



Editor's Corner:

Getting My Money's Worth!

Anyone who knows me, knows my middle name: frugal (a.k.a. CHEAP). I want \$2 in value for every \$1 I spend and I want it yesterday!

Sound familiar? Does it sound like something too many of your chamber members say (loudly or silently)?

With this in mind, now ask: why does Joan Testa belong to her local chamber of commerce when CDS's clients are chambers all over the country, not independent businesses in Euless, Texas?

Well, the correct answer is that I should be a member because of the advocacy and quality of life issues the chamber tackles. I benefit from these, yet as an individual, I can not achieve the results this powerful and effective organization with clout can achieve.

Good answer, right? But how many of your members question why they should be members and don't have the answer...whether it is the answer I gave above, or any other?

Then let me relay to you several of my personal life experiences that "justify" the tangible "what's in it for me". They illustrate that belonging isn't just the "right thing to do" but a smart thing too. Maybe these examples will get you thinking of ways you can challenge your members into looking at what is in it for them too.

...New to town, my granddaughter became ill and we could not find a pediatrician that was taking new patients until Mary Frazier, Chamber president made some calls. Problem solved!

...OK don't laugh too hard at this one, but it is true: When my recent ex, asked me to find a way for his mother to visit him for the holidays even though she needed oxygen in the home, it took a Chamber member to provide it. The funny part was when they quoted me \$150 for the weeks' equipment use and I balked that it was for my EX-mother-in-law, they suddenly invented a Chamber member discount of \$50.

...When I burned my hand on Thanksgiving and did not want to go to a doctor (remember.....cheap!) I recalled an article in my Chamber newsletter about a home-town high customer service oriented pharmacy (not the big box "take money out of a community, don't put

anything back in") who guided me on treatment and medications that took great care of the burns well - AND FREE.

...At the first Chamber luncheon I have gone to in years, I made two contacts (an attorney and a webmaster) that will make my life easier and CDS more efficient - neither of whom I would have met had it not been for the Chamber.

Got you thinking????

Developing Youth & the Future Workforce

Many Chambers nationwide are facing a variety of workforce issues including youth going off to college and not returning after graduation. The communities are feeling a "talent drain" and are concerned about the quality of the workforce in the future. Progressive chambers have active and effective education committees that have established a strong business and education partnership. Excellent programs include career connections/business mentoring, Jr. Leadership and Jr. Ambassadors programs, college/career nights, and scholarships/grants for students to attend LOCAL colleges/technical schools with local business internships and job placement.

Identifying Need - Filling Need = Make Sale a.k.a.

Targeting Chamber Member Benefits to the Needs of the Community = More Members

Talk about stating the obvious! Before you buy any product, don't you confirm it will be the right product for you...that it will fill your need? Sure....so why don't we always apply this theory to our Chamber product - the benefit package?

Take a few moments to review your benefit list and be sure that most of the needs of your business community are met with your member benefits.

Targeting benefits to the unique features of the community is important. The most successful chambers are certain that they have in their tool kit, an emphasis on benefits that are tailored to their environment: i.e. special benefits for high tourism areas; or fast residential growth area (newcomers/retirees); or military communities; or communities with a significant number of businesses employing 20 or more; or high-tech oriented/heavily internet accessing communities; or suburban areas with limited local media and/or direct mail providers, etc.

The balance of this newsletter (and next) will delve into more specifics about member benefits that are targeted to specific types of communities....in general terms, but hopefully, the ideas will trigger further investigation and discussion within your chamber on providing the greatest value for your Chamber membership investment.

Targeted Member Benefit: Communities with many businesses employing 20 or more

When a community has a significant number of medium to large businesses, a major concern to these chamber members and prospective members is assistance in human resource issues as well as increasing productivity and profitability.

In addition to their full benefit package available to all members, the most effective Chambers provide a broad scope of services specifically geared to these businesses. These range from workshops and training programs (skills enhancement, technology, retail sales etc); Leadership programs; "shop local" member to member discount cards for each employee; and committees/focus groups that focus on issues most effecting them, etc.

The Greater Elkhart (IN) Chamber (population 55,000, 1000+ members) is the focal point for securing a broad spectrum of FREE direct assistance to help build successful area companies. Under the umbrella of North Central Indiana Business Assistance Center and Business Modernization & Technology Corp. are:

- SBDC (Small Business Development Center) offering short and long term assistance in funding information, business planning, etc.
- SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) private one on one business advice
- MAS (Manufacturing Assistance Services that provides hands-on assistance for manufacturers to improve productivity and competitiveness.
- OSHA Services: Monthly OSHA Council meetings and the Medical OSHA program, keep members up to date on all the current OSHA safety

standards and requirements. OSHA audits are available on a confidential basis, a \$5,000 value that is FREE to Chamber members. OSHA 10 and 20 hour training classes are also available at significant discounts to Chamber members.

- The Chamber co-sponsored the Elkhart County Wage and Benefit Survey, with Chamber members having access to survey results and custom reporting options at a reduced cost.

Note: Don't you hear often from the manufacturers and wholesalers in your community that they do not need to join the Chamber because although it is the "right thing to do", they don't see the "what's in it for me, dollar for dollar value"? Repeatedly in Elkhart, just by explaining some of the programs explained above, these types of businesses saw how they could actually save thousands of dollars by investing in Chamber membership AND USING ITS BENEFITS.

Remember my theme song: Chamber membership is an investment, an investment for which there is significant tangible and intangible return, BUT you must first know what the Chamber product is and you MUST USE IT!



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 (soon to be updated!)

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