



Chapter 7

Committees





Five Key Questions

Prior to taking on any project, the Board and membership should address FIVE KEY QUESTIONS.

1. Is it a Mission fit?
2. Will it build the membership and business community?
3. Will it strengthen the policy process (*governmental affairs*)?
4. Is it value-added for the membership?
5. Will it improve communications?

These are the areas that will guide the actions of the Chamber as you strive to increase the Chamber's influence in the community, the relevance to business, and overall ability to represent the members. **The focus must be on the needs and wants of the membership.**



Committee Structure

1. A member of the executive or board will chair Chamber committees.
2. It will be the responsibility of the chair to form a committee that would involve **at least two other directors** and **at least two non-director volunteers**.
3. The committee chair will be responsible for the committee. Put the responsibilities of your volunteers on paper.
4. The committee chair will be responsible for filing a **committee report**, which should reflect information that you are prepared to introduce at general meetings, board meetings, and/or news copy (*i.e. Chamber newsletter or flyers*).
5. To be given time on the agenda, the committee reports **must be received** by the Chamber office **7 days prior to a meeting**.
6. The committee chair is responsible for financial statements, if applicable, for his/her project. This is assuming a budget has been set within the Chamber's annual budget.
7. The president will be advised and kept up to date on all committee activities.
8. **Tenders:** To ensure quotes are kept on file in a central location, easily accessible to all concerned, and to maintain the continuity of purchasing through the Chamber and its committees, all quotes are done at the office. (In the case of a volunteer Chamber with no staff – this needs to be done by one person).

This would include such items as posters, tickets, DJ/music, catering, liquor, and general supplies. The event date, venue, quantity, what is required, and the date the information is required by should be received by the office *at least 2 weeks prior to when information is needed*.



The Functions and Structure of Committees or Task Forces

What is a Committee?

The dictionary defines the word **committee** in two ways: **A person or body to whom some trust or charge is committed** and **a body or person appointed to study, take, or recommend action.**

In Chamber of Commerce activity, committees are the membership in action and the organization through which a *program of action* is carried out. The success or failure, therefore, of Chamber operations will depend to a great degree on the skill with which select committees are selected and the number of projects that are brought to a successful conclusion through committee work. Experience has proven that all too often the difference between a smooth running, effective Chamber and one that just fumbles along can be traced to differences in those Chambers structure and operation. The following broadly covers the purpose of all committees:

1. To study and report;
2. To recommend;
3. To act; and,
4. To promote.

The committee will fulfil all or any of these purposes depending upon the reason for their formation and nature of the work involved. There are many basic advantages to using committees. They provide group judgment and an opportunity to utilize the knowledge and experience of more than one person.

Committee work also enables members to participate most effectively in the Chamber program, as well as providing valuable training for new members who might one day assume leadership roles in the Chamber.

Types of Committees

Committees broadly fall into two major categories — administrative and action. Finance and membership committees are good examples of *administrative* committees.

Administrative committees are set up to carry out the internal activities of the Chamber, while action committees are responsible for carrying out the Chamber's program of action. Industrial and educational committees are examples of *action* committees.

Committees are also divided into two sub-divisions based on their duration. Committees that are continuing in nature are termed *standing committees*, while those created for a limited period of time are called *task forces/special committees*. In the case of continuing committees, it would be pointed out that it is the committee name and purpose which is continuing and not the volunteers. Volunteers may and should change to some extent from year to year.

Two of the most common questions asked with regard to committees are:

1. *How many committees should we have?*
2. *What types of committees should we have?*

Every community and every Chamber differs in character and program so the answers are very general nature. The answer to the first question might be stated in this way:

1. *Enough committees to carry out your program of action — enough to achieve your objectives and promote your activities — but not enough to place you in a position where some of them have little or nothing to do OR resources are exhausted.*

The answer to the second question would be:

2. *It depends entirely on your particular Chamber's program and activities.*

The following are suggested as basic committees for a successful Chamber:

1. Budget and finance;
2. Civic/government affairs;
3. Commercial or retail;
4. Industry, trade and commerce;
5. Membership;
6. Program;
7. Tourism;
8. Publicity/public relations/communications/media liaison; and,
9. Education.

Agricultural, transportation, and public affairs are other options for committees.



Organizing a Committee

Terms of Reference

The board or executive should draft terms of reference for every committee operating within the Chamber. Wherever possible, these terms of reference should be in writing and they should define the broad objectives of the committee.

Selection of Committee Chairs

In most Chambers the president, in consultation with the board, selects the committee chair. Chairpersons should be chosen for their leadership qualities, their ability to recognize and use the talents of committee members, and to reconcile conflicting opinions of members in order to bring forth policies to which all members of the committee can agree upon. It is also desirable that the chair have a sound knowledge of the policies and objectives of their Chamber with the time to invest and an interest in the purpose and work of their specific committee.

When selecting the chair, it might be helpful to bear in mind some of the responsibilities they must assume. A chair must be able to:

1. Present the problem or project;
2. Clarify the problem;
3. Stimulate group thinking;
4. Follow and summarize discussions;
5. Delegate responsibility;
6. State a deadline for completion of various jobs;
7. Check progress;
8. Report progress to the board;
9. Keep committee enthusiasm at a high and sustained level; and,
10. See the job through to conclusion.

In short, the chair must be able to **ORGANIZE**, **DEPUTIZE**, and **SUPERVISE**.

Selection of Committee Personnel

The strength of the committee is determined by the composite qualifications of its members. Members should be made to realize their responsibilities and they should be prepared:

1. To take part in discussions;
2. To keep prejudices in check and respect other people's views;
3. To share experiences for the benefit of the group;
4. To attack challenges impersonally and avoid arguments;
5. To avoid discussing irrelevant matters;
6. To follow the discussion attentively;
7. To resist temptations to "make a speech";
8. To take active part in the work of the committee;
9. To have the time to get the job done, thoroughly and on schedule; and,
10. To accept the directions and rulings from the chair.



The Committee at Work

Analyzing the Project

Once the objectives and functions of the committee have been clearly defined, it will be easily recognized whether the job to be done consists of making a study; preparing a report and recommendations, or taking action for the promotion of an idea or an activity.

At this point the committee chair, with the help of the committee, should:

1. Analyse the job that must be done;
2. Develop a terms of reference;
3. Develop a comprehensive plan of action that includes the various steps towards final achievement of the objective;
4. Work out a breakdown of the various jobs to be done;
5. Establish timelines for these jobs;
6. If money needs to be spent, prepare a budget for the approval of the board; and,
7. Define the responsibilities of the individual members of the committee. (It should be made clear what is expected of them.)

Be clear on **chain of command** or who speaks for the Chamber before making any public pronouncements — board approval must be obtained. Pronouncements carry more weight if they are made in the name of the whole Chamber.

Arranging Committee Meetings

Notices of committee meetings should be issued well in advance to all committee members and it should clearly set the date, time, and place of the meeting. When choosing the time of the meeting try to make it convenient for all members. Experience seems to indicate that in larger centres, lunchtime or late afternoon is preferable; while in the smaller centres; evening meetings seem to attract the best attendance. Committee meetings should be kept as brief as possible, and should be informative and to the point.

Draft an agenda for each meeting and send copies in advance to all committee members. Attach any background material along with the agenda in order that all members are informed.

Event Committees

Generally event committee tasks include:

1. Preparing a critical path or timeline for the event;
2. Assigning tasks to volunteers;
 - a. Secretarial (reports, minutes, etc.)
 - b. Sponsorships
 - c. Audio/visual requirements
 - d. Decorations
 - e. Promotions (ads, tickets sales, etc.)
 - f. Securing door prizes
 - g. Program and master of ceremonies
 - h. Entertainment
3. Sending thank you notes to volunteers;
4. Prepare final report to board with recommendations for the following year.

Fact Finding Committees

All committees need to base their findings on accurate and authoritative information. This information should be obtained by:

1. Careful research;
2. Astutely drawing upon the experience of other communities;
3. Obtaining the opinions of recognized authorities;
4. Careful and unbiased analysis and study of the facts obtained;
5. Depending only upon original sources of information;
6. Acquiring an ability to know the proper sources of information;
7. Being thorough but obtaining only the pertinent facts; and,
8. Avoiding duplication of effort. Before commencing the task make certain that someone hasn't already performed a study of the matter under consideration.

Keeping Minutes and Records

Immediately following each meeting, a proper set of minutes should be prepared and distributed to all committee members. Assignments made at the meeting should appear in the minutes and a written memorandum from either the chair or the secretary should confirm them.

The committee secretary should keep a complete record of the committee activities. The records should include:

1. A complete file of activities of the committee and committee members;
2. A list of committee officers;
3. A list of committee members;

4. A complete file of minutes;
5. Financial reports and budget statements;
6. Press clippings; and,
7. Photographs.

When the committee has completed its work, a report in summary form should be drafted and included with the above records with recommendations for the next year's committee (if applicable).

Arranging Publicity

A good publicity program for committee activity may be summed up in four (4) points:

1. Keep the membership informed;
2. Interest prospective members;
3. Influence public opinion; and,
4. Advertise the community.

It will be necessary to establish who is responsible for publicity. In some Chambers, each committee handles their own; while others, the existing communication committee/person of the Chamber is used.

Informing the Executive Committee

Although the president of the Chamber of Commerce is an ex-officio member of every committee, time does not normally permit them to attend all committee meetings. To keep the president and the directors informed, brief progress reports should be submitted to the board meetings, either by the chair or through a director depending upon local procedure.

Presenting Recommendations

When conclusions have been reached and recommendations are to be presented to the board, a brief should be prepared. It must be logical and supported by provable facts. Any outstanding objections would also be included in the brief to demonstrate your conclusions have given full consideration of all the facts. Whenever possible, copies of the brief should be provided to the directors prior to their meeting.

Sample Committee Checklist

Function: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

of Guests: _____

6-8 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- ___ Assign chair
- ___ Set committee
- ___ Secure major sponsorship (prior to setting date)
 - Offering:
 - ___ free table at event
 - ___ advertising on promotional literature/advertising
 - ___ tickets, posters
 - ___ 10 minute infomercial at event
 - ___ banner at event
- ___ Draft budget
 - Personal invitations all Chamber members - (cost for mailing)
- ___ Set dates at a board meeting (after securing sponsorship)
- ___ Book or confirm facility
- ___ Secure major door prize
- ___ Set table price
- ___ Set ticket price (allowing for commissioned sales)
- ___ Tender D.J./band (through Chamber office)
- ___ Organize entertainment
- ___ Book master of ceremonies
- ___ Advertise
- ___ Book community announcements
- ___ Reports for publications/newspaper
- ___ Reports for board meetings

3 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- ___ Hire commissioned ticket sales person
- ___ Tender tickets/posters (through Chamber office)
- ___ Print tickets

2 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- ___ Tender liquor (through Chamber office)
- ___ Tender catering (through Chamber office)
 - ___ Special food requests
(Vegetarian, no onions, nuts etc.)
- ___ Tender decorations (through Chamber office)
- ___ Arrange for president to open and close event (and/or appropriate dignitary)
- ___ Arrange for someone to say Grace
- ___ Arrange for video camera
- ___ Arrange for pictures
- ___ Invite dignitaries:
 - ___ MP
 - ___ MLA

2 MONTHS IN ADVANCE cont'd

- Mayor & Council
- Reeve
- Alberta Chambers
- Complimentary tickets** for press
- Sponsor signs
- Arrange for bartenders
- Arrange for volunteers
- Set up
- Door tickets
- Liquor tickets
- Ambassadors
- Clean up
- Plan program/agenda

2-4 WEEKS IN ADVANCE

Set up requirements

- Program/agenda for evening
- Registration table
- Guest book
- Reserve table signs/name plates
- Head table, number
- Microphone/podium
- Centre pieces
- D.J.
- Band/DJ set up prior to guest arrival
- Dancing
- Flowers head table
- Corsages/boutonnieres
- Draw tickets
- Extension cords

EVENING OF EVENT

Door requirements

- Ushers to sit people
- Door float/cash box
- Bar float/cash box
- MUST** record first ticket number
- Pens/paperclips elastics
- Draw box
- Suggestion box

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EVENT

- Supplies packed up & labeled for next year
- Thank you letters
 - Sponsors
 - Volunteers
 - Special guests
- Thank you ad for newspaper
- Prepare final report
 - Recommendations for next year
- Prepare financial statement
- Book facility for next year

Bar Requirements

- Liquor tickets
- Liquor
- Permit
- Napkins
- Bartenders
- Salt/Pepper/celery salt
- Worcestershire sauce/tabsco
- Ice/containers
- Lemon/lime
- Mix/juice
- Shot glasses
- Beer/highball glasses

**Contact the Chamber office regarding purchasing of
any products and/or services, as
CHAMBER MEMBERS must be used where possible.**



Event Timetable for Success

- **One year in advance**
 - Establish the type of event
 - Determine needs, expectations, interests – set goals
 - Set budget (*include sponsorship & fundraising*)
 - Select committee meeting dates
 - Book keynote speaker/entertainment

- **6 months in advance**
 - Develop time lines & action plan
 - Determine site (matching objectives and needs)
 - Set program content (include support materials)
 - Consider need for support event (i.e. spousal/family)

- **3 months in advance**
 - Establish a marketing plan and execute
 - Design registration requirements/procedures
 - Arrange logistics (i.e. audio-visual, food/beverage, signage etc.)

- **2 weeks before**
 - Confirm all logistics
 - Final meeting with all suppliers

- **Event day**
 - Final walk-about, test equipment, confirm food

- **Two weeks following**
 - Final committee meeting
 - Follow up evaluations/invoices
 - Final report/guide for next year (note successes and failures)
 - Thank you letters

Courtesy of MPI (Meeting Professionals International)



100+ Ideas for More Profit

The following ideas are just that — ideas. As most came from the Colorado Institute and the Northwest Chambers Leaders Conference, some ideas may not apply and/or work for your Chamber.

Increasing Revenues

1. Accept credit card payments and encourage your members to pay by credit card.
2. Obtain sponsors for all meetings and events, including the meeting event meals or events handouts, and anything else that comes to mind.
3. Offer audio conference programs as one way to enhance your service to members who can't attend in person.
4. Use your events and seminars as forums for effectively promoting and selling your publications, products, and services.
5. Sell surplus fixed assets.
6. Rent out your Chamber's excess building space and unused equipment.
7. Sell your consulting services to members or other Chambers.
8. Institute an aggressive membership campaign staffed by commission staff or, better yet, by volunteer members.
9. Market your products aggressively. For example, in each letter/package being mailed/sent, include a brochure or advertisement on upcoming opportunities.
10. Sell advertising in all your publications.
11. Enlist well-known members to endorse your Chamber to widen acceptance.
12. Offer your staff a percentage of new income from non-dues sources as an incentive.

Changing Products and Pricing

13. Re-evaluate your member's needs, expectations, and preferences. Ask yourself *Would new or different event/services work better? Should programs operating at a loss be dropped?*
14. Prioritize all of your programs and identify your core and non-core items, can they be eliminated while maintaining essential services.
15. Review and update your fees and charges including memberships, programs, services, and publication fees.
16. Set member and non-member fees at your events to encourage non-members to join.
17. Offer courses or publications as a series to increase sales.
18. Charge for services you now offer for free.
19. Strengthen customer service by retaining someone to answer incoming calls, to reduce callbacks, and to register for events.
20. Provide no-frill seminars.

Improving Financing

21. Ask your vendors to carry your receivables.
22. Create new funds, such as a founder or endowment fund, to cover the cost of existing programs into the future.
23. Ask your members for loans, either long-term loans to invest in the future or short term "bridge" loans. Offer members interest that is competitive but less than you would have to pay a bank.
24. Buy a building while prices and interest rates are low.
25. Negotiate the lowest discount rates for charge card purchases.
26. Review your banking relationships and negotiate better ones.
27. Promote events early with payment collected in advance.
28. Improve your collection procedures: Make sure statements go out in a timely fashion. Hand write notes on statements politely asking for payment by a specific date and personally call all accounts due more than 60 days. Hire a collection agency. Enforce fees on late payments.

29. Prepare a realistic budget and have your staff integrate it with monthly cash flow statements.
30. Take advantage of vendor discounts and negotiate for discounts in exchange for prompt payment.
31. Keep accurate financial records and compare your monthly financial reports with your budget.
32. Make sure the person reviewing financial transactions is focused on the good of the Chamber. (*See also Internal Financial Controls 6-7*)
33. Invoice members 60 and 30 days before their anniversary dates.
34. Make bank deposits daily.
35. Make sure you are getting the best return on all your money, including your daily cash flow.
36. Use petty cash to expedite processing cash receipts.
37. Process credit card payments electronically.

Cutting Costs

38. Eliminate department boundaries. Think in terms of tasks or activities, and encourage your staff to work as a team.
39. Review your most common activities and find ways to do them for less. Challenge your staff to come up with ideas.
40. Focus more on training and less on fixing repetitive problems.
41. Develop budgets and target goals for every area you are trying to lower costs.
42. Make a challenge out of saving money. When the staff realizes that making the payroll comes first and everyone has to help, you'll be surprised how much help is offered.
43. Determine if potential cost savings or increased revenues justify equipment upgrades.
44. Investigate purchased VS. leased office equipment.
45. Bring training in-house if your staff is large enough.
46. Decide if all subgroups of membership need to be served.
47. Implement a cash award system for successful cost-saving suggestions.

48. Ask your board for suggestions on how to cut costs.
49. Never pay full price for anything.
50. Ask your membership for donations of in-kind services (printing, legal, accounting, etc.) or needed equipment, furniture, or supplies.

Salaries and Benefits

51. Reducing staff size could leave the Chamber dangerously understaffed. Instead, increase productivity by using staff more efficiently.
52. Assess staff by ability and not by title or department. Take advantage of each person's strengths.
53. Analyze your staff's daily routines and eliminate unnecessary tasks. Concentrate your staff's energy on key services and revenue-producing activities.
54. Pay overtime to existing staff instead of hiring temporary help.
55. Use interns or volunteers to perform clerical and other simple tasks.
56. During peak times, hire students to help or utilize local high school work experience programs.
57. Contract out functions like payroll and bulk mailing to services that can do them for less.
58. Introduce direct-deposit payroll cheques, saving staff trips to the bank.
59. Review employee benefits and comparatively shop for those you must keep.
60. Offer furloughs as an opportunity if things get really tough. Some staff may be eager to take time off without pay.
61. Substitute comp time (time off in lieu of) for overtime when possible; be careful to follow the rules.
62. Close on Fridays during your slow season.
63. Offer flex Fridays – staff works an extra 35-40 minutes each day and takes one Friday a month.

Purchasing

64. Work cooperatively with all suppliers to keep costs down, let them know you will stick with them if they help you.
65. Renegotiate prices with existing vendors and seek competitive bids on all future expenditures. Conduct annual or biannual reviews of your major vendors.
66. Form a purchasing group with other groups or associations.
67. Have your administrator approve all staff subscriptions and memberships.
68. Join a buying club for office supplies and printing services.
69. Centralize purchasing responsibilities.
70. Review service contracts.
71. Consult with staff before you make major purchases. Buying equipment that does more than you really need can be expensive and buying equipment that does less can be disastrous.

Occupancy Costs

72. Downsize office space by using offsite storage.
73. Review your facility operations and management.
74. Remind staff of heating and air conditioning costs and urge them to keep their windows closed.
75. Renegotiate your rent.
76. Conduct an energy audit.

Communication

77. Create promotional flyers and program books in-house with desktop publishing.
78. Use conference calls instead of traveling.
79. Use second-day mail instead of overnight.
80. Combine mailing when possible.
81. Change your long distance telephone carrier to a regional carrier.

82. Set up telephone rules and urge that staff keep calls short. If possible, have your phone system keep a log of staff long-distance calls.
83. Respond to requests the first time to avoid callbacks.
84. Use e-mail or faxes instead of messengers whenever you can.
85. Make sure no personal mail is being passed through your postage meter.
86. Use third-class bulk postage instead of first-class where practical.
87. Reduce the paperweight of your publication.

Insurance

88. Use the Chamber Group Insurance Plan.
89. Increase building insurance deductibles, especially fire and theft.
90. Use D & O Insurance coverage.

Meetings

91. Be a frank and tough negotiator with hotel and conference centers.
92. Review menus to provide lighter, less expensive meals.
93. Hold small meetings in your own conference facilities. Use a local caterer or carryout or even "brown-bag".
94. Have board members pay their own costs to attend meetings.

Non-Dues Projects

95. Membership directory
96. Shopping center directories
97. Industrial and corporate directories
98. Newcomer guide
99. Annual dinner
100. Golf tournaments (Texas scramble, one club, etc.)

101. Business after hours
102. Business expos and trade fairs
103. Map advertising
104. Leadership programs
105. Continuing education programs
106. Newsletter advertising
107. Coupon books
108. Celebrity waiter/waitress dinner
109. Sports tournaments (slo-pitch, hockey, bowling, etc.)
110. Ladies night out
111. Craft show
112. Farmers market
113. Dances
114. Food concession stands
115. Pancake breakfast
116. A taste of [enter your community]
117. Chamber sweepstakes
118. Circus
119. Community flea market
120. Theme dinner
121. Auto expo
122. Annual barbeque or steak fry
123. Demolition derby
124. Administration for other organizations
125. Tours
126. Comedy night auction
127. Specialty day luncheons (Secretary's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc.)

128. Conferences
129. Community economic profile
130. On-line directory
131. Carnival
132. Highway signs (advertising on brown signs)
133. Award banquet (business of the year)
134. Tourism contracts/partners

Each event should:

- Make you money;
- Make you friends; and,
- Make you famous.

Weigh the benefits of the function against the labour intensity (staff and volunteers).



Worksheet for GBIs (great big ideas)

INTERNAL AUDIT

Name of Project: _____

Proposer: _____

Leadership (chair or champion): _____

Brief description of the project: _____

Basic Implementation Steps:

Start date?	Completed date?	Volunteer time?	Staff time?

Estimated Expenditures:

Dollar risk? (worst case scenario)	Who will raise the money?	Financial resources?	Human resources?

Outcome statements: _____

(What is the end result? What will be accomplished? What profit can be anticipated? What is the finished product?)

What is the mission "fit"? _____

Number of current members who will benefit? _____

Number of new members it will bring in? _____

What is the market size (reasonable potential)? _____

EXTERNAL AUDIT

Is it a **demographic fit**? _____

What is the market group? _____

What is the public acceptance? _____

Are we in competition? _____