



## Editor's Corner

### **Almost Everyone Hates Membership Drives – Even Me !**

When you say membership drive, doesn't it conjure up a vision of a boiler room where a bunch of people who don't want to be there are trapped for hours doing something they don't want to do and probably aren't prepared to do properly? It's a vision of dialing for dollars, soliciting, failing more than succeeding until you start calling in favors, and/or twisting a few arms. And it usually gets repeated the same time every year, since the drop out rate is so high.

No wonder no one wants to do a membership drive: would you?

Sure it is a reality...in most Chambers the sales staff (if they have one) can not sufficiently recruit enough new members to replace those going out the back door and still meet the budget goals. Staffs struggle to make the Chamber attain a high enough saturation level to truly represent a large enough percentage of the entire business community. Also, how does a Chamber ever make that quantum leap from say a 500 to a 700 member Chamber or what do you do when your CEO says "membership is down...do something"? So membership drives do serve a valuable purpose. Sure, volunteers have a sphere of influence and access to different prospects than the paid sales staff does....and a "peer sponsorship-adopt a member" sale to a new member is an excellent one.

But not all membership drives are alike....at least they don't have to be!

Let's get back to the basics of salesmanship...and add in the mission of most chambers. What do you have: identify the need, match the need with what your product has to offer and put the two together! If we as an organization exist to help our communities prosper and be the best possible place in which to work and live....then what we need to do is stop "selling memberships", and instead, teach everyone how they can invest in themselves and in their community by investing in their Chamber.

I call this Community Awareness....look at our Chamber Development Services website ([chamberdevelopment.com](http://chamberdevelopment.com)) for more ideas.

### **Benjamin Franklin Wisdom**

"Tell me, and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn."

### **Selling Memberships to National Chains**

Always a challenge to say the least but here are some techniques and ideas I have observed, applicable to free standing and mall units. Understanding the fact that your biggest objection is usually an excuse ("we have to submit it to corporate " or "corporate will not approve local chamber membership spending"). I have heard these used over and over, and many times it is definitely not true. Many, if not most, store managers and regional managers have access to limited discretionary funds and if they see that spending it on x rather than on y, is worthwhile, x gets it! So how does the Chamber become x? Do for them what they want most! Advertising and access.....not donations or memberships!

Be sure to educate the retail prospect that for a minimal investment of just a couple of hundred dollars, their store receives for a full year: inclusion in the Chamber corporate discount directory and program and the community wide Chamber gift certificate/Chamber bucks program. This allows them instant access to all Chamber member corporations and their thousands of employees. As a member, their store information/coupon would also be included in the thousands of Chamber coupon books and relocation packets distributed annually (especially well received in military communities when the Chamber presents these packets at newcomers' indoctrinations).

Some Chambers have been very successful (Oshkosh, WI) in teaming up with the mall management team to enroll all of the mall merchants into the Chamber. Since in many cases the stores pay the mall management thousands of dollars annually for community and national advertising, this can be achieved by setting up a high ticket umbrella membership or one that makes every store an associate member. As such, each store is given extensive advertising and promotion, as well as the mall itself. Again this is meeting the basic needs of all involved: the merchants want the mall management to institute a marketing plan to generate more traffic and spending in their stores, and the management company partners with the Chamber to gain access to a large population base.

### **Quotes for the Month**

My mind not only wanders, it sometimes leaves completely.

The best way to forget all your troubles is to wear tight shoes.

The nice part about living in a small town is that when you don't know what you're doing, someone else does.

I know what Victoria's Secret is. The secret is that nobody older than 30 can fit into their stuff.

I read this article that said typical symptoms of stress are eating too much, smoking too much, impulse buying, and driving too fast. Are they kidding? That is my idea of a perfect day.

### Member Benefit: Discount Coupon Book

Vineland, N.J. (population of 62,000, staff of 3 serving 650 members) launched a book available to the employees of member firms who can utilize it to buy products and services from other member firms at substantial savings. The coupons are punched when used and are then submitted to the Chamber for a monthly prize drawing. The advantages of the program were heavily promoted city-wide:

1. direct monetary benefit to members...members are able to more than pay for their membership through this program.
2. direct monetary benefit to members' employees
3. strong and tangible membership sales-benefit tool since only members can put a coupon in the book
4. furthers the Chamber slogan "be loyal, buy local"
5. will force current members to give the Chamber a true and current account of how many employees they have, which will increase the dues pool to the Chamber.
6. by giving incentives to participants to turn in each month's coupons, the program is trackable (for future program selling and to spotlight member categories)

### Board Packets Online

Some Chambers are putting their board information packets on their website so board members can download the information in advance of the board meeting. This saves on copying and mailing costs. Only board members can view the information through use of a special user ID and password. (This idea from the W.A.C.E. newsletter.)

Check out our website: [www.chamberdevelopment.com](http://www.chamberdevelopment.com) email: [joan@chamberdevelopment.com](mailto:joan@chamberdevelopment.com)

Joan Testa  
Chamber Development Services, Inc.  
P.O. Box 612611, Dallas, TX 75261-2611  
Toll Free Pager/Voice Mail (888) 502-3323  
Fax (800) 584-0321 e-mail: [joan@chamberdevelopment.com](mailto:joan@chamberdevelopment.com)

BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 444  
BEDFORD, TX  
ZIP CODE 76021

*RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED*

## Tidbits...

*Old and New concerns for the baby boomers:*

**Then:** Long hair  
**Now:** Longing for hair

**Then:** Watching John Glenn's historic flight with your parents  
**Now:** Watching John Glenn's historic flight with your kids

**Then:** Popping pills, smoking joints  
**Now:** Popping joints

**Then:** Acid rock  
**Now:** Acid reflux

**Then:** Keg  
**Now:** EKG

**Then:** Our president's struggle with Fidel  
**Now:** Our president's struggle with fidelity

**Then:** Getting out to a new, hip joint  
**Now:** Getting a new hip joint

**Then:** The Grateful Dead  
**Now:** Dr. Kevorkian



Even in Cannes, France I go to Chambers of Commerce!