or not? How about helping me out on this survey

you are the professionals of this industry.....what are your needs?

So as the "old battlehorse" of the Chamber membership consulting business, having personally conducted almost 600 programs coast to coast over the last 18 years, here's my two cents: In this newsletter, I share information with you rather than a sales pitch about me, for the same reason I want a business to become part of your Chamber not just do someone a favor and join. However, is this what you need and want or not?

do you want to sell lots of memberships **OR** do you want businesses to **buy in to your success, join the Chamber?**



do you want to just add lots of dollars and numbers **OR** spread your Chamber message?
are you willing to define/deliver the Chamber "product" so that businesses join because they understand how membership meets their needs (do you realize you will probably sacrifice quantity for quality?)

I share information and do **Community Awareness Programs NOT MEMBERSHIP DRIVES** because I am unique to the industry for providing you a customized plan, tools, and training for membership development:

businesses buy in - not join!

IS THIS WHAT YOU AS A CHAMBER PROFESSIONAL WANT? An outline of the CDS program is on the reverse side: look it over and take 2 minutes to go online and email joan@chamberdevelopment.com a quick "yes it has value and I will at least share my opinion of it with you" or "no thanks...not our thinking".

I know you are busy, but I promise to continue to send you ideas....please send me this one note!

Community Awareness Membership Recruitment and Retention Program

Organizational Development

Leadership Training

We know that a lot of Chambers don't do membership drives anymore. Neither do we! CDS is more concerned in the ability of volunteers, staff, and board members to communicate your Chamber message – not just run a fund-raiser! CDS provides your Chamber **the plan, the tools and the training** for maximum growth and effectiveness.

Features.....

- a complete custom designed for you turnkey membership recruitment program **instruction manual** with timelines, publicity releases, sample forms and letters, etc. for your Chamber to keep and use in the future
- training and motivating the membership & leadership, through **multiple training sessions/workshops**, including "How to Grow Your Business Through Chamber Membership"
- the development of **customized marketing materials**
- the **written analysis of membership** strengths and weaknesses by classified category with matching new members to their peer group sponsors
- **constant interface** between the Chamber staff, volunteers and CDS staff, including Joan Testa who has personally conducted almost 600 membership programs over the last 18 years from coast to coast
- a **73-page "Attention to Retention" handbook** that becomes the property of your Chamber to use again with or without our guidance and a **full year of post-program retention advice/service**

Benefits.....

- **analysis of your Chamber program/product**, relating it to hundreds of other Chambers nationwide, and resulting in the **creation of new marketing materials** for you
- **definition** of your Chamber's product so it will be understood as a **business investment, not a donation**
- creating **community awareness** of your programs and benefits to current / prospective members and the community as a whole
- **increasing new member numbers while retaining current** members in a 2 ½ to 3 day outreach to the community by current business leaders/Chamber members who spread your Chamber message (not twist arms) adding an average of 3+ new members per campaign participant who dedicates just one half of one day to the project
- **increasing member involvement** through knowledge, peer sponsorship and mentoring
- the most **comprehensive recruitment/retention/organizational development and leadership training program at the same fee structure of "just a membership drive"**. Our fee includes all training materials and workshops and is based **ONLY** on the paid new member revenues collected during the **FIRST** implementation of the program (no fees on pledges, promises, residuals, renewals or use of the program next year).

Yes, the above has value and I will at least share my opinion of it with you No thanks, not our thinking

Name _____ Title _____ Chamber _____

Name _____ State _____