

Chamber Development Strategies

Issue #54 October 2004 an idea exchange - from Joan Testa, Chamber Development Services, Inc.
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Editor's Corner:

Benjamin Franklin said:

"Tell me, and I forget.

Teach me and I may remember.

Involve me and I learn."

How often do we try telling and/or teaching the community all the things the Chamber is doing?

How often do we try telling and/or teaching businesses why they need to be members?

More importantly, do you really involve them so they understand? Do they have sponsors or mentors that work with getting them involved?

We hear constantly about how businesspeople are time-poor (even more so than dollar-poor) so asking them to get involved becomes almost "the impossible dream".

The impossible dream that is, unless the light goes off to them. That's when they realize that if they keep on doing what they always have done, they will get what they have always gotten: so to get different results, they have to try something different.

Sometimes it's a matter of illustrating that a large number of the most successful businesses in our community are involved in the Chamber. So what is it that they know....or are doing...that perhaps we are not?

Most of the time it is a matter of getting them to realize that the Chamber is an investment for which there is return, both tangible and intangible. They need to understand that by USING the various aspects of this investment that best fits their particular business's needs, they will grow their business. After all, isn't that why they are in business...to grow (a.k.a. make a profit - make a difference)?

After having worked with almost 600 Chambers of Commerces nationwide over the last 18+ years, it may seem too simplistic to say this but I have found people **join** the Chamber for the "What's in it for me" but **buy into** the Chamber and appreciate its real value when they get involved.

CDS works with our clients to not only get businesses to **join**, but to **buy into** their Chamber.

Good Marketing Piece

Many Chambers have comprehensive materials detailing their programs and benefits and quite a few have a "Top Ten" list. Here is one from Jacksonville, FL.

Top 10-12 Reasons to Join the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce
It's All About You !

1. Increase revenue
2. Expand Networking opportunities
3. Create visibility
4. Obtain cost-effective small business programs and benefits
5. Enhance credibility and corporate identity
6. Gain access to the movers and shakers of the area
7. Participate in the economic development of the First Coast
8. Give back to the community
9. Have a voice in local, state and federal government on business issues
10. Improve the current and future workforce on the First Coast
11. Be featured on the Grand Award - winning website: www.myjaxchamber.com
12. Access diversity in business

Chambers Taking Stances on Issues

I have heard it from both sides of the table: Chambers who don't want the rock the boat and alienate some of the community so they do not take stands on issues and others who jump in with both feet saying that if they don't get someone mad, they must not be doing anything!

Having clearly identified that manufacturing is the backbone to their communities, several Connecticut Chambers of Commerce, including the exceptional Greater Bristol Chamber, are actively supporting MADE in USA.

Current so-called "free trade" policies have led many corporations and retailers to take advantage of cheap foreign-made goods. This is devastating in its negative impact on U.S. manufacturers.

These chambers are actively working with legislators for a more balanced approach to world trade - have free trade policies to be turned into fair trade policies. They are making a difference - call John Leone in Bristol for more info: 860-584-4718.

A Quote on an Application for Membership

Collierville, TN has the following quote prominently displayed on their Application for Membership-Annual Investment Schedule:

"No community will ever be very much better than its Chamber of Commerce causes it to be."

.....President Ronald Reagan

Odds and Ends

Verbal Communication

55% based on body language
35% voice inflection - tone of voice
7% actual words used

Never Give Up Trivia: On his 1009 sales call, Colonel Sanders sold his first franchise.

You Know You're a Workaholic When:

You have more notepaper in the bathroom than toilet paper.

You think people who do only two things at once are lazy.

You like to make lists of your lists.

Read Between The Lines

Almost every Chamber has a page or section of their newsletter that lists the new members that joined since the last newsletter. The best list also includes details about the new members - mini-profiles that become a member introductory ad to the entire readership. They typically include business name, address, phone and fax numbers, e-mail and web site addresses, contact person's name and type of business. If space permits, a 10-50 word description is also included.

Most chambers also list renewing members, sometimes with many of the details listed above, and many times with years of tenure with the Chamber.

Elkhart, IN goes a few steps further: they have a most informative page in their newsletter that details:

New Members Please extend a hearty welcome to these new members!
(below this header the new members are detailed)

Returning Members Our Thanks to Members Who Recently Returned!
(details about these members follow the header)

Renewing Members ... Our Thanks to Members Who Recently Renewed!
(below this header are the renewing members list)

Former Members ... Our Thanks to Members for their Past Support. The Elkhart Chamber thanks the following businesses for their past support and hopes to see them as Chamber Member Investors in the future.
(the list of names follows this header)

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

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