



There's Always Money (And Great Marketing) In The Banana Stand

Look Inside!

Read Through Our Pages For Other Great Articles!

Page 2: Fun With Community Festivals; The Debt Ceiling Conundrum

Page 3: Weighing In On Carbon Taxes; O Members, Where Art Thou?

Pages 4 & 5: Read Up On Five Great Chambers In Our Chamber Spotlight!

Page 6: Kickin' It Old School With Business Expos!

Page 7: Austin Educates; Survive And Thrive At Work; Most Important Chamber Committee

Page 8: Businesses of the Month & Upcoming Events!

Page 9: The New Chamber Motto; Turn Non-Members Into Members; Dealing With Problem Behavior

Page 10: Defaulting To A "Yes" Attitude; Challenges In The Boardroom; Social Media

Carly Morgan
Staff Writer

In today's marketplace, you need more than just a great product or service; you need to make sure people know about your great product or service. For a chamber of commerce, that means getting as much information out there as possible that lets businesses know who you are, what you do, how you benefit the local business community, and why area businesses should fork over their hard-earned cash to be a part of your chamber.

Have you ever heard that Thomas Edison quote that says, "Success is ten percent perspiration, ninety percent inspiration"? Because I'd like to propose that success is also at least, like, ninety percent marketing. Which puts us at roughly 190 percent but if you're willing to overlook the mathematical shortcomings of my proposition, then so am I.

But marketing for the sake of marketing probably won't get you to where you want to be. It's important to market with purpose, and with substantive

material that reflects the resources and services your chamber provides. Because marketing for the sake of marketing is about as useful as nothing at all, especially-



time, some of the channel's most popular shows were sitcoms like *Malcolm in the Middle* and *That '70s Show*. So, likely due to the success of those programs, *Arrested Development* was marketed as though it were the same type of show that would appeal to the exact same viewer demographic. But in reality,

Arrested Development presented a brand of humor, and an involved web of ongoing plots and subplots, uncharacteristic of the traditional sitcom. While not meant for an entirely different audience, it certainly catered to a more off-beat comedic sensibility than did *That '70s Show* or *Malcolm In The Middle*.

A chamber executive once told me, "If you've seen one chamber, you've only seen one chamber." All chambers of commerce are not the same, and what may have worked for a chamber a few towns over may not work for every chamber (yours included). A series of social media seminars that seemed like a huge crowd-draw for one chamber might not have (Continued to Page 6)

National Chamber Review
130 East Main Street, Granite Building
Rochester, NY 14604

PSRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ROCHESTER, NY
PERMIT #51

Approaching Strategic Planning With a Warrior Spirit



Melynn Sicht and Carol Weinrich Helsel
Contributing Writers

In business, we seldom hear the term "warrior spirit"; in sports...yes, in psychology...yes, in religion...yes; but not in business. Small business consultant Kathy Marlor describes a warrior spirit this way: "If you ever set a goal and didn't quit along the way no matter how tough it got, no matter what obstacles were in your path, because you were so driven to succeed—then you, my friend, have experience using a 'warrior-style' spirit."

Now imagine: warrior spirit meets outcome-based strategic planning. BAM! The duo of a warrior spirit and strategic planning is an exciting one. The combination feeds and energizes a debate about what is relevant and moves a board and staff to new action. The warrior spirit embraces courage, resolution, commitment to overcoming obstacles, constant progress, capitalizing on strengths, and addressing weaknesses. Approaching strategic



planning with a warrior spirit provides chamber leadership with a blueprint for growth and revitalization. Take stock of where you are today, where you want to be at the end, and the steps and leaps necessary to get there. The plan becomes a true guide for innovation—not only a document that turns into an operational plan. Applying warrior spirit to elements of planning:

If you're ready to take strategic planning to a new level—moving beyond the same annual discussion, beyond the chamber's traditional offerings, for the same target group of members—then commit to applying a warrior spirit to these important elements of planning:

1) Relevance: Any organization or product not "exceptionally relevant" is going away. There are simply too many alternatives available thanks to technology and virtual resources. While the Internet and other organizations are not replacing chambers, it does require a chamber to up the ante on member service

and delivering a relevant portfolio and accompanying message of value. It demands the board examine and reconsider the chamber's brand promise. There is stiff competition—including the choice to simply not belong. Think of this as planning around the new normal.

2) Research: If you skip member research and assume you know what members think is relevant, you are in trouble. *Making the right strategic decisions begins with having the right conversations.* If you want to have purposeful conversations, you must begin with data as a foundation. Data rarely gives you the answers; it is the prelude to the conversation. Data doesn't tell you what to do; it pinpoints the most relevant topics for discussion about strategy. Data helps you look at the organization honestly, from the voice of those who buy your products and services. For a chamber to be relevant, its staff and leaders must ask members the right questions about their greatest business worries and needs.

Get input and feedback from your most important stakeholders. It is a vital step in planning. Many organizations skip this step. Maybe they conduct a member survey every few years (or sometimes never). Today's business environment demands *value-based research* every year (the same frequency you gather your board to prepare for the coming year; to review/approve an annual budget). It allows (Continued to Page 6)

Understanding the Differences Between Mobile Websites and Responsive Design



Scott Juranek
Contributing Writer

Staying on top of mobile developments is difficult, even for those of us who work in the tech industry. Not surprisingly, there's a fair amount of confusion when it comes to understanding the differences between responsive website design (RWD) and mobile websites. Mobile websites have been around since 2007 and were developed to enhance a website visitor's experience when they used a mobile device. Within the last two years, mobile website design has taken a new direction. You may have seen the term, 'responsive design'. This has become a hot new methodology for website designers to offer clients, however it is still a fairly new way to make a site mobile-friendly.

So what are the differences between a mobile site and a responsive website? Let's first dig a bit deeper into the definitions and then see how it can all tie back to your mobile strategy.

Mobile Websites

A mobile website is usually designed as a companion experience to your main site. It doesn't replicate the all of the content from your main site, rather, it highlights features a user might need while walking around your community. For example, it might contain easy contact information or quick maps and direc-

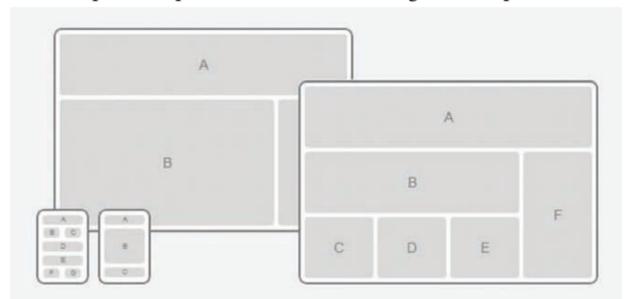
-Have larger user interface elements designed specifically for touch screens

-Have prominent search functionality

Responsive Website Design (RWD)

Responsive sites, on the other hand, are a single website design that automatically adjusts to fit wide range of devices. As the design of the site shifts, columns may disappear and images scale based on the size of the display of the user (see image below).

Basically there are 'break points' in the design that allow for the logical shifting of elements to fit within a smaller mobile device screen. If you want to check out an example for yourself, type in the URL for the Napa Chamber of Commerce, www.napachamber.org, on your laptop and then compare the results you get on your smartphone. This is an example of how MicroNet created one responsive design for Napa that now



Responsive Layouts, Responsively Wireframed
Credit: Adobe's James Mellers

works across multiple devices. In general, mobile sites:
-Have cut features to eliminate anything not relevant to a mobile user
-Reduced content and use fewer, shorter words

For this approach to work well, a great deal of planning must go into the process. Getting the navigation right can be (Continued to Page 9)

Festivals: Community, Local Business, And Fun For All

Caroline Adair Freeman
Staff Writer

I love festivals. Love them. Festivals create a time and place for communities to embrace their inner spirit, to wear their funk on their sleeves, and to gather together and smile. It is a time to slather on some sunscreen and eat from food carts. It is a place to be surrounded by local music, to have your children's faces painted, and to wear that crazy hat that has been buried in the back of your closet since college. Festivals are places to people watch and create memories. Festivals are places that epitomize community spirit.

Halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego is beautiful San Clemente, a sunny, breezy, beach side town that is home to families, young professionals, and retirees alike. With pristine beaches and a charming downtown, the community has a lot to be proud of. The San Clemente Chamber of Commerce is revving up for their 60th Annual Fiesta Street Festival. The motivation of the San Clemente Chamber is the community pride, spirit, and excitement that comes along with an annual festival. It gives local businesses the chance to be on display and show off everything they have to offer their community.

With the Fiesta Street Festival, the San Clemente Chamber of Commerce sets the ultimate example of creating a community tradition that wraps its cultural arms around every local business and organization. Last

year, 26 different local nonprofit service organizations participated in the Fiesta Street Festival, raising funds to be redistributed into various charitable enclaves. The Festival hosts entertainment for all ages and tastes with three stages of live performance,



Credit: sea turtle (Flickr)

es that continue throughout the day. There are contests such as the Hula Hoop Contest, Pie Eating Contest, Tortilla Toss, and more. They even host a Classic Car Show & Motorcycle Show. Government agencies are also invited; such as the armed services, sheriff's department and border patrol, to name a few.

All local businesses are welcome at the Fiesta Street Festival,

but as a special nod to members of the chamber, the chamber of commerce includes a special members only exhibition, giving their members even more visibility within the community. The San Clemente Chamber of Commerce

tive, but as a special nod to members of the chamber, the chamber of commerce includes a special members only exhibition, giving their members even more visibility within the community. The San Clemente Chamber of Commerce

puts on the Fiesta Street Festival while doing their best to be environmental and maintain the beauty of their beach side community by barring the use of Styrofoam and hosting shuttles to and from the event for arranged parking areas.

that come out and it is like a huge farmer's market. We walk around and buy food from the local vendors. There's games for kids, stations set up with contests. There is a salsa tasting booth, which is my favorite every year. There is always

live entertainment, too. There are bands playing all day long. Its a big celebration of San Clemente; local restaurants come out and have their food, and there is always arts and crafts. It really is a favorite event for my friends and family."

Festivals celebrate community, frequently focusing on what is unique and cherished. They are events where commu-

nity members from all walks of life can gather together and enjoy their community and all it has to be proud of, while also providing a place for local businesses to promote themselves.

While some chambers such as San Clemente host their own

festivals, other chambers simply make an effort to support and promote the festivals their community already offers. In Jackson Hole, Wyoming, a charming tourist town surrounded by the natural beauty of the snow capped Teton mountain range, the chamber of commerce dedicates part of their website to local festivals. From the Teton County Fair to the Jack-

son Hole Film and Food Festival, the chamber of commerce is standing by the community, promoting local business, and providing access to wholesome family friendly events.

Some cities embrace festivals as part of their cultural identity. For example, Portland, Oregon is home to more breweries per capita than any other city in the world. And they also just so happen to have 29 different annual beer festivals; Winter Brew, Spring Brew, Summer Brew, Fall Brew, Organic Brew, International Brew...the list goes on. Each of these festivals brings the community together to celebrate not only beer, but being a part of the community. When accompanied by music, delicious food, and ambiance, no matter what the festival theme is, it becomes a wonderful opportunity for community spirit, family fun, and enhancing the local economy.

Chambers have a mission to support and promote local businesses. By putting on or partnering with festivals, that promotion of business is enhanced, bringing about new relationships and a more well rounded community atmosphere, meaning that festivals are good for Chamber members, and the community at large. The sun is shining and festival season is right around the corner. Talk to your community about getting involved with festivals in your area.

The Debt Ceiling Conundrum

Carly Morgan
Staff Writer

On October 1, 2013, the US government went into a partial shutdown as a result of congressional disagreement over whether or not to raise the debt ceiling. On October 16, Congress passed the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014,

government cannot continue to incur debt. However, the Government Accountability Office (an arm of the US Congress) defines the debt ceiling as "a limit on the ability to pay obligations already incurred." Meaning: it doesn't stop anyone from running up the government's tab. A lot of the discourse surrounding the debt ceiling debate had

quickly could, ultimately, do more harm than good, and send the economy into another, possibly deeper, recession. But voting on whether or not to raise the debt ceiling is not the same as voting on the budget; the "budget" that allowed us to hit the debt ceiling in the first place was *already voted on*, and the money has already been

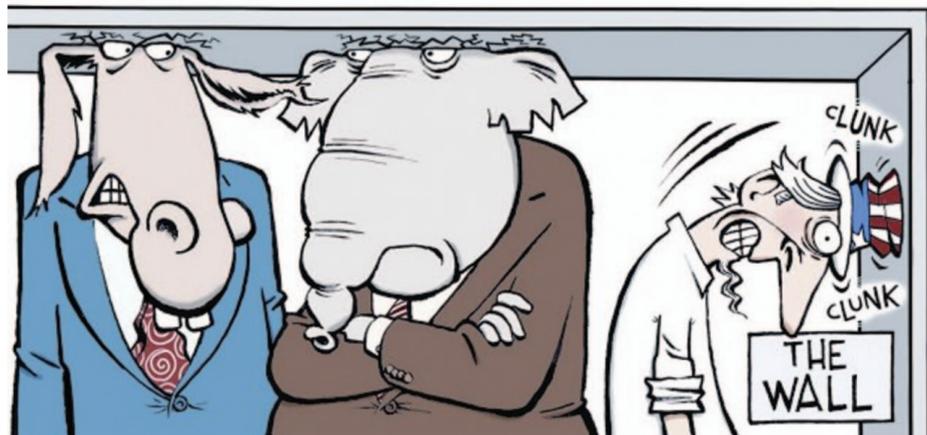
tion in the world, and generally subscribes to a "small government" model. However, in a letter to Congress dated October 16, 2013, USCOC Executive Vice President for Government Affairs Bruce Josten wrote: "While important policy issues are at stake in the ongoing debate about federal spending, debts, deficits, and entitlements, the full faith and credit of the United States should not be subjected to further brinkmanship. The consequences to the U.S. economy and the American business community of a default are too extreme to be allowed to occur."

In a press release issued by the Chamber, Josten also characterized both the continuing resolution and the raising of the debt ceiling as "must-pass legislation." Part of what can be taken away from Josten's letters is that proponents of raising the debt ceiling are not unaware of, or insensitive to, the larger problem at hand: decades of shoddy economic policy have gotten us to a place where our government regularly spends more than it takes in. But, as Josten also points out, "default will not contribute to an environment which allows Congress to rein in spending." While the solution is to cut spending or raise taxes (or some combination of the two) should remain open for debate, refusing to raise the debt ceiling does not solve the problem of our ever-increasing federal deficit. One thing it *do*, though, is "sow significant uncertainty in the bond markets and place upward pressure on interest

rates... [raising] capital costs for struggling U.S. businesses and cash-strapped homebuyers." That's according to the Council on Foreign Relations, which also cites a 2012 study by the Government Accountability Office to show that in 2011, the debates about raising the debt ceiling—and the consequent delay in doing so—cost taxpayers approximately \$1.3 billion for the 2011 fiscal year. Not raising the debt ceiling to default on its debt. Though opponents of raising the debt ceiling (groups like The Heritage Foundation, for example) would refute this claim—citing the fact that, raised debt ceiling or not, the Treasury would still be collecting money from taxpayers, which could technically cover the interest and the principle payments on the debt—this would require a prioritization of debt service over all other government funding. That means it would be done at the expense of defense spending, Medicare, Social Security, investments in infrastructure and education, and payments to programs that help some of our most vulnerable citizens. Congress has never voted against raising the debt ceiling, and the United States has never actually gone into default, so it's hard to say exactly what the economic implications would be if that were to happen. But, according to Thomas J. Donohue, President and CEO of the US-COC, "Continued uncertainty is the greatest threat to small businesses and our country's economic recovery." That state-

ment, though issued in October 2012 in a press release regarding the then-looming fiscal cliff, certainly applies in today's situation as well: Donohue says that "uncertainty forces job creators to sit on the sidelines instead of hiring more employees and expanding their operations." In fact, a 2013 report prepared by Macroeconomic Advisers, LLC states, "fiscal policy uncertainty... raised the unemployment rate in 2013 by 0.6 percentage point—the equivalent of 900,000 lost jobs." The report also estimated that a two-week shutdown "would directly trim about 0.3 percentage point from fourth quarter growth." After the passage of the continuing resolution on October 16, 2013, Donohue issued another statement urging "the administration and Congress to avoid a self-made economic crisis in upcoming debates by committing to work with one another on a plan...to improve our economy and ensure the fiscal health of our country."

THE CEILING



Credit: Joe Wolf

which included a continuing resolution that will fund the government until January 15, 2014, and delay another vote on the debt ceiling until February 7. But what do measures like this do to the economy, and how do they affect business owners? And more importantly, what exactly does it mean to "raise the debt ceiling"? A common misconception regarding the debt ceiling is that not raising it means the federal

politicians and civilians alike rallying to "balance the budget." That's all well and good, but in order to "balance the budget" immediately, the government would have to either cut spending by 40% on the spot or, according to CNNMoney, raise taxes by about \$738 billion to cover expenses from the end of the last fiscal year (i.e., April 1 through September 30). However, enacting either such drastic measure too

spent. These "balance the budget" battle cries would be much more appropriately placed in a different context—like in discussions about future spending. During the October debate, one of the loudest voices urging Congress to raise the debt ceiling was, perhaps surprisingly, the US Chamber of Commerce. Representing over three million businesses across the country, the US Chamber of Commerce is the largest business federa-

WANT TO RECEIVE NCR EVERY QUARTER? BECOME A SUBSCRIBER!

HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN ARTICLE?

E-MAIL: INFO@CHAMBERREVIEW.ORG

LEAVE A MESSAGE: 1-877-316-4311

Weighing In On Carbon Taxes

Carly Morgan
Staff Writer

In 2009, Representative Henry Waxman introduced the American Clean Energy and Security Act to Congress. The bill (also known as the Waxman-Markey Bill) aimed to institute a “cap-and-trade” system on greenhouse gas emissions. Such a system would allow the federal government to limit emissions of greenhouse gases on a national level, consequently allowing businesses to buy or sell permits to emit these gases. (The primary culprit being, unsurprisingly, carbon dioxide.) The rationale behind the bill was that companies producing more greenhouse gases would be faced with higher emission costs, which would provide incentive to reduce GHG emissions. The bill made it through the House, but not the Senate, and one of the groups most vehemently opposed to it was the United States Chamber of Commerce.

When it comes to carbon taxes, though, the USCOC currently has not taken a stance on either side of the debate. However, in an interview with ThinkProgress, USCOC Chief Operating Officer David Chavern characterized a carbon tax as “an interesting thing to think about.” So what is the carbon tax, exactly, and what makes it so different from a cap-and-trade system? Why the acrimony over one but not the other?

Both are forms of market intervention, but in simplest terms, a cap-and-trade impacts supply while a carbon tax could potentially impact demand. With the former, there’s a limit on the amount (or supply) of emissions. Once that limit is hit, that’s it; there is no more. The latter involves not limiting emissions outright, but putting a price tag on them in the hopes that higher costs will lead businesses to curtail their production of greenhouse gas emissions.

The emission of GHGs is a negative externality, which

means it’s a cost imposed on people other than those consuming the product. Think of it a bit like secondhand cigarette smoke: if one person is smoking a cigarette in, say, a restaurant, everyone in the vicinity is affected by the external cost. Now, in New York State, it’s illegal to smoke in a restaurant, so the external cost imposed by secondhand smoke has been negated in that context. A carbon tax, on the other hand, would internalize the external cost by making the cost to the consumer reflect the negative impact their consumption has on those around them; the source of the negative externality is priced to reflect its impact on society.

The Congressional Budget Office released a report last May outlining the pros and cons of a carbon tax. The report stated that although a carbon tax could reduce carbon emissions while simultaneously raising governmental revenue, it could also raise the cost of certain goods and services (par-

ticularly those that involve relatively high quantities of emissions, like transportation and electricity). On the one hand, this could lead consumers to seek out goods and services that use less carbon, and could also encourage larger firms to look into alternative energy sources—efforts that could potentially contribute to slowing climate change. Also, a 2011 report by the CBO stated that a carbon tax of twenty dollars per ton could generate nearly \$1.2 trillion in government revenue over the next decade.

However, from an economics standpoint, many worry about the effect of a carbon tax on an already fragile economy, and the CBO has not yet been willing to say that a carbon tax would actually be effective in reducing carbon emissions; it might be more likely to just hurt industry. Such a phenomenon could take effect if demand for the production of GHGs proves to be inelastic. (Consider, for example, the demand for cigarettes: in my home state of New York, smokers will pay anywhere from eight to fifteen

dollars for a pack of cigarettes, depending on what part of the state they’re in.) So why was the US Chamber of Commerce so harshly critical of a cap-and-trade system, but not yet willing to come out on either side of the carbon tax debate?

The most probable explanation has to do with economic uncertainty. Since the cap-and-trade system essentially limits the “supply” of units of pollution, prices would fluctuate: the trading price of emission permits would increase when demand was high relative to supply, and decrease when it was lower. With a carbon tax, the price on units of pollution is set; any remaining uncertainty has only to do with the quantity of GHG emissions. The price certainty of a carbon tax is likely enough to make it the more appealing of the two options to anyone looking at the issue from an economic standpoint.

So why should anyone care about this? Because carbon taxes and other similar economic entities have been popping up across the globe recently. A recent report by The Climate

Commission stated that by 2013, 33 countries and 18 sub-national jurisdictions would have some sort of carbon price in place. In Canada, the provinces of Alberta, Quebec, and British Columbia have carbon taxes. Montgomery County, Maryland passed the first county-level carbon tax in the United States back in May of 2010. In 2008, a carbon tax was levied on businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area. In Europe, countries such as Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom have all implemented some form of energy tax.

Varying forms of carbon taxation have been proposed and debated multiple times in the US Congress in the past couple of years alone. And even if a federal carbon tax never sees the light of day, initiatives to impose carbon taxes at the state level have begun taking shape in Washington, New York, and Oregon. This issue has become one of real debate, and the outcome could be one that affects a lot of people and a lot of businesses.

0 Members, Where Art Thou?

Carly Morgan
Staff Writer

Operating a chamber of commerce while simultaneously working to recruit new members is a challenging and delicate balancing act. Here’s some information to help you discern how—and why—to keep all those balls in the air at once.

The Feedback Loop

My dad has always characterized my (irrationally crippling) fear of water as a “vicious cycle”: I was afraid of the water, so I never learned how to swim. Since I don’t know how to swim, I’ve grown more afraid of water over time. (The idea of sinking to an oxygen-deprived death was somehow more viscerally terrifying at, say, age twenty than it was at age eight.)

This is an example of a feedback loop. If you’ve ever been to a Sonic Youth concert, then you’ve experienced the horrible aural assault to which such a term can refer, but it’s more often used in discussing economics. In a chamber of commerce, for example, a feedback loop could look something like this: low membership means low income; low income means fewer resources for providing valuable, high-quality services to members; not providing a broad range of valuable, high-quality services to members leads to a decrease in member retention, and the original problem of “low chamber membership” is exacerbated further. It’s precisely what one might characterize as “a vicious cycle.” Conversely, higher membership means more member dues, and more member dues mean greater annual income for your chamber to put toward providing the best possible services to members, which leads not only to increased retention rates of existing members, but could also mean greater enrollment of new members.

Take Stock Of What You’ve Got

Before undertaking any new recruitment endeavor, take a look at the member benefits that your chamber already has in place. The best thing you can do to recruit new members is to fulfill your chamber’s exist-

ing mission and promises to current members. Few promotional tactics are more effective than good, old-fashioned, word-of-mouth marketing, and if your current members are satisfied, that information is likely to spread. On the flip side, of course, is the fact that misery really does love company: news of your chamber not fulfilling its duties to its members is likely to spread just as, if not more, rapidly than any positive testimonials, which only further underscores the importance of keeping members happy.

When trying to get a read on how current members feel about your chamber, you can always go the classic survey route. However, another effective way of gathering information on member satisfaction is to look at member retention: annual member retention rates shouldn’t really dip below 75%. If they do, there are likely other issues of “customer satisfaction” that need to be addressed before you start focusing more resources on attracting new members.

Another useful tool in assessing the perceived value of membership to your chamber is to look at enrollment statistics. If your chamber’s services are genuinely appealing to the local business community, then new member enrollment won’t be a “major-event-only” phenomenon; you’ll be signing up new businesses all throughout the year. This isn’t to say that if membership seems to peak around the time of recruitment events, you’re doing something wrong—trends like that are to be expected. But that shouldn’t be the only time people are signing up.

Speaking of your chamber events, are non-members showing any interest in participating in them? If they are, that’s a good indication that these events are seen as valuable experiences, and you should wield this to your advantage as much as possible: if non-members want to participate in an expo, attend a lecture or training seminar, or get involved in any sort of members-only event, let them. Ideally, any participating non-members will ultimately decide to join your

chamber. But even if they don’t, you can charge a participation fee for non-members that allows them to attend the event (and experience first-hand just how valuable a chamber membership could be to them) and serves as a form of supplemental income for your chamber.

Once you’ve taken a good, hard look at everything your chamber is already doing to provide value to existing members—and how to potentially enhance that value—the next step is to start considering how to attract new members.

“What should young people do with their lives? Many things, obviously.”

If there’s truth in imprecision, then Kurt Vonnegut nailed it when he said that. For many of the chamber executives I’ve spoken to over the past several months, a main concern is attracting younger members to their chamber. As a millennial myself, I’ll be the first to admit that part of why there aren’t as many younger business owners joining chambers of commerce is because there aren’t as many younger business owners out there as there have been in previous generations. (I didn’t even move out of my parents’ house until I was 24, at which point I was far more concerned with how to budget for both Netflix and my student loan payments than I was with starting a business.) But that doesn’t mean that these young entrepreneurs aren’t there at all, and their membership could prove extremely valuable to any chamber of commerce.

Here’s the thing about young business owners: they probably have a lot of years of business-owning ahead of them. Attracting younger members to join a chamber of commerce is the best way to ensure the longevity of any chamber. One great way to attract younger members is to offer some type of mentoring program, where older businessmen and women can impart some of their wisdom and expertise unto up-and-coming entrepreneurs. Such relationships could even prove highly mutually beneficial, as the younger members may be able to help their mentors with,

say, any technological issues, like sprucing up their Internet presence or establishing/maintaining a social media page.

I know I bring it up a lot, but I really can’t stress it enough: Have. A. Web. Presence. Especially if you want to attract younger business owners to your chamber. Communicate with young, prospective members in the ways that they’re most accustomed to communicating. Generally, this involves some sort of screen/keyboard combination. Also, using the Internet to reach this demographic means you’re more likely to tailor your message to our (stereotypically) shorter attention spans: the Facebook status bar isn’t meant for writing an entire manifesto on the benefits of joining your chamber. And Twitter only allows 140 characters per tweet for a reason, which is to encourage users to keep their messages short, sweet, and to the point.

Finally, when it comes to attracting younger members to your chamber of commerce, I have one bit of ammo for your arsenal that I’m pretty sure could prove a failsafe: free food. Always free food. Pizza, donuts, breakfast sandwiches, pizza-donut-breakfast sandwiches, whatever. If I learned anything from collegiate extracurriculars, it’s that the best clubs always serve food. And when you have food, feel free to advertise that bit of information. Prominently. There is no shame in this. Free food is the best food. (I think that was Newton’s fourth law.)

Of course, I’m not suggesting that you focus recruitment efforts exclusively on younger business owners. It has simply been my experience that many chamber executives find this to be the most elusive demographic. There are lots of ways to attract new members of any age and, perhaps surprisingly, some of the most effective require minimal resources.

Show Them What You’re Made Of

Although you would literally never know it from looking at me, I have a gym membership. When I referred my mom to the same gym, she signed a year-long membership contract, and my membership fee was waived the following month. This is

a perfect example of member-to-member recruitment, which amounts to little more than word-of-mouth marketing plus a few extra perks, and can be applied to virtually any member-based organization.

Consider, for example, offering a reduction to a member’s annual dues if they refer another area business to your chamber, and that business enrolls. As a general rule, any message about how valuable a chamber membership is will likely be more compelling coming from anyone other than the chamber itself. Bad news often travels faster than good news, so getting good news to spread sometimes takes a bit more coaxing, which is where the dues reduction comes in. Member recruitment incentives can serve as a way to remind and encourage members to sing your chamber’s praises to other area business owners.

Another great way to show potential members just how valuable membership to your chamber would be is to let them see first-hand what, exactly, their annual dues would be put towards funding. One way to do this is to host regular open-house events that allow anyone who might be interested in joining to come see for themselves what your chamber’s daily operations look like. Transparency is crucial to establishing trustworthiness, and trustworthiness plays a major role in attracting and retaining consumers in virtually any context. For some business owners, annual dues to a chamber of commerce may seem like a formidable expense, and those of a more skeptical persuasion may need evidence that their money isn’t simply going to line the pockets of some faceless executive who spends the day sitting in an office with his feet up. Chamber executives and their supporting staff do a *ton*. In fact, multiple chamber presidents have told me that a good day in the office is when their to-do list doesn’t demand more hours in the day than there actually are. Don’t be afraid to let people see how hard everyone at your chamber works.

Also, if you’re looking to add more benefits to your chamber’s roster, there are a few that are, of course, tried and true: member

directories, promotional services, training events, etc. But sometimes, the best thing you can do for members is to offer them a setting in which to socialize with other business owners. And I’m not talking about your average luncheons or business averages. Why not round up some chamber members for a round of mini-golf, or a group trip to a local amusement park? You could even make it kid-friendly—one of the highlights of my summer as a kid was my dad’s annual company picnic, and there was always a huge turnout for it. Giving members a less-professional environment in which to interact affords them greater opportunity to forge relationships with one another that extend beyond stuffy professionalism. Imagine how much more valuable membership to your chamber would become if it also provided members an opportunity to *kick it with their friends*. To this day, one of the few things that keeps me going to the gym is knowing that when I get there, I’ll have an opportunity to catch up with some of the girls who work there. (Whether or not I actually set foot on a treadmill is an entirely different story.) There is great value to be found in imbuing your chamber with a real sense of community.

Finally, if you feel your chamber simply does not have the man (or woman) power to undertake new enrollment strategies, there’s always the option of hiring a recruitment specialist. The job is similar to that of a door-to-door salesman, but instead of going from house to house hawking knives or vacuum cleaners, a recruitment specialist would travel to area businesses to get the word out about your chamber and what it has to offer.

Recruiting new members is an essential component to any chamber of commerce’s continued success. In looking for new ways to attract members, don’t be afraid to think outside of the box. Abandoning convention can sometimes seem a bit intimidating, but it’s a great way to set yourself apart from other chambers and to get the attention of potential members.

CHAMBER SPOTLIGHT: 5 DIFFERENT CHAMBERS, 5 UNIQUE COMMUNITIES

Every Chamber of Commerce has a unique story to tell. In Chamber Spotlight, we take an in-depth look at 5 Chambers across the country and tell their story. Want to be considered for a Chamber Spotlight? Tell us why at info@chamberreview.org

Plymouth Chamber of Commerce

– Plymouth, IN



Patrick McCabe
Editor

For the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce in Plymouth, Indiana, success means an ongoing pattern of cooperation with the city, participation by the community, and a general sense of togetherness from everybody in the area. In these terms, it's easy to see that the Plymouth Chamber has had plenty to be proud of recently.

I spoke with Ryan Jessen, the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce Board President. Currently finishing the last year of his second, and final, three-year term, Ryan has helped guide the chamber into their new period of transition from a largely traditional chamber to a more modern, technology-based organization. With a membership of 350, and a long-standing business population, it hasn't always been easy, but with cooperation from the city and their members, the chamber's prospects are on the rise.

Three years ago, Ryan implemented a rebranding initiative to get the chamber more up-to-date with the recent advancements in the chamber industry. "It was really [about] starting with the mission and the vision statements, and really rebranding everything from social media to logos to websites. I think, not only the rebranding, but the focus on technology has been a big part of that."

From the communication they have with their members, to the advertising opportunities available, everything is transitioning from print to digital and on-line options. For example, the chamber used to send hard copy newsletters to members; now that's all done via email. Social media pages like Facebook keep their members updated on recent chamber news, and they're currently in the process of creating a mobile app for use on portable devices. Advertisements have all transitioned online as well. Members can sponsor just about anything that appears on the chamber website: newsletters, e-blasts, etc. It's all digital, and it's all available 24/7/365.

During the rebranding, it was decided that the chamber also needed a new logo. What was decided on is something unique, and something that could be invaluable to any close-knit community like

Plymouth. Says Ryan, "Four different organizations in town met with [the same] designer, and what [we're] really trying to do is get everybody [together] with a general familiarity [on] the logo design...all different colors and different stuff for the individual [organizations], but we wanted to tie [them all] into one big concept. And that's the city of Plymouth, the chamber of commerce, the school system, and then the fourth one is PIDCO, the Plymouth Industrial Development Corporation."

Just two of the four logos are completed, but in the end what they'll get is a completely cohesive message across all aspects of the city's various counterparts. It sends a message to residents, visitors, and business owners that Plymouth is a place of equality, togetherness, and respect; that Plymouth is a place where the good of the community goes first and foremost ahead of anything else; and that Plymouth is a place where your needs are really heard.

The rebranding is an obvious next step when you consider how closely the chamber and city work together. "We work hand-in-hand with the city. We really try to be an advocate for them in local politics," says Jessen. The chamber is always working to get local and state politicians to visit and attend seminars. To date, every state senator and US senator in Indiana has visited the Plymouth Chamber.

The chamber seeks out and promotes events like this because they are the base of the community. "I envision the chamber to be a community resource that can provide information, first and foremost; an organization that can provide local and regional referrals; an organization that will help in continued learning, whether it's seminars or whatever it may be; and lastly an advocate in the state and federal government. I think [our members] really just need a voice and eyes and ears in the community," says Ryan.

At the end of his tenure as Board President, how does Ryan feel about the way he's leaving the chamber? "I think the biggest source of pride right now is the community's willingness to stick with us and really help make us go. At the end of the day, the reason the chamber has been so strong and the reason it's been able to grow has been the community's 100% support. Whether its word of mouth or volunteering or membership dues...that's been our biggest source of pride is just watching the community stick with us and really help us get to the point where we're at now."

If the past is any indication, the people of Plymouth will stick together to remain successful for years to come. For more information on the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, visit their website at www.plychamber.org.

Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

– Hilo, HI



Rainbow Falls - Hilo, HI

Credit: Jan H.

Patrick McCabe
Editor

360 degree views of beaches and shores with an annual average daily temperature of 74 degrees Fahrenheit: this is a chamber in a tropical paradise. Welcome to Hilo, Hawai'i, home of the Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce. Hilo is the largest settlement on the Island of Hawai'i, also known as the County of Hawai'i for which Hilo is the county seat. Founded in 1898, the Hawai'i Island Chamber is embarking on their 116th year as a business organization in 2014.

In their time the chamber has been very instrumental in making the Big Island what it is today. The chamber took strong positions locally, such as support for construction on the breakwater in 1904. It was completed in 1929. In 1912, still known as The Board of Trade, the chamber called for incorporation of Hilo. In 1913 they supported creation of a national park around Kilauea Volcano. In 1916, the chamber was involved in the creation of a Federal Building for Hilo, which was completed the next year. In 1948, the name was changed to what it stands today, the Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce.

Today, their mission statement reads as follows: "We help businesses and promote Hawai'i Island. The Chamber provides leadership via services and advocacy for the business community and to promote the economic well-being of the community as a whole." They accomplish this by: "Initiating and maintaining programs of research, education, and community; identifying the issues facing the business community and undertaking any action necessary to achieve satisfactory solutions; working with and coordinating activities of industry-related organizations to promote a stable and healthy economy; maintaining communication and rapport between the business community and those who make our laws or carry out the functions of government; and advocating election or appointment to public office of those who possess a sympathetic understanding of the problems facing the business community and have the ability, knowledge, and experience to make sound decisions."

Most of the chamber's work is done through its committees. Chamber members staff and run the committees and meet monthly to formulate policy, plan functions, and conduct business. The

standing committees at the Hawai'i Island Chamber are: -Economic Development: Enhances the general business climate of Hawai'i Island to promote a stable and healthy economy. -Education: Promotes and coordinates seminars and other educational activities by government agencies, the University of Hawai'i, or the Chamber, that would benefit or interest members and the business community. -Finance: Coordinates the financial affairs of the Chamber so that it is stable and fiscally sound. -Government Affairs: Monitors legislation at all levels of government that may affect HICC, its members, or the business community. -Membership & Benefits: Solicits new members as well as working on retaining existing members. -Social: Promotes fellowship and cooperation among members and other chambers of commerce. -Political Action: Through financial support for state and local political candidates and issues, this committee furthers the goals and objectives of the Chamber.

The Chamber also has special committees. These committees don't meet regularly, but are called upon when necessary. They are: -Agriculture: Provides a voice in the business community for Hawai'i Island's diversified agriculture through special events that promote the agriculture industry. -Bylaws: Established at will by the President, the Bylaws committee reviews the governing document of the Chamber, making recommendations to the Board for changes when necessary. -Scholarship Auction: Since 1984 the Chamber has awarded more than \$70,800 to University of Hawai'i at Hilo Students and \$13,500 to Hawai'i Community College Students. -Tourism: Goal is to assure visitor expectations are met. Safety, security, and sanitation are expected by visitors, and this committee deliver. -Website: Oversees the renovation of the chamber website, improving and promoting it through advertising opportunities for members.

Through committees, incredible member involvement, and a dedication to keeping the island as pristine, beautiful, and welcoming as its always been, the Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce is due for another 116 years of success. To learn more about the Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce, visit their website at hicc.biz.

Greater Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce

– Sandpoint, ID



Sandpoint, ID

Courtesy Idaho Tourism

Patrick McCabe
Editor

"We're a very diverse community...We're very artsy: music, performing arts, visual arts, that's kind of who we are. We're a very friendly community."

Kate McAlister has been the President of the Greater Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce since August 2010. In that time she has seen her small community thrive as a tourism town, embrace social media, and be named "The Most Beautiful Town in America" and one of the Top 5 Destination Wedding Locations on separate occasions.

The chamber, although under different names, has been in Sandpoint since the early 1960s. Unaffiliated with the USCOC, they are "an advocate for business development and tourism." Though located right in Sandpoint, the chamber is a regional representative for businesses all throughout Bonner County, Idaho.

Like many chamber executives, presidents, and CEOs, Kate's background is from the business community, where she was in charge of employee

volunteer programs at a private firm. She would go into charities and non-profits and help them run their organizations like a business: by developing a plan and implementing it. Says McAlister, "The reality is that's what all of us were discovering, non-profits are running on heartstrings. But yet those of us who had to decide who got the money, the philanthropic side of the corporation, there were no measurements. There were no business practices at all. So it was difficult to justify that to an executive staff. Without measurement, it's like 'well we give money because they're good, we like them.'" Kate's background in planning and organizing a non-profit business strategy is vital to a small chamber that hovers around 450-500 members.

As mentioned before, Sandpoint's main business stems from tourism. Sandpoint used to be a timber town, but the business climate has changed. By implementing strategic planning and changing the mission statement to address tourism, the town and the membership are recognizing the shift as the chamber works on ways to embrace their new iden-

tity. "We have a lot of tourism-driven businesses, and it's to their advantage to a part of our chamber, because we have a destination marketing organization as well," says McAlister.

A major boon to their destination marketing happened largely on a whim. In 2011 the Sandpoint chamber caught wind of a new contest from Rand McNally and USA Today called "Best of the Road". In this contest they were honoring small towns across the country in several categories, with the main stipulation being your town had to have a population of 150,000 or less. Well, with 7,300 in the town of Sandpoint, the chamber knew it was a long shot, but nominated Sandpoint for "Most Beautiful Small Town in America" anyway.

When they were selected for the Top 5, they were thrilled. When they were told that they had won, it was beyond anything they could have expected. When asked about their choice for the winner, the judges said, "Sandpoint by far, because the people are amazing and they just happen to live in paradise." As the very first winner of this now annual contest, the distinction is even more special. Photos of Sandpoint were then featured in the next edition of the Rand McNally Atlas.

Winning this contest really put Sandpoint on the map for a lot of people who had previously been unfamiliar with the small Idaho town. "The unintended consequences of winning has been huge," says McAlister, who mentions another distinction that was bestowed on Sandpoint last July. Schweitzer Mountain Resort was rated one of the top

five locations for a destination wedding by Birmingham Press in the UK. (Destination meaning spots outside the United Kingdom.) Being mentioned alongside a private game reserve in South Africa, a beach restaurant in Portugal, a hotel in Prague, and a lion camp in Kenya puts the beauty and uniqueness of Sandpoint into context. From the top of Schweitzer Mountain you can see across the Canadian border, the borders of three neighboring states, and the entirety of Lake Pend Oreille, the fifth deepest lake in the United States.

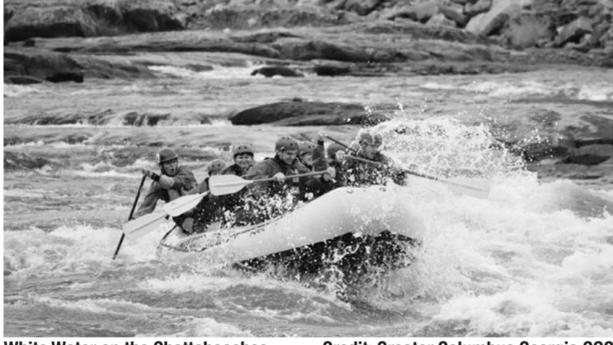
While all of these distinctions are wonderful and a huge source of pride for Kate McAlister and her staff, there's something else that takes the cake. In 2013, the city came to the chamber and asked them to take over the Business Improvement District that had previously been run by a third party organization. "In all the years the chamber's been in existence, there's been this chasm between city and chamber... and for them to come to us and say 'we think you're doing a great job and we'd like you to consider this' is amazing. Because they could've gotten rid of us." With these new connections, that chasm is shrinking.

Between winning awards and improving business in her community, what does Kate McAlister's best day as a chamber president look like? "Being out and about, being able to stand up and talk about the chamber and our successes. Or just seeing a member come in and say, 'This is really amazing, you guys do so much.' That's my best day."

To learn more about the Greater Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce, visit their website at www.sandpointchamber.org.

Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce

– Columbus, Georgia



White Water on the Chattahoochee

Patrick McCabe
Editor

"I think you have to keep re-inventing yourself. I've been in the business 37 years, and I don't know what normal is anymore." These wise words were spoken by Mike Gaymon, president of the Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce. Having been the president of their chamber for 25 years, he has seen the chamber industry transform several times over.

The Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1844, but has come a long way since then. Columbus means not just the city, but Columbus County as well. In addition to being a regional chamber, they also staff and run a regional economic development organization consisting of seven counties and two cities. One of the counties is located in a neighboring state, making it a bi-state regional economic development organization. Instead of being run by a third party organization like in many places, the Greater Columbus Georgia COC takes on this responsibility as

Credit: Greater Columbus Georgia COC

well, which is funded by both public and private resources. The chamber's membership currently stands at about 1,250, as the membership rises back to its pre-recession numbers. But it's still a struggle, especially compared to when Mike began his chamber career when every business owner would go out of their way to become a chamber member. Today, as we all know, that's not the case. It's about demonstrating value to target new members. In regards to their membership numbers, Mike says, "The bad news is... based upon market share we ought to be at 2,000 plus. There's a challenge and there's an opportunity as well. We, like many other chambers, we've cut our cost...we've rightsized...we've gone through most of our programs...trying see where we can drive out cost. At the end of the day, the potential for growth and development lies in 'what are we doing or not doing and how can we get more market share?'"

Part of obtaining that market share is making sure your market is strong in the first place. In Columbus, Georgia the biggest employer, and the

biggest impact on the region, is, by far, Fort Benning. The military drawback overseas in the last few years had a massive impact on the Fort and whether or not they were going to move the 3rd Brigade Infantry Division to another place entirely. This would have meant over 18,000 people and over \$433 million being taken from the Columbus community.

In terms of the chamber, it would have been devastating. Every restaurant, every store, every shop would have been impacted by this sudden move of nearly 20,000 people. Just the financial support this group of people provides to the area by purchasing basic living expenses helps several businesses stay in the black. With the soldiers at the Fort unable to lobby for themselves, the chamber stepped up and lobbied for them. After a year of information gathering and setting up their presentation they stated their position: not one of emotion, but a presentation based on the facts. In the end, it was decided that the 3rd Brigade Infantry Division would remain at Fort Benning. It was a tremendous victory for the chamber and for the people of Columbus, Georgia.

Maintaining the large military presence in Columbus was an extraordinary circumstance, but how does the chamber address the day-to-day business needs of their members? Through programs like Business First. "We survey our [members] and then physically go out and meet with them and talk to them in more detail about

'what are the concerns, what are the interests, what are the opportunities? Are you finding there are issues in [workforce or infrastructure]? Are there problems preventing your company from staying here and perhaps even expanding here?'"

From these results they gather information and figure out a way to address these needs for their entire membership. The chamber will work with the city, county, universities, or whomever in order to solve the problem. There was an indication that members didn't have available in Columbus the



Chamber Depot

Credit: Greater Columbus Georgia COC

skilled workforce they need to do business. The chamber got in touch in with local universities and technical colleges that offer advanced manufacturing programs to try and bolster that field in the area. It's about all facets of the community: the chamber, local government, and schools, working together for the overall betterment of the region.

Mike says it best. "What I've found...is that our organization is continually looking at 'how are we going to rein-

vent ourselves in this particular area?...because the world business climate is ever-changing. It's kind of like [what] Gretzky said about being a great hockey player: 'you [have] to skate to where the puck is going to be... and trying to figure out 'where is business going to be six months from now, a year from now?...it takes an awful lot of brain cells being burned and also some boldness in saying: 'our best information indicates this and we need to move forward, but we need to be agile and ready to adjust should we find that out our measureables,

course has caught a lot of attention. In fact, the white water course was named one of "12 of the greatest man-made adventures in the world" by USA Today last April. Go on Youtube and search 'white water on the Chattahoochee', and you can see for yourself the raging rapids right in the middle of a downtown environment.

Like all chambers, Greater Columbus Georgia has had some disappointments, and like all chambers, they've had quite a lot to be proud of as well. It's all about persistence, the drive to go out there everyday and

with the deliverables that we thought were going to happen, indicate it's not happening."

This information gathering helps the chamber get work done. Some work is done so we can have better business, but some work is done so we can go play. In Columbus that's no different. For twelve years the chamber and the city worked on, and have now completed, the longest urban white water course in the world. 2.5 miles, with some Level IV rapids, the

know you're making a positive impact on the community. Or as Mike puts it, "the best day is just knowing that you have an opportunity to help be a part of something that's going to make a big difference in the community, short and long-term."

It's why chambers do what they do.

For more information on the Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce, visit their website at www.columbusgachamber.com.

New Castle County Chamber of Commerce

– New Castle, DE



Patrick McCabe
Editor

Community outreach, small business development, and rock 'n' roll concerts: just another day at the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce. What started as the Newark Chamber of Commerce in 1922 expanded into its current form as the county chamber in the 1980s. Currently at 1,400 members, the chamber is growing again after taking a hit to their membership, like many other chambers, due to the recession.

These days, the chamber focuses on its value proposition in order to attract and retain members. They operate on a philosophy of "connect, save, and grow", which seems to be a message their membership is responding to. "We can help our members connect with their next customer...we have a number of savings offers through affinity programs; health insurance programs, that still exist, even after Obamacare, that can provide a nice value to our members. On the growth side, we have a lot of business education. We have our economic development programs to help grow the county, and then our government relations...which is something we're very active in," says Mark

Kleinschmidt, president of the New Castle County Chamber.

One way the chamber reinforces this philosophy is through their building itself. The chamber is located in a former National Guard Headquarters, meaning they went from a couple thousand square feet to over ten times that space. The building includes a gymnasium, which the chamber uses as a multipurpose room for events; but what's really unique is the 12,000 square feet of space they lease out to early stage companies for what's called the Emerging Enterprise Center (EEC).

The Emerging Enterprise Center is an incubator program that looks for early stage businesses who are three years old or younger, have a business plan, and a way to create jobs. "What the EEC is about is creating jobs and creating economic activity." In the six years of the program's existence, 22 companies have been a part of the incubator environment. The businesses lease the space at a discounted rent and are provided with everything they need to operate: utilities, internet, phone, fax, mail, a receptionist, and even a refrigerator and water cooler.

Each company is assigned a business mentor throughout their six month lease term, which they can renew up to

three times. Says Mark Kleinschmidt, "We don't have financial performance [reviews], but we have activity performance [reviews], so every six months we put together those particular goals." Because it's not about these businesses making money, at least not right away. It's about making sure that they are focused on their goals and are always moving closer to achieving them. "The idea is to get them to success a lot faster, and success is viewed as creating new jobs."

Another benefit to the EEC is the incubator businesses' membership in the chamber. "What's really cool about the incubator is that all of those companies and residents use chamber members for products and services, so there's a nice relationship. And the incubator tenants also are able to come to all of our networking and business education events for free. Again, what we're trying to do is accelerate their success," says Mark Kleinschmidt. In the last six years those 22 incubator businesses have created 86 new jobs in New Castle County.

What does the chamber do for established businesses? "Our members have access to 'news they can use': information that isn't just academic, but action-oriented that they can put to work the very next day." The chamber relies heavily on business education to help their members grow. The chamber works with local newspapers and TV stations to put on seminars to show members how to use those vehicles. Another major educational

initiative is on the importance of new technologies like social media and mobile apps.

In fact, the New Castle County Chamber was the first chamber in Delaware to develop an app for mobile devices. The app, Del Biz 2 Go, features a member directory, an events calendar, coupons, ads, and chamber news. Only chamber members are able to advertise on the app, but the app is available to download for anybody interested. A different member is chosen each week for a "deal of the week" that is sent as a text message to all of the app's subscribers. So far, they've had over 1,100 downloads, and that number is growing.

What are some of the events advertised in the app? The chamber kicks off their event schedule in January with a rock 'n' roll concert called Chamberpalooza. Each year they invite a tribute band to play, with this year's act, a Rolling Stones tribute band. The event is a fundraiser for the EEC, celebrating local entrepreneurship.

Quarterly mini-expos are also held annually each season, with the appropriate titles Spring Fest, Summer Fest, Fall Fest, and Winter Fest. Each expo hosts about 20-25 vendors who purchase space to exhibit their wares. "It gives [members] an opportunity to market their product or services through a tabletop display." They get between 200-300 attendees for each event.

So, while he's organizing events, helping entrepreneurs succeed, and improving the business community, what does Mark Kleinschmidt's best day as a chamber president look like? "Interacting with members and

doing some planning for our next big activity." It's this attitude that's resulting in long-term success for this regional chamber.

To find out more about the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce, visit their website at www.ncccc.com.

Masthead

National Chamber Review
EDITOR: Patrick McCabe

Text:

STAFF WRITERS: Caroline Adair Freeman, Carly Morgan
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Bob Harris, CAE, Carol Weinrich Helsel, Cathi Hight, Scott Juranek, Frank J. Kenny, Penny Maynard, IOM, Kerry Robertson, Glenn Shepard, Melynn Sight

Administration:

Kevin Baer
Bob Bartosiewicz
Tim Corcoran
Greg Thoen

Photography:

PHOTOS & IMAGES COURTESY OF: BenSpark, Justin Blue, Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Jan H., Bob Harris, CAE, Carol Weinrich Helsel, Cathi Hight, Idaho Tourism, City of Marietta, GA Public Information Office, James Mellers, MicroNet, Inc., New Castle County Chamber of Commerce, nSightMarketing.com, Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, sea turtle (flickr), Glenn Shepard, Joe Wolf

Design/Art:

LAYOUT MANAGER: Katherine Philbin
LOGO & GRAPHIC DESIGN: Joshua Doty

National Chamber Review is published quarterly by CGI Communications, Inc. 130 East Main Street, Rochester, NY 14604. The information herein is compiled from a variety of reliable sources. However, we disclaim and deny any responsibility or liability for the timeliness, use, interpretation, accuracy and completeness of the information presented. All material, data, formats and intellectual concepts in this issue are copyrighted by National Chamber Review.

Business Expos, Kickin' It Old School

Carly Morgan
Staff Writer

As a chamber executive, it probably goes without saying that your main goals are to provide value for members, increase non-dues revenue, and increase chamber membership as a whole. One way to achieve all three of these objectives is to provide members with unique opportunities and forums in which to market their businesses, particularly marketing events which member businesses likely wouldn't be able to organize single-handedly.



Credit: Public Information Office, City of Marietta, GA

Whenever we talk about marketing, something about a strong web presence or a social media account seems to come up in the same breath. Inbound marketing is given a lot of credence, and for good reason: it's effective. But even though Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other online platforms are great ways of drawing customers to you, they're not the only ways of doing so. There are other useful methods of inbound marketing that don't require an Internet connection, but rather, a connection with the community. One such method is the business expo—an effective form of inbound marketing that no business can pull off on its own, and a great way for any chamber to increase the value of its member dues.

There's something about a business expo that strikes me as a little, well, old school: the advent of things like Facebook, Twitter, mobile apps, and even plain old blogging have all been game-changers for the marketing industry. And as someone who has literally no memory of a pre-Internet existence, I am definitely a proponent of chambers and businesses using such tools to reach consumers. What I would hate to see, though, is for the old-fashioned, meet-and-greet, face-to-face methods of marketing—the very aspects of inbound marketing that an Internet presence aims to mimic—to fall by the wayside.

While you can undoubtedly cast a broader net with online interactions, communicating via digital forums does mean you end up missing out on some of the most important elements of communication (i.e., body language, inflection, eye contact). Also, interacting with someone online greatly diminishes the odds of your having his or her undivided attention during your exchange. (How often are you ever sitting at your computer and only doing *one thing* at a time?) Having a face-to-face conversation with someone gives you more of an opportunity to forge a better connection.

Of course, you could very easily argue that the benefits of a business expo are also intrin-

sic to any event that might allow for business owners to interact face-to-face with customers—events like festivals or county fairs. These events do not require chamber membership or connections with other businesses; they really only require a vendor's fee and an adequately sized tent. However, as someone who has spent some time working in lead generation, let me be the first to tell you: all face-to-face encounters are not the same. Take a county fair, for instance: customers are there to eat cotton candy, ride the precarious roller coasters, maybe pet some

farm animals. They're probably not there to engage with business owners or lead generators. At a business expo, however, customers are there *specifically to find a certain product or service*. You probably don't need me to tell you which generates a greater number of hot leads. Beyond lead generation, a business expo can serve other goals as well. It could be used as a means of recruitment for some businesses looking to hire new employees, or as an opportunity to network not just with consumers, but with other chamber members. It can even serve a membership tool for the host chamber. (We'll get to that part in a minute.)

As far as actually hosting an expo is concerned, there are a few major steps involved. First, find a venue. Here in Rochester, there's a home business expo hosted annually in the city's convention center. Or, for something on a smaller scale, consider a library, a rec center, or a hotel lobby. The green business expo I went to last September was held outside, along the city's waterfront. Get creative. But also, try to book the venue at least a year in advance of your event.

Next, get started on materials to market the event to local businesses. Events like this often have specific themes for specific business categories, but yours could be as broad as "chamber members" or "local businesses." Gauge your membership and decide if a more niche expo is appropriate for your chamber. Regardless, you might want brochures, mailings, or maybe even a website or a Facebook page to help you get the event information out to potential participants. Include both members and non-members in your marketing efforts: one way to help drive up membership numbers could be to allow member businesses to participate for free, but non-members can get involved in the event simply by paying the membership fee, and joining the chamber. You can also make larger spaces available for purchase to businesses that may want a little more room to spread out, or to bring a larger

display (another potential revenue-generator for the event).

In the months leading up to the event, you will want to start generating public interest with print or radio ads. Look to on-line promotional tools as well—your website and current social media pages are likely great examples of this. Opt for whatever method you think will get you the best results. This is crucial, as the entrance fee paid by attendees is likely to constitute the bulk of the expo's revenue.

The whole point of inbound marketing is for business owners to connect with consumers who are already interested in their types of products or services. A business expo lets this happen in, arguably, the best way possible: with a face-to-face interaction. When the consumer makes the effort to reach out and find a certain type of business, much of the legwork is done for the business already; instead of going out and looking for customers, customers come to them. By affording chamber members the opportunity to interact with customers in person, and in a setting where the consumer has sought out the businesses, the value of any business's membership to your chamber increases dramatically.

**WANT TO RECEIVE NCR EVERY QUARTER?
BECOME A SUBSCRIBER!**

HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN ARTICLE?

**E-MAIL:
INFO@CHAMBERREVIEW.ORG**

**LEAVE A MESSAGE:
1-877-316-4311**

There's Always Money (And Great Marketing) In The Banana Stand

(Continued from Page 1)

the same impact for your chamber; not because it isn't a good idea, but because different business demographics will respond to different initiatives. Understand your area's demographic, and don't let membership benefits that might actually appeal to your local business community get lost in the hubbub of trying to replicate exactly what's worked for other chambers.

I know we've talked about it before, but you know what people generally don't like? Uninspired, mass-produced dreck masquerading as targeted marketing. I'm talking about the spam email messages, the random fliers stuffed through garage door handles (you know, the ones so thoughtfully addressed to "Our Neighbors at [your address]"), even the relentless barrage of disruptive radio and television ads. Thoughtful content that reaches fewer, more interested consumers will go a lot farther than mindless advertising that's primarily meant to hit as many eyes and ears as possible. Since 1988 CGI Communications, Inc. has helped thousands of municipalities, counties, and chambers of commerce create thoughtful and unique video marketing material aimed at new and prospective movers. Through a subsidiary of CGI Communications, Inc., NEXT! Ad Agency clients are also offered search engine optimization (SEO) and online reputation management services—both important elements in keeping pace with the in-

Approaching Strategic Planning With a Warrior Spirit

(Continued from Page 1)

you to compare current results with the previous year's to see if you are moving the needle. Access to quality data fuels the problem solving process.

One executive director client sums up this point nicely: "The primary purpose of annual member research is benchmarking—to see if we have made any gains (or lost ground) in how well we are meeting the needs of our members. The second purpose is to identify anything new we didn't already know or have on our radar screen to help further define and refine our focus in our strategic planning process."

3) Value: If you believe you offer value but cannot articulate (sell or explain) that value to members, you have a problem. Few, if any, chamber members and their businesses have to belong to the chamber to conduct business. Chambers must offer relevant and unique value to attract and retain members. Think about one significant, relevant, and unique benefit of membership at your chamber. Can you pinpoint it? Can you explain, specifically, the value it delivers? Is the value quantifiable? Do you deliver it with excellence? You may not be able to answer "yes" to all these questions, but if not, you miss the chance to take the biggest step in unifying your leaders and staff. Once they are in sync with your promise, then members will begin to recognize it.

4) Messaging: If leaders and

staff cannot communicate a clear, succinct message of value to your members, you risk losing them—no matter how good your services. It's a sales job to influence the opinion of the chamber's most important stakeholders. Convincing important member segments is the launching pad to influencing all members (and attracting new ones). And what's the message? Simply, *connecting the dots* between what you do best to something members need most to stay in or grow their businesses.

5) Purposeful planning: When you gather the board together to look ahead three to five years, don't start with where you are now. Start with where you want to be—your vision. Business blogger Michael Hyatt writes: "If you don't start with a lofty vision, you become content with mediocrity and execute even lower." And as organizational consultant Jamie Notter writes: "If you go into a situation already knowing the answer you are guaranteed not to learn anything." Instill a state of mind within chamber leaders, top officers, and senior management that encourages focus on the long-term vision of the organization.

6) Be courageous. When addressing a threat or a big market issue in planning, you don't always know if a new direction will work, or if a new goal is achievable. Be a courageous organization. Jamie Notter and Maddie Grand define courage this way: "Courage is not the absence of fear. Being courageous is taking action, despite the presence of fear. Courage starts with admitting that you don't know. You don't know how it's going to end...embrace the not knowing

part, even when you don't know exactly where you are going to end up. Take action anyway."

Help members learn, earn, and fight.

There are three basic member needs that chambers are best positioned to address:

1. LEARNING: Helping organizations *learn* about the market, economic trends, and business development.

2. EARNING: Helping members *grow* their business.

3. FIGHTING: *Advocating* for members' business interests.

Strategic planning is the result of courage, resolution, and commitment in your culture, your conversations, your decisions, and your follow-through. Debate your important member audiences and their business needs. Debate how you can respond to what worries members most. Evaluate the messages and how you deliver on them.

Be bold. Treat the chamber like a for-profit business. Recognize your competition and the need to raise the bar in your strategic planning exercise. Don't be afraid to be innovative in your planning for fear of failing. Make the decision to set lofty goals and *embrace your warrior spirit!*

Melynn Sight speaks to and works with local, state, and national associations across many industries and chambers across the country on projects that help to strengthen the connection between organizations and their members. Learn more at nSight-Marketing.com or contact Melynn at Melynn@nSightMarketing.com.

Carol Weinrich Helsel is a freelance writer with 24 years of experience in non-profit organization management. She is owner of Pastiche Communications, specializing in helping companies meet their marketing and communication goals. Learn more at www.pastichcommunications.com.

I mentioned before that *Arrested Development* was a new kind of sitcom, and sometimes, with greater innovation, comes greater initial resistance. The influence of *AD* is present in current popular sitcoms, such as *30 Rock*, *Parks and Recreation*, and *Community*, indicating that it was never that audiences weren't going to come around to the show's unique format; it was just going to take a little bit of getting used to. Making yourself crazy in an effort to fix a product or service to please naysayers will likely only cause more problems than it solves. In the case of *Arrested Development*, Fox tried to bolster viewership by marketing the show as something that it wasn't. But the *AD* cast and crew stuck to their guns and left the format of the show alone, and what they ended up creating has since enjoyed something of a "modern cult classic" status and a rabid fan base. Maybe your chamber has been considering a mobile app. Maybe there's a new kind of event or promotion that you want to try that's never been done before. Don't be discouraged if initial reception to a new idea is less stellar than you had hoped it would be; if you know the idea is good, stick with it.

In *Arrested Development*, we have an excellent case study of what bad marketing can do to a great product. The show won handfuls of awards – Emmy's, Golden Globes, Screen Actors' Guild Awards, Producers' Awards, you name it. As *AD* star David Cross said in a leaked season three blooper, if a show with credentials like that doesn't do well in the ratings, "maybe the problem doesn't lie

[with the show]. Maybe it lies with marketing." By knowing your demographic, understanding and using the platforms available to you for reaching your demographic, and not letting a few raised eyebrows get in the way of pursuing innovation, you can avoid falling victim to the same fate as *Arrested Development*. Your chamber probably already provides a great service to your local business community, but it takes more than just a great product or service to avoid falling through the proverbial cracks. With the help of a company like CGI Communications, Inc. that specializes in community video promotion, and NEXT! Ad Agency to help navigate the sometimes technologically confusing waters of SEO and online reputation management, your chamber can be on its way to not just *more* marketing, but *better* marketing. That way, even if George Michael burns down your chamber's banana stand, you'll still have great marketing content to fall back on.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

WE WANT FEEDBACK FROM YOU!

TIPS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS, COMMENTS?

E-MAIL INFO@CHAMBERREVIEW.ORG AND TELL US HOW YOU FEEL.

OR, CALL AND LEAVE US A MESSAGE AT 1-877-316-4311 TODAY!

Austin Educates

Carly Morgan
Staff Writer

It's not unusual for a chamber of commerce to undertake some form of education initiative. Often, these initiatives are focused on students at or just beyond the college level, either helping to place third and fourth-year students in relevant, resumé-building internships, or assisting recent graduates in their job search. But lately, it seems that a greater number of chambers of commerce are focusing their education initiatives primarily, if not solely, on students at the K-12 level.

In the throws of the Information Age, the demand for an educated workforce is growing constantly, and rapidly. For example, the New York State Department of Labor reported last June that there are nearly 70,000 jobs available throughout New York State. Yet the number of New York residents looking for a job—roughly 700,000—has remained stagnant, the available jobs, unclaimed. With immediate job openings for one out every ten unemployed New York State workers, you might expect these positions to fill almost as quickly as any business can post a “Help Wanted” ad. But that's not happening. Why? Because the current pool of job-seekers is not qualified to fill them.

According to Timothy Bartik, author of *Investing In Kids: Early Childhood Programs and Local Economic Development*, the “overall skill level of the local labor force is one of the key drivers of local job growth and wage growth...If we want higher rates of broad-based economic growth in this country, which will help support the prosperity of many businesses, we need to increase our labor force skills.” One group that is clearly in staunch ideological agreement with Bartik is the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce.

“Human capital.” That's what Gilbert Zavala, Vice President of Education and Talent Development with the Austin Chamber of Commerce, says his Chamber is investing in by directing funds toward public education at the K-12 level. “Talent is a big factor in whether or not a company chooses to relocate to a region,” Zavala explained. “That's why we believe having a strong pipeline, from K-12 to higher education, is critical; because we know a lot of those students are going to be the future talent base for businesses looking to relocate here.”

When the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce realized the importance of a competitively educated, local workforce, they decided to get involved, forging a partnership with 15 area school districts. “[In] 2005,” Zavala explained, “we did an analysis and found, basically, that we weren't on track to meet future talent demands.”

So, that same year, the Greater Austin Chamber launched its “20,010 by 2010” initiative with the goal of bolstering direct-to-college enrollment by 30 percent between 2005 and 2010. Their methods proved highly effective: base enrollment started at 65,000; as of 2010, enrollment rates were north of 86,000. Building on that program's success, the Greater Austin Chamber is now looking to increase the area's direct-to-college enrollment rate to 70% by 2015, putting the Metro Austin region right on track with the national average.

With both its past and present initiatives, the Greater Austin Chamber has adopted a multifaceted approach to helping high school students through the college application and admissions processes. Part of their strategy involves using chamber funds to retain high school counselors over the summer, affording recent high school grads a key extra resource in the transitional months between the end

of high school and the start of their post-secondary education.

These measures are in place to help diminish the impact of what Zavala calls the “summer melt”: the statistical drop-off between the number of high school seniors who plan to go directly from high school to college (91%), and the number who are actually on a college campus for the first day of classes (62%). “That 30% gap,” Zavala said, “[is] what we're trying to fix by providing additional guidance for students to make sure that they're able to enroll.” To stay in touch with students, counselors employ methods involving social media and text messaging. “[The students] get tailored texts,” Zavala explained. “Like, ‘Hi Joseph, this is Miss Ramirez at Crockett High School. Wanted to check in with you about your plans to enroll at Brandeis. Message me back if you need help.’ So they're very targeted.”

Aside from extending counselors' contracts, the Greater Austin Chamber also sponsors Financial Aid Saturdays, aimed at helping students through the application process for state and federal student loans (better known by their acronyms, TASFA and FAFSA). During our interview, Zavala and I joked a bit about what a nightmare the FAFSA application process was for both us. The difference between our experience and that of many other students, however, is that he and I both had resources at our disposal that made FAFSA just that: a nightmarish inconvenience, and nothing more. But for some students, that “nightmarish inconvenience” ends up becoming the very roadblock that keeps them from enrolling in college at all. Financial Aid Saturdays is the Greater Austin Chamber's solution to that glaring problem.

What started in 2005 as four, yearly events in one school district, Financial Aid Saturdays have since grown to include 36 events in fifteen different dis-

tricts. Zavala said that data collected by the Chamber, in partnership with UT Harvard and Johns Hopkins University, shows that each year, up to 40% of students encounter enrollment barriers, FAFSA being one of them. “These are kids that have made it through parts, or have completed, the application process, and then just get caught up,” he explained. Things like Financial Aid Saturdays, as well as the Chamber's funding to retain high school counselors over the summer, help students overcome these enrollment barriers.

Who do you think is benefiting from this extra help the most? “Primarily, it's first-generation, lower-income students,” Zavala said. “Their families don't have the context to guide them through the things that they have to do to enroll.” According to Zavala, roughly 85% of unemployment insurance wage claims in the area come from residents with less than an Associate's Degree, so drumming up college matriculation rates is bound to drive those numbers down. One of the best indicators for how far a young student will pursue his or her academic career is to look at how far the parents of that student went in school. So what better way to expand an area's talent pool than to invest in a brand new generation of college-bound students?

Beyond helping students to enroll in college, the Greater Austin Chamber also goes to great pains to ensure the college readiness of as many graduating seniors as possible. According to The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, if a student is “college-ready,” he or she will not have to take remedial college courses (typically in English or math, and taken for no credit) in order to prepare for entry-level college courses. Sometimes, the importance of college-readiness is overshadowed by well-meaning, though perhaps overzeal-

ous, efforts to get as many students into college as possible. However, in an August 2011 interview with *Community Impact Newspaper*, Drew Scheberle, Senior Vice President of Education and Development with the Greater Austin Chamber, said, “Being college-ready saves you a lot of money when you go into college, and it means you are far more likely to graduate.”

Obviously, if students don't have the necessary skills to succeed in, and finish, college, you probably haven't done them much of a favor by getting them enrolled; a likely outcome of such a scenario is the incurring of some amount of student debt, despite remaining degreeless. So, in order to ensure students' college-readiness, the Greater Austin Chamber offers tutoring to students who need help in crucial areas. “We have business volunteers tutor the students in subject areas, and those are facilitated by content experts from APIE [Austin Partners In Education].”

With all of these proverbial balls in the air at once, you might start to wonder how the Greater Austin Chamber has managed to fund its education-related endeavors. Primarily, it's been through Opportunity Austin, a 501c3 whose focus has been on funding employment, education, and economic development. “We have lead investors that commit about \$100,000 over five years,” Zavala said. “[Investors] run the gamut from big corporations like 3M and AT&T to smaller firms, attorneys, investment firms, realtors.” Zavala went on to explain that the Greater Austin Chamber also raises “sponsorships for the program with partners like St. Edward's University, University of Texas, Texas A&M—universities that want to support enrollment from our region.”

Beyond that, Financial Aid Saturdays and the college-readiness tutoring programs are run entirely by volunteers from area

businesses. “We're member-driven, like most chambers,” Zavala explained. “We recruit about 500 business volunteers [for Financial Aid Saturdays], with the base being university financial aid officers. [But] we get all types of volunteers that have an interest just because it's one of the more satisfying events in the sense that you're spending an hour or less to complete a FAFSA with a family.”

With members volunteering their time and donating their money to the Greater Austin Chamber's education initiatives, it of course raises the question of, “What's in it for business owners?”

Zavala says that community visibility plays a large role in businesses choosing to involve themselves in the chamber's education initiatives, particularly when it comes to volunteering for Financial Aid Saturdays. What Zavala characterizes as “the ultimate outcome,” however, is a talented, educated, and capable workforce.

“You want qualified workers to build you business on,” Zavala said. “And when employers are looking to expand, they want to have a deep pool of college-educated, career-ready workers.” He said that this is especially true in Austin, where the tech industry is a driving force of the local economy. “So certifications, whether they're in a specific programming area, or if it's HVAC or construction and building, those benefit small and big employers.”

The chamber's engagement with public K-12 schools has even broader impacts on the overall quality of life in the area, and how appealing the community is to prospective movers. Further, Zavala explained, “As companies look to expand or relocate workers, they want quality schools... so the efforts to ensure that our students are graduating prepared to enroll in two and four-year colleges is another selling point.”

How To Survive And Thrive At Work

Kerry Robertson, IOM
Contributing Writer

It may seem a little simplistic, but in today's increasingly complex world, a positive attitude is most likely a person's best survival tool. Oprah Winfrey recently asked poet Maya Angelou on her 70th birthday what she had learned in life. Her answer spoke volumes about the power of our attitude and how it affects our lives professionally and personally. Maya Angelou said this: “I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he or she handles these three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights. I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one.”

Our daily routines are filled with “pains” and pleasures, countless ongoing stimuli, both positive and negative. The way we interpret these stimuli determines to a great extent how we live our life. Learning to concentrate on the positive brings more joy and resiliency into our life. If we focus on the negative, our lives can become dismal and disappointing.

However, it's difficult to stay positive. It's human nature. Problems at home, illness, inconsiderate co-workers, and even tangled Christmas tree lights can distract our positive focus. Remaining posi-

tive is a life-long challenge that takes commitment and work. Those who succeed in consistently focusing on the positive have learned how to control their attitude. Here are four suggestions that may help you create a more positive focus.

Focus on what's positive about your job. People who are consistently negative toward work are doing a disservice to their co-workers, employers, and themselves. Make a commitment to think, act, and talk about only the positive aspects of your work.

Be a team member and build a reputation for being pleasingly predictable and a pleasure to be around. When we participate as a member of the team, we gain a feeling of acceptance instead of isolation. We experience the joy of reaching common goals, creating an enjoyable work environment, and the opportunity to deepen work relationships.

Think of your job as a place where good things happen. Thinking of your job as a 40-hour weekly drudgery will add stress to your life. Strive for an upbeat, good-natured attitude. Remember, some days there won't be a song in your heart... SING ANYWAY! It will lift you up instead of drag you down.

Position yourself for more success by sharpening your people skills. A negative attitude towards your work can side-

track your success and negatively influence your personal life. Research shows that 85% of your career and financial success depends on how well you get along with other people.

Your people skills reflect your attitude about life. Control your outlook on life and you will win where others fail. Your positive attitude will enhance your life and the lives of others around you. Maya Angelou also said, “I've learned that no matter what happens, or how bad it seems today, life does go on, and it will be better tomorrow. I've also learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Here's to not only surviving, but thriving at work!

Kerry Robertson is a professional speaker, trainer and coach specializing in presentation and communication skills. She has been honored as one of “Oklahoma's 50 Women Making a Difference” for her training and eighteen years as a news anchor and talk show host. As a faculty member of the Institute of Organizational Management (IOM), she instructs on Speaking with Confidence, Customer Service Inside and Out and Managing the Media. Kerry can be reached at 405-840-1777 or email: Kerry@KerryRobertson.com.

The Most Important Committee

Penny Maynard, IOM
Contributing Writer

Which committee do chamber executives believe is their most important? As Dave Kilby of the California Chamber has been saying for almost twenty years, it is the nominating committee. After twenty plus years as a chamber executive, I heartily agree.

The individuals who will govern the organization and provide policy direction to the executive for years to come are selected by the nominating committee. Thus, you can see the crucial role the nominating committee plays. Some criteria members of the committee should consider when selecting candidates for the board: 1) a decision maker who can actually make decisions and commit resources at a board meeting, rather than having to go back and obtain authorization; 2) a respected community leader; 3) a supporter of chamber goals; and 4) someone who plays well with others. Other considerations could include someone who brings diversity and a representation from different segments of the business community.

There are resources that can suggest other factors to consider when preparing the nominating committee for its very important role. It's important to keep in mind that the chamber

is a business organization and the social aspect of the team being brought together, while important, should be considered as only part of the overall objective of a strong professional organization that is respected in your community.

Your chamber should enforce term limits on board members to keep fresh ideas coming. This also prevents your chamber from doing the same things year after year, a sure way to lose membership and community respect. According to a survey conducted by the Western Association of Chamber Executives, only 17% of chambers have no term limits for board members. Term limits also avoid the situation where a board could become a cozy, closed club that is not viewed favorably by the membership and the community.

Annual board retreats should be held, often overnight, but definitely out of town to avoid business interruptions. This is crucial for board orientation as to their roles and responsibilities while serving. Particularly important to stress is each board member's fiduciary responsibility which sometimes is either misunderstood or overlooked entirely. An informal setting provides an environment good for team building and for development of shared goals. A chamber

that has no board retreat tends to cause some board members to feel as though they are not being provided the opportunity to be active participants in decision making and policy making for the organization.

After a certain level of professionalism has been achieved, accreditation by the US Chamber is the next logical step. Accreditation measures the professionalism of the organization with ratings from one to five stars, and is a thorough internal organizational review. It can be time-consuming, but it is well worth the effort. I have worked at a 5-Star chamber and at chambers without accreditation. Details of how to go about applying can be found on the US Chamber's website.

One requirement for accreditation is term limits for board members. Also at the bottom of the list featured on the US Chamber website is this statement: “if you answered ‘no’ to any item on the list, you are not ready for accreditation.” There is nothing on this list that most chambers are not already doing. It is usually only a matter of taking the time to put everything together and forming a committee to assist in the application. It is well worth the effort.

I am always available to answer any questions and to help with resources to achieve your goals. Contact me at pdanabeach@gmail.com or by cell phone at 949-370-6520.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUSINESSES OF THE MONTH: 4th QUARTER, 2013

Let us know about your Businesses of the Month for January, February & March, 2014. E-mail submissions@chamberreview.org today!

October

-Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce, Rexburg, Idaho: HB Boys, L.C. A management company with Burger King restaurants throughout Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, and Oregon, HB Boys, L.C. opened their Rexburg location in 1997. Two years later, they opened a Chevron station, and most recently, a Subway was opened October, 2012. HB Boys, L.C. is proud to be a member of the Rexburg community and looks forward to continued service for years to come.

-Wells County Chamber of Commerce, Bluffton, Indiana: Snug Cafe. Originally opened in 1927, The Snug Cafe was recently purchased by Shaun Imbody and Chef Hector Minon. Serving breakfast and lunch seven days a week, The Snug Cafe is a great place to enjoy home cooking and a friendly chat. "Having the support from the citizens of Wells County makes our business what it is today. I am very happy to be Business of the Month and this is such an honor," says Minon.

-Lynden Chamber of Commerce, Lynden, Washington: Dutch Mother's Restaurant. "Owned by Lynden-ites Dave and Debbie Black, Dutch Mothers Restaurant is the kind of place that long time locals as well as visitors just passing

through Lynden have come to find the best of two worlds coming together in a parade for the palate! Located right in the heart of Lynden, you can visit the Blacks and their fine staff at 405 Front Street, Lynden."

-Ventura Chamber of Commerce, Ventura, California: Tolman and Wiker Insurance Services. "Tolman and Wiker Insurance Services, LLC is located in beautiful Downtown Ventura and is one of the largest, privately-held independent insurance brokerages in California, and is ranked among the top 100 insurance brokerages in the country. The company was founded in 1923 in Ventura by Cary E. Tolman; Robert Wiker joined the company in 1945 and thus the partnership of Tolman and Wiker was born."

-Seville Area Chamber of Commerce, Seville, Ohio: Medina County Board of Developmental Disabilities. "We are best known for the excellent services we provide nearly 1100 adults and children in Medina County with mental retardation or developmental disabilities. Much of what we do goes beyond the walls of our facilities, we encourage individuals to live, learn, work, contribute, and socialize in their own communities."

November

-Mobile Area Chamber of

Commerce, Mobile, Alabama: Beaufort Engineering Services. "BES made green and sustainable design and construction a core part of our business several years ago simply because it was the right thing to do..."

We have a committed goal of designing all projects to be sustainable, environmentally friendly, and to meet energy efficiency standards. We want to be innovators in reducing energy use and eliminating waste from the construction process," William Walter Bolton, President and CEO of BES.

-Perry Area Chamber of Commerce, Perry, Georgia: Walker-Rhodes Tractor Co. "Walker-Rhodes Tractor Company is an agricultural and industrial equipment supply company 100 miles South of Atlanta, Georgia off of Interstate 75. We've been serving the Middle Georgia area since 1938 and look forward to serving you. Our primary areas of responsibility include the following markets: Row Crop, Industrial, Lawn and Garden, Orchard and Grove, Livestock, and Hay and Forage."

-Whitehouse Chamber of Commerce, Whitehouse, Texas: Kay Taylor, Farmer's Insurance. "Kay Taylor and her staff were recognized by the Whitehouse Chamber of Commerce as Business of the Month for November. Kay Taylor Farmer's Insurance of-

fers a wide range of insurance coverages to meet every need. Some examples include Auto, Home, Life, Recreational Vehicles, and Business. You can find them at www.farmer's.com"

-Plattsburg Chamber of Commerce, Plattsburg, Missouri: Downey House. Vacant houses turn into nightly rentals thanks to Jeff and Reyeann Longwell, owners of the Downey House. Night rentals are like bed and breakfasts, expect you rent out the entire home and no meals are provided. After a slow start, the Downey House has become one of the most popular places to stay in Plattsburg. Thanks to that success, the Longwells have opened a second night rental, The Farm House.

-Spanish Fork/Salem Area Chamber of Commerce, Spanish Fork, Utah: Back on Track Family Chiropractic. "Congratulations to Dr. David Baggaley DC and his family at Back on Track Family Chiropractic November's Business of the Month. Dr. David Baggaley is a chiropractor serving Spanish Fork and the surrounding communities. He and his wife Rebecca are actively involved with the Chamber of Commerce and Rebecca serves on the board for Women in Business South Utah County."

-Greater Rostraver Chamber

of Commerce, Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania: McShane Florist and Greenhouse. "McShane Florist & Greenhouse proudly serves the area and is committed to offering only the finest floral arrangements and gifts, backed by service that is friendly and prompt. McShane Florist and Greenhouse offers fresh cut flowers, funeral, wedding, prom and special occasion arrangements, gift items, candles, potted plants and seasonal flowers."

December

-Christian County Chamber of Commerce, Hopkinsville, Kentucky: Comcast Spotlight. "The mission of Comcast Spotlight, in partnership with Time-Warner Cable, is to make advertising solutions simple. Our customers benefit with targeted, local advertising strategies that utilize the most popular television networks like ESPN, HGTV, and The History Channel along with websites like FoxNews.com. Comcast Spotlight delivers your advertising, made simple."

-Greater Palm Bay Chamber of Commerce, Palm Bay, Florida: Unity Center of Palm Bay. "A non-profit organization, Palm Bay Unity Center was created with community in mind. We have two different venues that can be used for a variety of events. Call (321) 216-6914 today to schedule your tour. Palm Bay Unity Center is your local

event and community complex!

-Logan County Area Chamber of Commerce, Bellefontaine, Ohio: Mobile Instrument Service & Repair. "Mobile Instruments has grown into an innovative set of Mobile Service Labs, in a four building campus, dedicated to handling the most extensive repair. From the beginning, the Reed family set out to make Mobile Instrument a different kind of company. Today, they have grown to over 175 OnSite Service Representatives with customers in 49 states."

-Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, Lafayette, Indiana: Lafayette Brewing Co. "Experiencing Lafayette Brewing Co. means sampling handcrafted ales brewed on-site in Old World tradition; tasting fare that ranges from pesto melts to fresh wraps, bison burgers, pulled pork, beer-b-que beans, Cajun fries and more; enjoying the ambiance only a restored historic building can provide; and, often, appreciating live music or comedy shows."

-Plainfield Chamber of Commerce, Plainfield, Indiana: John Hall Construction. "John Hall Construction has been in business since 1968 and has been located in Plainfield since the beginning. John Hall Construction is in the site development, excavation, athletic field construction/maintenance, and snow removal business in Central Indiana. The business's employees have been with the company on average of 18 years each."

1st QUARTER 2014 UPCOMING EVENTS:

If you have important events coming up in April, May & June of 2014, e-mail submissions@chamberreview.org to submit them for our next issue!

January

-Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce, Sacramento, California: The BIG Event, Entrepreneurial Spirit (Jan 9). "Hear from six amazing speakers who will share their stories of struggle, success, and their strategies for getting through both. You're guaranteed to walk away with inspiration and ideas to improve your life and business. Great speakers, great energy, and all for a great cause. Seating is limited! Tickets start at \$10, visit sacbigevent.com"

-Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce, Baraboo, Wisconsin: Baraboo River Runners 4th Annual Ride-In and Landowner Appreciation (Jan 18). "All you can eat chili and pizza buffet along with music, raffles and door prizes. Trailer Kings will begin performing at 6:30 pm on the mainstage! Everyone is welcome to attend; please join us for this evening of food, fun, and friends! Come by car, truck, sled, or foot! Visit www.barabooverrunners.com for more information."

-Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce, Ellensburg, Washington: 10th Annual WinterHop BrewFest. "Come and join in the 10th annual WinterHop BrewFest on Saturday January 18. Over twenty of the Northwest's finest micro breweries will be on hand. Venues are scattered throughout downtown Ellensburg. Tickets go on sale the first business day of December and only 1500 tickets will be sold."

-Key West Chamber of Commerce, Key West, Florida: Quantum Key West Race 2014 (Jan 19-24). "This exciting challenge features world-class competition and yachting teams from more than twelve countries and 24 American states. More than 100 racing yachts compete for class championships in this international regatta. Fans can book seats on spectator boats or from land at Key West's Atlantic-front restaurants, resorts, and beaches. Contact: 781-639-9545 or email kwinfo@premiere-racing.com"

-Sauk Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce, Sauk City, Wisconsin: Chamber "Super" Bowl 2014 (Jan 31). "Teams of four, Scottish Doubles (three games). Partner one rolls first ball, partner two rolls second ball (two groups of two per lane); second game people reverse roles, third game either combination. The Championship Team hosts the traveling trophy for the next year! Lowest score from the night hosts the ball and chain! \$15/\$25, includes two free drinks and food!"

February

-Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce, Talkeetna, Alaska: Kaffeeklatsch (Feb 2). "Sprichst Du deutsch? Let's speak German... just for fun! Locals, tourists, students...don't be shy. Simply show up at the Talkeetna Roadhouse 3pm the first Sunday of the month and have some "klatsch" with some coffee or tea. Fragen? Questions? Call Debbie, 733-2553."

tions? Call Debbie, 733-2553."

-Navarre Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, Navarre, Florida: Beatles Invade Navarre (Feb 8, 7-11pm). "Celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Beatles Invasion of America. Enjoy the music of Not Quite Fab, the highly sought after Beatles Tribute Band, as they rock us through the decades with the sounds of the Fab Four. Wear your favorite 60's attire, there will be a contest for best costume. Visit www.incnavarrenow.com for more details."

-Petoskey Regional Chamber of Commerce, Petoskey, Michigan: Winter Wildlife Adventure (Feb 8). "Greenwood Sanctuary is a privately-owned property near Wolverine, protected with a conservation easement held by LTC. Greenwood welcomes the public to enjoy and explore this almost 1,400-acre property for this special event. Groomed trails will offer a chance to find respite in the beauty of this winter wildlife haven."

-Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, Raleigh, North Carolina: Evening of Champions 2014. Feb 12 at 5:15, this event features a cocktail reception, dinner, and the awards program featuring keynote speaker, Michael Vick. You won't want to miss this event as Vick tells his story of triumph, struggles, and redemption. Bring your camera! Tickets are \$60 for The Greater Raleigh Sports Council members and \$75 for non-members.

-Aspen Chamber of Commerce, Aspen, Colorado: Aspen Laff Festival (Feb 20-22). "After thirteen years as the featured site for the HBO/U.S. Comedy Arts Festival, and three years as the co-producer and home of the Aspen Rooftop Comedy Festival, the Wheeler is now stepping up to present its own unique four-day comedy experience. Come ski all day and laugh all night as we present the most brilliant new voices in comedy in a variety of stand-up and improv events at the Wheeler!"

-Alliance Area Chamber of Commerce, Alliance, Ohio: Steppin' Out in Style with a Smile Fashion Show. "Join us on Saturday February 22 at the YWCA of Alliance for a fun-filled morning of fashion, shopping, scrumptious finger foods, music, and delightful twists all in support of the YWCA Women's Career Clothing Closet. The closet distributed over 6,000 pieces of clothing for work last year to Alliance women. Tickets for the event are \$20.00 per person plus a donation of a gently used item suitable for work."

-Charlevoix Area Chamber of Commerce, Charlevoix, Michigan: Revolution Bike in Charlevoix will host the 2nd Annual Dogman Challenge Fat Bike Race at Mt. McSauba on Saturday, February 22. The Dogman Challenge is a 2 hour race that will begin with a mass start at noon. The course is a fast and challenging 2 mile loop through the single track trails of Mt Mc-

Saubu Recreation Area and North Point Nature Preserve."

March

-Steamboat Springs Chamber of Commerce, Steamboat Springs, Colorado: Mardi Gras Masquerade Ball (Mar 1). "Yampa Valley Autism Program's 6th annual Mardi Gras Ball benefiting children and their families with autism and other developmental disabilities." Join us for food, drinks, fun, and dancing as we raise money for the Yampa Valley Autism Program. Come out for a great cause!

-Cayucos Chamber of Commerce, Cayucos, California: Cayucos Sea Glass Festival (Mar 8-9). "Calling all sea glass enthusiasts, sea glass craftspeople and sea glass jewelers and artists! Come join us in beautiful Cayucos for our beach side Sea Glass Festival. More information can be found at www.cayucosseaglass.com or by contacting us at cayucosseaglass@gmail.com."

-Gallatin Chamber of Commerce, Gallatin, Tennessee: The Gallatin 5k Shamrock Run and 1 Mile "Leprechaun Leap" Family Fun Run/Walk (Mar 15). "Proceeds will be used to fund innovative educational programs for students K-12 in the City of Gallatin. Registration opens at 6:30 am, Gallatin High School Football Field. 1 mile fun run/walk is not timed and starts at 7:00 am; 5K race begins at 7:30 am. Race will be chip timed and run on asphalt through downtown Gallatin."

-Columbus Chamber of Com-

merce, Columbus, Ohio: WELD 2014 Keynote Speaker Susan Packard (Mar 20). "WELD is excited to feature our March keynote speaker, Susan Packard, as she shares her insights on The Leader Within: Growing Your Leadership Team. A founding visionary network executive behind CNBC, HGTV, Food Network, and other popular cable channels, Susan Packard's approach to leadership and innovation has helped her build and lead extraordinary organizations that both consumers and employees can get behind."

-Lockhart Chamber of Commerce, Lockhart, Texas: Tolbert Texas State Chili Cook-Off (Mar 21-22). "Admission is FREE both days with family fun, food and drink vendors, entertainment, and a small carnival for the kids. Prizes are awarded to winners in chili, chicken, brisket, ribs, beans, salsa, for showmanship, Bloody Mary, and Margarita categories. The top three chili winners qualify to cook "Behind the Store" in the International Terlingua Cook-off in Terlingua, Texas held in November."

-New Ulm Chamber of Commerce, New Ulm, Minnesota: Prairie Peacemakers 2014 Quilt Show (Mar 21-22). Quilters! Come and join the New Ulm Chamber and Prairie Peacemakers for their Quilt Show! "Vendors, door prizes, demonstrations, opportunity quilt, lectures and book signing by Judy Martin, nationally known quilter and author. Refreshments and lunch available."

The New Motto: Access, Resources, and Solutions to Members



Cathi Hight
Contributing Writer

For as long as I can remember, the message to members was “get involved, get results.” This implied that if members wanted to gain benefits from us, they had to come to events, belong to a committee, or be active in grassroots advocacy initiatives to drive favorable business legislation. Inadvertently, this message also told members that if they couldn’t get “involved” in the face-to-face opportunities we provide, they weren’t likely to reap the benefits they anticipated.

I agree that when members actively and consistently engage in networking and committee initiatives, they are more apt to know what’s going on and can develop deeper relationships with other members. It’s the same recipe for what it takes to make social media initiatives effective. It doesn’t matter how many Facebook friends, LinkedIn connections or Twitter followers one has—if you’re not reading, sharing, or contributing, you can be out of the loop and lose touch and favoritism pretty quickly.

Turn Non-Members Into Members

Frank J. Kenny
Contributing Writer

Should a chamber use its social media reach to promote and engage non-members? Or are the benefits of the chamber’s social media assets to be used strictly for members only? I hear this question all the time.

Think of it this way: running a chamber is, in many ways, like running any other small business.

For example, you continually need new customers (members) because current customers move away and otherwise leave your ranks. If you fail to replace your current customer base, you are in big trouble because the economic foundation of your organization is crumbling (while the overhead probably isn’t).

So, where are those new members supposed to come from?

For decades, a chamber could expect new members to simply walk in the door. A new business would start up in town and one of the first things that new business would do, more likely than not, is join the local chamber.

You could expect to lose three members to attrition and yet three new members, give or take, would walk in the door.

As we have been hearing for years, those days of members just walking in the door are either over or coming to an end. Baby Boomers were joiners, plain and simple. They joined the Rotary, the Lions, and they joined the chamber.

I am not going to go deep

But membership in a professional or trade association isn’t another social media venue. People have so many choices today to be profiled, get involved, collect information, and network with others. Time poverty prevents so many members from attending programs and events that are either “one-offs” or offered on days/times when they can’t attend. And managing so many different memberships can be time-consuming and unproductive.

We also have to realize that individuals and organizations belong to associations for different reasons. Some join because of us—why we exist, how we do it, and what we get done. Many others join because it’s more about them—what they want to communicate to the community about their brand, what needs or interests they have to address, and what they can get from us. The new motto we’re rallying around is focused on: Access, Resources, Solutions, and realizing that the interests/needs the motto communicates can mean different things to different groups.

Our days of selling the same benefits to all prospects and members are behind us. The bottom line is that one size fits no one. We must develop different value propositions to communicate and serve a diverse membership base. That starts with an understanding of the various segments of your audience (both members and prospects), what’s important to them, and how these diverse needs are met through the association. We must develop different value proposi-

tions to communicate and serve a diverse membership base.

In our webinar, *How to Appeal to the 4 Types of Members*, we discussed the most common interests and needs of our audience. This chart reflects a high level description of the most common ones.

Some of our audience is very interested in overall issues that impact most community businesses and they value that we take on those larger issues through our advocacy initiatives. Most businesses are concerned about the local economy and want us to take an active role in driving the key ingredients that breed economic success. Small businesses are seeking tools and resources to help them grow while others prefer a home grown method of face-to-face networking.

The Member Profile Matrix illustrates how these different interests and needs create four different types of members who make up our membership base. This Matrix could be used to evaluate the benefits we offer for each type, identify service gaps, and even help us develop a tiered benefits model that appeals to all four types.

It’s a good time to re-evaluate who you serve, how you serve them, and what changes to make to position your Chamber for success in 2014 and beyond. Leverage the new motto: Access, Resources, Solutions, and consider what that means to each type of the member.

Cathi Hight is president of Hight Performance Group and provides realignment strategies that help associations of all sizes manage constant change, deliver benefits that members value, leverage volunteer and staff resources efficiently, and effectively communicate the value of membership. Contact Cathi at (720) 304-0747 or e-mail: cathi@hightperformance.com.

member to post on their Facebook page, for example. They certainly wouldn’t use the social media reach of the chamber to promote a non-member. For them, it is strictly *pay to play*.

I hope you see how shortsighted that is. You are losing members to attrition. The new generations aren’t joiners, per say. You can’t run enough ads (you don’t have the budget) and “smiling and dialing” is no longer effective.

How do you get new prospects into your funnel in a cost-effective manner? Social media—by using your platforms for the benefits of the entire business community, not just current members.

Throw some social media love at non-members from time to time. That will get you on their radar. That will create interest. That will create a desire for more attention. That puts them into your funnel and that will allow the cold-call to become a warm-call because they are aware of you (and know, like, and trust you and the chamber). As Zig Ziglar said, “If you go looking for a friend, you’re going to find they’re scarce. If you go out to be a friend, you’ll find them everywhere.”

It is the same with putting people into the top of your funnel. Don’t withhold your favors until they are members. **Give favors and they will become members.**

How do you do this in a way that won’t bother current members? First, most members couldn’t care less one way or another. But if you are worried about getting criticized for reaching out to non-

If You Loved Me, You’d Buy Me a Barbie Doll!



Glenn Shepard
Contributing Writer

The cardinal rule of behavioral modification is to reward the good behavior and punish the bad. Simple as that sounds, we sometimes get it backwards. Two places where this often happens are in management and parenting.

Once while at a Toys-R-Us in Columbus, Georgia, I saw a woman who looked to be in her late twenties, with her daughter, who looked to be about six. The little girl had the biggest blue eyes I’d ever seen, and it quickly became apparent that she knew how to use them to get what she wanted.

This particular day, she wanted a Barbie Doll. She took the Barbie off the shelf, tilted her head to the side, and flashed those baby blues. In her most innocent, angelic voice, she said, “Mommy, I want this Barbie Doll.” Her mother said, “No. It’s not your birthday and it’s not Christmas. Put it back and if you’re good girl, maybe Santa will bring it for you this year.” When the charm failed, she decided to try negotiating with, “Mommy, I really, really, really want this Barbie Doll. If you’ll buy it for me now, it can

be my Christmas present and my birthday present this year.” Her mother responded, “What part of no don’t you understand? I said put it back!” When the negotiating failed, the little girl decided to try manipulation. She whined, “If you loved me, you’d buy me the Barbie doll!” Mom responded, “I love you so much that I’m going to take my belt off and show you how much I love you.” When the manipulation failed, the little girl pulled out the sure fire winner for any child, which is of course, the temper tantrum. She cried, stomped her feet, and yelled, “Moooooommy, you don’t love me anymore! You don’t like little girls. If I was a boy, you’d buy me a G.I. Joe. You’re just a mean mommy!”

Her voice was so piercing you could almost hear dogs howling outside. People in the mall were stopping to see what was causing all the ruckus in the store. Shoppers in the store came over to see what see what “Mean Mommy” was doing to her innocent little angel. In her moment of embarrassment, the mother caved. She grabbed the Barbie doll, shoved it in the little girl’s hands and said, “Here! Take the stupid thing and shut up!” Mom just taught her daughter the worse lesson she could teach her, which is that if she whines enough; she’ll get what she wants. Do you know what’s going to happen to that little girl twenty years from now? She’s going to grow up and come to work for you! Perhaps she’s already there, and now it’s your job to teach her the lesson her mother didn’t.

As easy as it is to second guess this woman’s parenting

skills, managers make similar mistakes with employees. Imagine that you gave a problem employee a verbal and a written warning. You then gave him a three day unpaid suspension. This was supposed to be a punishment, but he came back with a suntan. He didn’t get punished, he got a vacation. What makes it even more asinine is when we suspend employees for absenteeism.

There must rewards for good behavior and good performance, but there must also be consequences for bad behavior and poor performance. This is more than a management technique; it’s basic behavioral psychology.

Glenn Shepard is a motivational speaker nationally recognized as a leader in fighting the declining American work ethic. He’s the bestselling author of six books, including “How to Manage Problem Employees”, and over 400 published articles. His company provides accredited seminars at no cost to chambers. For more Free resources, go to www.glenshepard.com.

**WANT TO RECEIVE NCR EVERY QUARTER?
BECOME A SUBSCRIBER!**

HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN ARTICLE?

**E-MAIL:
INFO@CHAMBERREVIEW.ORG**

**LEAVE A MESSAGE:
1-877-316-4311**

Mobile Websites

(Continued from Page 1)

tricky and requires thoughtful design and planning. Additionally the proliferation of new devices continues. Designers must consider and test different layouts and user experiences for multiple screen sizes ranging from smartphones to tablets to desktops. According to Facebook, 7000 different device types are used to access the site daily.

Sometimes there can be slower load times with RWD. Nonetheless end users expect the same load speed on their smartphone as on their desktop—which is sub two seconds.

The slower performance can have several causes: inexperienced designers who develop heavy, large pages with too much complexity, poor network connectivity and underpowered devices. Slow-loading pages matters deeply to end users with some 50 percent who won’t return to your site if they encounter an underwhelming experience.

Determining Your Approach

Understanding the behavior of your site visitors is critical to determining which approach you may want to undertake. The latest research from Google states that “90% of people move between devices to accomplish a goal, whether that’s on smartphones, PCs, tablets, or TV.” The three most common ways users move between devices are:

- To search again on a second device
- To directly navigate to a destination site
- To send themselves a link via

email to remind them to click the link later

Perhaps the best experience for your users might be to enable link integrity across all devices via a responsive design. This approach ensures that the web links work as users expect. They work in emails on smartphones; in search engines listings and on tablets; in social media links on laptops; and on all devices. However, if you have users who are trying to make complicated purchasing decisions from your site, many have found mobile sites easier to create and use rather than trying to create the same functionality in a responsive design format.

Recommendations and SEO Considerations

Google has gone as far as stating that responsive design is a best practice. This is likely because it’s far easier for Google to crawl and index one site versus multiple versions of the same site. As a result, there is an SEO payoff for implementing RWD.

Your first step, of course, is to accommodate mobile visitors. There are any number of resources to help you decide how best to proceed. At MicroNet, we’ve just completed redesigning a number of our established layouts as responsive designs and have learned a great deal during the conversion process. As always, we’d be happy to review your site and offer suggestions to make it successful for you and your mobile visitors. Scott Juranek is the CEO of MicroNet, Inc., providers of membership management software and website solutions for over 1300 Chambers of Commerce and associations. His background is in software development and he is passionate about using technology to make business easier. Scott.Juranek@micronetonline.com.

Defaulting to a “Yes” Attitude

Carly Morgan
Staff Writer

Guy Kawasaki is a marketing guru who spent the earlier part of his career making customers fall in love with Apple products. He's the father of "evangelism marketing"—a form of word of mouth marketing that turns costumers into a company's strongest advocates—and has written several books on the topic. Kawasaki's marketing premise rests on the principle of winning customers over not with gimmicks or flashy advertisements, but with hard work and a vested interest in each individual customer. This is Part One.

Walk into an Apple store with a problem, and if they can fix it for free, they will. When my laptop charger mysteriously bit the dust in the middle of finals week during my senior year of college, Apple replaced it. For



Guy Kawasaki Credit: BenSpark

free. When I first installed Final Cut Pro, I had no idea how to use it. So I called the Apple store and set up an hour-long tutoring session with a store employ-

ee. For free. Practices like these aren't exactly commonplace, but maybe they should be. Kawasaki has spent the latter part of his career teaching people about the marketing principles he employed while working at Apple. Part of his approach to developing a solid marketing strategy is "defaulting to a 'yes' attitude." This may sound like a great way to land yourself in some unpleasant situations—defaulting to "yes" seems like it could leave you agreeing to some pretty miserable things. But Kawasaki maintains that, generally speaking, people won't ask you to do unreasonable things. And if they do, then they're probably not worth trying to impress anyway. (That's the sort of thing

my aunt would call "bad ju-ju." You don't want to surround yourself with bad ju-ju.) But with that in mind, if someone—a board member, a business

owner, a community resident, you name it—asks something of you or your chamber, the answer should always be: "Yes." One reason for this is that it might be the best means of netting at anyone's disposal. If someone thanks you for doing him a favor, your response can be, "I know you'd do the same for me." Kawasaki cites this as an opportunity for building reciprocity; doing something for someone else gives them an opportunity to pay you back, and that's not a bad thing. If you help someone out of a bind, they really should be willing to do the same for you. Consider the Final Cut Pro example again: after the store employee taught me how to use the software, I obviously couldn't offer to do the exact same thing for him. I did, however, return the favor in a different way: when Apple released Final Cut Pro X in 2011, you know what I did? I bought that software, too. Reciprocity can manifest itself in different ways, but it's always a part of building any sort of mutually beneficial relationship. Kawasaki also claims that defaulting to a "yes" attitude builds trustworthiness, as it shows a willingness to roll up your sleeves and do some of the dirty work yourself. An important part of building this sort of trustworthiness is never asking anyone (especially someone over whom you have any amount of authority) to do something that you would not be willing to do yourself. My dad oversees several branches

of a bathroom remodeling company. He's a businessman, at the end of the day. But if a customer has a problem with a product and there isn't an installer available to fix it, my dad grabs a tool belt and a hard hat, drives to the home, and fixes the problem himself. His willingness to do this betters his relationship not just with his customers, but with his employees as well. Defaulting to a "yes" attitude is about more than immediate reciprocation; we do things for other people not only so we can call in a favor down the road, but because there are few things, if any, more crucial to the success of your chamber than the relationships you build. Of course, adopting this strategy may seem like a dangerous thing to do, so just keep in mind that it's okay to have limits. Everyone has them. And should anyone ever ask anything unreasonable of you, then by all means: tell them to forget about it. But if your city asks you to participate in an event that's unfamiliar to you, jump in with both feet. If a board member needs a chamber presence at his or her next company meeting, don't send your assistant; attend the meeting yourself. If a member comes to you asking for an extension on their dues, let it slide. Being willing to step out of your comfort zone, to lend a hand whenever asked, allows you to build the type of relationships within your community that won't be forgotten.

are responsible for the organization, giving away one's authority to a person who is less prepared than the director is impractical. Organizations are rethinking the wisdom of seating persons at the table that don't have the knowledge or did not participate in orientation. **Orientation is Optional.** Yearly orientation should be mandatory for all directors. Board training can be accomplished in as little as two hours; a small investment of time for a year of effective leadership. **Agenda Format.** Many agendas are filled with reports by officers, staff, and committees. Review the resulting minutes and you may find no significant motions advancing the mission and goals. It is OK to redesign the board agenda—moving reports to a consent agenda and focusing on items that will advance the mission and goals. Include the mission statement at the bottom of every agenda. **Silence Is Not Golden.** Some directors are silent because they don't understand the process or topics. Board members should come prepared to discuss issues, offer solutions, and be ready to vote. If you can hear a pin drop in the boardroom there is a problem. **Size Matters.** The average board runs about sixteen persons. Larger boards tend to delegate authority to a smaller executive committee. The trend is downsizing, although there is no correlation between board size and good governance. In 2008 the IRS opined, "...very large boards may have a more difficult time getting down to business and making decisions." Every board intends to produce significant results. Myths and poor practices can impede this progress. Bob Harris, CAE, offers free governance tips and templates at www.nonprofitcenter.com. He offers a self-paced governance review at the website.

Fear Is The Enemy Of Logic. And Social Media.

Carly Morgan
Staff Writer

In the Digital Era, one of the only things moving faster than Usain Bolt is the information coursing through cyberspace, and new movers, prospective community members, and consumers are taking full advantage of that. Online reviews, Chamber websites, social networking pages—modern consumers are turning to these resources to help guide them through their decision-making processes. A strong, well-managed online presence affords your Chamber the opportunity to put its best foot forward in the arena where consumers are most often turning for information. Also, active engagement with social media allows your Chamber and its member businesses to engage in the ever-coveted "two-way dialogue" between business and consumer, rather than the one-sided bombardment in which outbound marketing methods (i.e., television commercials, billboards, and magazine ads) so often result.

Sometimes, though, cultivating and refining an online presence can seem like a daunting task. It takes time and energy that some organizations may feel they simply cannot spare. It also requires a willingness to commit long-term, as you almost certainly will not see results overnight. Engaging in social media use may also feel like airing all of your dirty laundry for all the world to see, and you may find yourself wondering, "Do I really want all of this exposure?" So, let's address one potential concern at a time.

Yes, you may need to up the manpower and/or funding in your marketing department. But this should not be looked at as simply pouring funds down some bottomless money drain; it's an investment, and a really solid one at that. Remember when Francis Bacon said, "Knowledge is power"? I don't either, because it was at least 400 years ago, but temporality aside: he was definitely onto something. The more information you can provide to community members, the more empowered they will feel to act as brand or community ambassadors. Word of mouth marketing is no joke, especially now that it's gone digital. "Tell your friends and neighbors" has now evolved into, "Like our Facebook post and re-tweet this photo." Consumers have a broader reach than ever before, and word of mouth marketing is free. Money spent on online endeavors now will mean marketing dollars saved in the future as your consumers do your advertising for you.

If your resource-related concerns are rooted in not having anyone on staff who seems suited to undertaking the project in full, consider outsourcing components of it. NEXT! Ad Agency, a division of CGI Communications, Inc., can help you build, enhance, and/or maintain your Chamber's online presence. This will ensure that your Chamber's best self is represented in the online community, and that it remains as visible as possible through tools such as search engine optimization, or SEO. But if the prospect of having to commit long-term deter-

your organization, you're not alone. It's an all-too-common misconception that just simply having the right technology in place will yield the desired results. However, consider social media use the same way one might consider Chamber membership: if your members' involvement with your Chamber starts and ends with signing up, paying their annual dues, and never stepping foot in any sort of Chamber-sponsored event or meeting, their membership probably won't mean a whole lot. The same goes for an online presence and social media use. Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and the like don't have any inherent value; it's your responsibility to breathe some life into them. Nothing about your Chamber happened overnight, right? It required consistent hard-work and effort to build and establish. There are huge results to be reaped from a strong online presence, but it's going to require patience and perseverance through the earliest stages, when your efforts may seem to be getting you nowhere.

Finally, the fear of overexposure. This seems like the most common deterrent to, say, joining Facebook, or starting a blog for your Chamber. Here's the thing: as awesome as it would be to have your Chamber run by robots, your Chamber is (probably) not run by robots. Use an online marketing campaign to show off the human side off your organization. Blog about funny office mishaps (as long as the mishap in question is innocuous enough for public consumption). Invite employees and consumers alike to participate in a Twitter-based, slogan-writing competition. Post a short video tour of your workplace on YouTube and share it on Facebook. Running any business or organization effectively requires, at the most basic level, a great product and a hard-working staff. With those two things in place, what you may have once thought of as "overexposure" starts to better resemble "transparency," and consumers like that.

Marketing's digital evolution is well underway, and as a result, the only way to get in on the conversation that other businesses and Chambers are already having with consumers is to build an online presence. The benefits will almost always outweigh any perceived drawbacks.

Challenges in the Boardroom

Bob Harris, CAE
Contributing Writer

In boardrooms across America volunteers are eager to do a good job in their governance roles. But too often, myths and misguided practices are major challenges to a high performing board.

Limited Savings: Myth. "As a nonprofit organization we cannot have savings." There are not restrictions on exempt organizations' savings. Similarly, nothing states that activities cannot generate excess revenue. If significant savings exist there should be a reason for the reserves that aligns with the statement of purpose.

Meeting Minutes are Public: Another myth. "We must comply with open records laws, freedom of information requests, and allow guests to attend our meetings." There is little basis for this statement. Generally, the only public records are three IRS documents (Form 990, Form 1023 or 1024, and the Letter of Determination). State corporate law may require other records to be available to members, directors, etc. Meeting minutes record board actions and protect the organization—they are not a newsletter for members.

Won't Have to Do Anything. "The nominating committee told me I won't have to do anything—and excused absences would be OK." The nominating committee was wrong. Each director is expected to participate in governance. Board members have fiduciary duties to advance and protect the organization. Though the bylaws may state that an absence will be excused, stakeholders and members expect directors to fulfill their duties (duty of care).

Misdirected Loyalty. Some organizations select directors from a chapter or industry segment. Mistakenly, those directors think they represent the sector from where they came. To be clear, once installed they represent the interests of the "parent" organization and give up their loyalty to the originating group (other than to communicate interests). More than that could result in a conflict of interest.

Management is Easier than Governance. Though many directors have management skills—it is not their job. The staff is responsible for management. Board governance focuses on policy development, strategic direction, and fiduciary duties. Managing or evaluating members of the staff is not governance.

Committee Work at the Board Table. Committees are charged with tasks. Directors must respect the work of committees and not do the committee's work at the board

table. If a committee has not produced satisfactory results, clarify the charge and send it back for further work.

Read to Lead. Leadership requires knowledge. Directors must be conversant in the governing documents (articles of incorporation, bylaws, policies, strategic plan, budget, and purpose statement). Compliance with the documents supports the doctrines of duty of obedience and voluntary immunity.

No Roadmap. A strategic plan should frame nearly all discussions at meetings. When directors have new ideas, check them against the strategic plan to see if they "fit"—or will something need to be dropped from the plan in order to take on a new project? Keep the strategic plan on the board table.

Alternates and Proxies. Some organizations allow for alternate directors and proxies. Because the elected directors



Credit: Bob Harris, CAE

HOW ARE WE DOING?

WE WANT FEEDBACK FROM YOU!

TIPS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS, COMMENTS?

E-MAIL INFO@CHAMBERREVIEW.ORG AND TELL US HOW YOU FEEL.

OR, CALL AND LEAVE US A MESSAGE AT 1-877-316-4311 TODAY!