

Chamber Development Strategies

Issue #49 December 2003 an idea exchange - from Joan Testa, Chamber Development Services, Inc.
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Editor's Corner:

Board of Directors' Contract

As a firm believer in "leadership by example" I have led the charge for visible, hands-on board member involvement, especially in this era of time deprivation: when the board members walk, the walk and not just talk...it's amazing how many others will follow! So let me reprint a Chamber's newsletter article that was inspired by putting this concept into action.

"Directors Sign Contracts"

In a show of direct commitment to the responsibility of serving on the Board of Directors of the M... Chamber of Commerce, each director has signed a formal "Commitment to the Board of Director's Contract." This type of an agreement helps identify some of the activities and responsibilities that come with serving as a director.

If we don't have a clearer understanding as to our role and responsibilities, the Chamber can't expect to have a committed or dedicated leadership.

The contract addresses ten key aspects related to the operation of the Chamber regarding:

- 1) policies and procedures,
- 2) meeting attendance,
- 3) recommendations and positions,
- 4) planning sessions,
- 5) committee liaison,
- 6) member relations,
- 7) budget,
- 8) community issues,
- 9) membership development, and
- 10) general operations.

The Chamber's leadership is mindful of the numerous hours put in by its volunteers including directors, chairpersons and committee members and notes that the contracts are primarily intended to define responsibilities and ensure that all directors understand their roles. Chamber directors are elected to 3-year terms and can serve up to 6 consecutive years.

The board presently includes 12 individuals and the City Manager who serves in an ex-officio capacity. Directors meet monthly while its five-member Executive Committee (officers) also meets monthly and conducts the affairs of the Chamber between Board meetings.

Blowing My Own Horn

Well, I am not blowing my horn...but I sure want you all to hear from a Chamber president who blew it for me! Training-speaking is what I love most to do, so when given the opportunity to facilitate a Chamber Board Retreat or speak at an association conference (like I will be doing January in New York "Growing Your Chamber" & February in Mississippi "Community Awareness = Membership Recruitment & Retention, Parts I & II), those in attendance are guaranteed to walk away more knowledgeable and enthused.

Let me know if I can assist you! I might even be able to wrap this into the Community Awareness Membership Recruitment and Retention Program for my clients with NO FEE!



"Dear Joan:

You are just amazing! How I wish I had your energy-and your quick-response skills. Thank you so much for making our annual Board of Directors Planning Retreat such a productive and successful event. You have a wonderful ability to make a diverse group of people accomplish miracles in a very short amount of time. And have fun doing it!

Several board members have commented on how effective you were in making us focus our many ideas and challenging us to think both realistically and creatively. Thank you for the significant role you played in getting a new chamber leadership year off to an enthusiastic and productive start!

Sincerely, Julie Rose, President"

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Keeping Marshall's Cash Registers Ringing

Smalltown USA Chamber, Marshall, MN (population 13,000 with 450 members) really works especially hard at holiday time to "Shop At Home".

They have a multi-faceted media promotion campaign starting in late October, wrapping up with end of year ½ price sale promotion on December 31. Recommended Holiday Hours (extended) are posted town-wide and heavily advertised. Special Chamber promotions and programs include:

Marshall Christmas Cash: Loans available at only 1.8% interest only thru 12/24, in amounts of \$750 per person or \$1500 per couple from local banks. Loans must be spent at participating "Chamber Christmas Cash Businesses" (a vast majority of the local retail community).

Christmas Tree Walk, hometown merchants enjoy increased traffic during this two week long holiday wonderland with tree decorating contest and outdoor ice rink with warming house. The Chamber offers cross-promotion by providing merchants, for their distribution, free coupons for a cup of holiday cheer at Santa's Snack Shack.

Experience Marshall Shopping Card: get your card punched by shopping at any/all of the 50+ hometown merchants and win prizes.

Gold Club

Many Chambers are now offering membership levels, named in a variety of creative ways, but all geared to increase revenue by encouraging businesses to contribute more than the standard annual investment. Marketed as a means for these businesses to help the Chamber make a larger impact on the community, the businesses are rewarded with a variety of perks. For example, the **Bristol (TN & VA) Chamber** (population 43,000 with 800 members) created their Gold Club level of investor in 1993 and since then has helped retire the Chamber mortgage and update computer equipment. Gold Club membership benefits include:

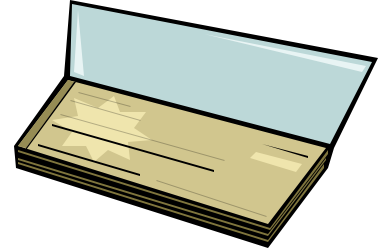
- 5th Friday Gold Club Breakfast
- Special recognition at First Friday Business Briefings
- Free web site link at www.bristolchamber.org
- Gold Club decal and certificate
- Additional listings in Chamber publications such as Chamber directory, Annual Report and Program of Work, newcomers guide and they are recognized at the Annual Awards Luncheon
- Discount on selected chamber programs such as 50% off on direct mailing flyers, one month free of Message on Hold and seminar admission discounts

Great Quotes from "Teamwork" by Dan Zadra

- >Anything can happen with the right team. That's the beauty of creating.
 - >We cannot become what we want to be by remaining what we are.
- >When we're through changing, we're through. Change is inevitable. It's direction that counts
 - >We can if we will.
- >Life's under no obligation to give us what we expect.
 - >If you have a job without aggravations, you don't have a job.
- >If everyone is thinking alike, someone isn't thinking.
 - >When two people always agree, one of them is unnecessary.
- >What people say is important, what they do is more important, but what they value is most important.

New Member Checkbook

In an effort to give new members both an immediate return on their dues investment and to get them "using" their member benefits and services, many Chambers have instituted a variety of new member coupon books. Some offer Chamber programs and products only, while others offer discounts from fellow Chamber members. Examples of coupons are: \$5 off breakfast meeting; \$7 off luncheon; \$25 off booth at Business Expo; \$30 free 6 ft. display table at Business After Hours; \$20 admission for two guests to Business After Hours; \$50 off set of mailing labels or monthly mailer...etc. Gathering discounts from members to offer other members and then putting them in this checkbook is basically a member-to-member discount program printed and given out to new members only.



A twist on this idea is the Owner's Manual with Warranty Card that is presented to all new members. Just like when buying a new car, you receive a manual on how to operate your new automobile and keep it in good working condition; the business that purchases a Chamber membership should get and use their warranty card to obtain ongoing maintenance. Chamber membership requires full participation to get the full benefits. During the process of validating the warranty card with each usage, the members are given tangible evidence that joining the Chamber was a smart buying decision and when they mail in their first year Chamber renewal with a completed warranty card, they receive a 20% discount.

Happy Holidays

Check out our website: www.chamberdevelopment.com