

Board Retreats

Oh No!!

Not Again!!

Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Executives
Board Retreats
Presented by Ken Warner, President
Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
MCCE Annual Meeting – Chaska – January 21 , 2010

WHY:

- To ensure the Chamber is meeting the needs of its members
- New Leadership Annually
- Gives the organization Direction/Focus
- Long range planning
- Short term objectives
- Believe it or not – to have fun and to network

WHO:

- Staff – Observers vs. Participants
- Current, outgoing, incoming Board members
- Others, if appropriate for the goal of the session, but not regularly included:
* Committee Chairs *Community Representatives * City/County/School (maybe)

WHERE:

- Large enough to accommodate full group session
- In town or out of town – Isolation will enhance concentration
- Privacy
- Breakout sessions available
- Food service
- Useable wall space
- Easily located, accessible and affordable

WHEN:

- Plan at least three months in advance
- Avoid holidays, fishing, craft shows and hunting openers
- Before everyone can get “caught up” in the own work routine
- Long enough to complete the agenda – usually a full day
- No cell phones

FACILITATOR:

- Should you do your own (Pros and Cons)
Chamber Executive vs. Professional Facilitator vs. Board Chair
- Guide the process – not supply the answers
- Provides information from outside sources which may be helpful
- Fees or expenses – depends on facilitator
- Assist in the summary
- Don't forget to send a thank you

ROLE OF THE STAFF:

- Meet with facilitator to determine agenda
- Serve as a recorder
- Professional input
- Resource person

ROLE OF THE BOARD:

- Chair or designated Board member may meet with President and facilitator to determine agenda for the session
- Commit to the session (½ day or full day)
- Bring in business and community experience
- Participate
- Commitment to the plan
- Follow up
- Remember, Boards can flip flop from year to year without any consistency. Leadership is always changing...the consistency in the process is **YOU**

SUPPLIES:

- Overhead/Screen
- Flip Chart
- Tape
- Markers
- Name Tents (Especially for outside facilitator)

POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR RETREATS:

- Review business plan and mission statement and determine if anything should change
- Review committee structure
- Discuss trends (external and internal) which affect the Chamber
- Address the image of the Chamber within the community
- Clarify where the organization is headed in the long run
- Problem solving
- Identify strengths and weaknesses
- Discuss survey results if you do survey
- Needs assessment
- Team Building
- Budget(s)
- Significant Issues
- Membership and Membership Retention (Trends...merged vs. dropped)
- Volunteer Participation
- Benchmarking ideas

DESIRED RESULTS:

Make sure your participants know:

- Outcomes to be achieved

- Boundaries
- Process to be used
- Time commitment and deadlines
- What the product will look like and who will do it

SUGGESTED DO'S AND DON'TS

DO

- Don't over program
- Allow ample time for discussion
- Hold an ice breaker
- Different agenda each year
- Have a budget for retreat. Determine who pays for what.
- Advance materials to participants
- Know you chairpersons "hidden agenda"
- Give a board bio to facilitator
- Do YOUR homework
- Recognize accomplishments
- Develop and theme for the retreat
- HAVE FUN

DON'TS

- **Don't** over program
- **Don't** procrastinate
- **Don't** contact facilitator less than one month before retreat
- **Don't** dominate your own retreat
- **Don't** avoid the tough issues – use the time to address them
- **Don't** sweat it – it should be productive and fun

SUGGESTED PREPARATION SCHEDULE FOR RETREAT

Assume January 1 Calendar Year

<u>July</u>	-	Commitment from Board Chair-elect
<u>August</u>	-	Commitment from Executive Committee Commitment from Chamber Board Select date and location
<u>September</u>	-	Select you facilitator (Gather input from members: surveys, meetings, personal visits)
<u>October</u>	-	Board selects final purposes for retreat Select resource people for retreat (if necessary) Finalize arrangements at meeting facility

Meet with facilitator and Board Chair/Board Chair-elect

- November - Mail results of input process and final agenda to Board
Conduct Retreat
- December - Set goals and Business Plan based upon results of the retreat
- January - Inform committees and membership of new Business Plan
Ask for the commitment and participation
- June - Consider half-day review process
- July - Start process all over for the next retreat

FACILITATOR PET PEEVES:

- Chamber Executive has not thought about or is not prepared for retreat.
 - ✓ No goals and objectives set prior to the retreat or they don't know what they want out of it...we just have to do a retreat mentality.
 - ✓ Lack of leadership by Executive to make recommendations to their leadership on what worked, what didn't, ideas for improvement, gaps in service or programs, etc.
- Thinking the facilitator will do it all – come up with agenda, plan everything, etc.
 - ✓ Not understanding that this isn't just part of our job.
- Hidden agendas – Board, Executive and yes...even staff.
- Lack of prior background information to Board about issues.
 - ✓ Lack of preparation of the Board or expectations aren't shared.
- No true background on the “problem” Board members.
- Making the start time/and finish time convenient for staff but not the facilitator or the Board.
 - ✓ Evening retreats, travel time, prep time, etc.
- Bad meeting facilities – temperature, meeting room, space, etc.
- No thank you not – after all, facilitators do this out of the goodness of their heart.
- Without some type of benchmarking...the volunteers can come up with wild ideas that are difficult to implement or maintain.

