



Editor's Corner.

**Those who THINK,
they know it all,
upset those of us
WHO DO!**

Does this quote hit home with anyone else besides me? Sure I identify with it in many one-on-one dealings, but it is especially accurate with group encounters (i.e. board meetings) when "everyone know everything".

Being the shy, retiring type who never shares her opinions...ha ha....I do think I know it all when it comes to answering the question I get asked most: "How can the Chamber prosper and grow when the economy is slumping, businesses are cutting spending and volunteerism is down? We know membership is the lifeblood of the Chamber but how can we keep those members we have and add more when so few are spending time and spending money?" Here's my know it all answer:

When the economy is slumping and business is down, the Chamber is needed most. But when you say that to someone, don't you often hear: "sure, but I am cutting down on costs"...or even worse..."I am cutting down on donations". There's the indicator: they think of Chamber membership as a cost or a donation, not an INVESTMENT....an investment for which there is a return, both tangible and intangible. **When a business understands that by availing themselves of the Chamber "product" they are purchasing a partner that will help them do what they can't do for themselves (at anywhere near the price), they not only buy the Chamber, they buy into the Chamber!**

Now the challenge: how do you get businesses to understand what the Chamber product is so they will buy it? After clearly defining the Chamber product (services, programs and benefits) get it marketed to the community and then ask the businesses to join. How? There is no one perfect way. It is a combination of methods varying from membership sales staff, to volunteer membership groups consistently "selling" memberships, to membership drives done in-house or with an outside consultant. No one program is exclusively better than the other at any given time...unless of course, you call me!

Resources

Where can a Chamber get lots of good information at little or no cost? Try the following websites:

www.acce.org

www.namd.org

Want even more great ideas, assistance, and networking? The N.A.M.D. Annual Conference is coming up August 15-18, 2002 in Las Vegas and it is always well worth the investment to attend.

At the N.A.M.D. conference, topics are discussed, trends are noted and information is shared by both speakers and other Chamber professionals. (Why re-invent the wheel?) For example here are a few samples from last year:

- ✓ Creative financing: some businesses do not have a very large budget for memberships but do have a budget for marketing. Create a customized invoice for "Marketing" instead of membership. Chambers seem to be moving away from the traditional "member" mentality and moving toward "investor", "clients", "partners", "customers". (Editorial comment: hurrah, someone is listening to me!)
- ✓ Give a discount to members that pay two or three year investments all at one time. Example: receive 10% discount for 2 years, 15% for 3 years.
- ✓ Have a local printer print paper placemats to be used at luncheons and breakfasts highlighting Chamber accomplishments, upcoming events, etc. (Editorial comment: why not sell a few ads too?)
- ✓ Host an entrepreneur class - meet six times a year to discuss common concerns or issues.
- ✓ Have an option on your website as a "testimonial generator". Members may enter their successes of being a Chamber member (remind them this give them "free advertising") and use the testimonies in Chamber marketing materials.
- ✓ Distribute your Chamber Referral Guide in the local newspapers to give the general public a tool for businesses and services that participate in the Chamber.
- ✓ Create a tip card - given to Chamber board and ambassadors or any member to leave at service establishments with a tip. It is the size of a business card that says "TIP of the Day" on one side and "Join the McKinney Chamber" on the other side with contact information.

Thanks to Terrie Keith, McKinney, TX Chamber of Commerce for taking such great notes at last year's conference and permitting me to share them with all of you.

Hope to see you in Las Vegas (be sure to see me and get a 2002 edition CDS monkey beanie baby!)

When the economy is Quotes and Joke of the Month

Since many will be traveling over the summer, I had to share with you some of my favorite airline quotes:

- o "Thank you for flying Delta Business Express. We hope you enjoyed giving us the business as much as we enjoyed taking you for a ride."
- o As the plane landed and was coming to a stop at Washington National, a lone voice came over the loudspeaker: "Whoa, big fella. WHOA!"
- o A flight attendant on a Northwest flight announced: "Please take care when opening the overhead compartments because, after a landing like that, sure as hell everything has shifted."
- o "Weather at our destination is 50 degrees with some broken clouds, but we'll try to have them fixed before we arrive. Thank you, and remember, nobody loves you, or your money, more than Southwest Airlines."

An attorney was having an affair with his secretary. Shortly afterward, she told him she was pregnant. Not wanting his wife to know, he gave the secretary a sum of money and asked her to go to Italy and have the baby there.

"But how will I let you know the baby is born?" she asked. He replied, "Just send me a postcard and write "spaghetti" on the back. I'll take care of the child's expenses."

Not knowing what else to do, the secretary took the money and flew to Italy. Six months went by and then one day the attorney's wife called him at the office and explained, "Dear you received a very strange postcard in the mail today from Europe, and I don't understand what it means." The attorney said, "Just wait until I get home, and I will explain it to you."

Later that evening the attorney came home, read the postcard, and fell to the floor with a heart attack. Paramedics rushed him to the ER. The lead medic stayed back to comfort the wife. He asked what trauma had caused her husband to have a cardiac arrest, so the wife picked up the card and read: "Spaghetti, Spaghetti, Spaghetti, Spaghetti --- two with sausage and meatballs; two without."

Target Marketing

Notes from "It's All About Marketing" session at the Western Association of Chamber of Commerce Executive's Association 2002 conference, courtesy of Charise McHugh, Half Moon Bay Coastside Chamber of Commerce & Visitors' Bureau:

"Theme mixers to target certain niches with a large number of businesses that have either not joined or feel neglected. They also show the community what your businesses have to offer.

- ❖ Design Mixer (galleries, furniture stores, tile setters, painters, landscapers, architects, interior designers, etc.)
- ❖ Entertainment Mixer (local theatre group, bands, musicians of every kind, city rec programs, record stores, video stores, music stores, etc.)
- ❖ Recreational Mixer (golf, tennis, sport fishing, horseback riding, city rec services, sporting good stores, etc.)
- ❖ Health Mixer (doctors, pharmacists, mid-wives, physical therapists, chiropractors, psychologists, health food stores, etc.)
- ❖ Finance Mixer (banks, investment advisors, mortgage brokers, accountants, title companies, etc.)
- ❖ Non-Profit Mixer (they display their non-profit brochures and pictures, asked for volunteers, the mini-auction was split amongst all of them.)
- ❖ Other possible categories: Automotive, Education, Wedding, Construction/Home Improvement

Go through your roster by category and send to anyone who remotely fits. These mixers are not as hard to put together as they seem. Then open these mixers to the public. The community will start buzzing. It's a very visible way to help businesses. And, your members really appreciate it. Others will quickly join the Chamber."

✓ establishments with a tip. It is the size of a business card that says "TIP of the Day" on one side and "Join the McKinney Chamber" on the other side with contact information.

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