



Club 505 (Business After Hours) Best Practices

Club 505's intention is to bring people to one place to network in a relaxed and fun setting. It is held after work at a chamber member location hosted by a Chamber member(s). The hosts receive the opportunity to showcase their services while showing gratitude to their customers, neighboring businesses, Chamber Members and potential clients. Hosting Club 505 can bring people through your doors, who might not otherwise do so, increasing business exposure, making great business contacts: all while having fun in a casual after hour's event.

A business must be a current Chamber member to host a CLUB 505 event, and dates are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. If help is needed in planning your Club 505, the Chamber staff will assist you.

Here are ideas for a successful event:

- **Select the time period, 2 hours or less works best.** Choose a range between 4-7pm.
 - Plan to be ready for early guests a half hour before your event begins.
- **Partner with a non-profit organization chamber member.**
 - Show your support for their cause. They could have a "booth" set up with their information & their supporters will be more likely to attend your event.
- **Send invitations** (postcards, flyer or formal) to your current business customers, chamber members and your staff – about 10 days before the event. A personal invite emailed is always a nice touch.
- Have a **short program** at a specific time, but keep it to no more than 5-10 minutes.
 - Some members will choose to attend at the time you will be making a presentation – recognition of building partners, staff awards, anniversary/history of business etc.
- **Engage your staff.**
 - Make sure they know about the event well in advance and ask them to personally invite people they know.
 - Have each staff member wear a name tag or logo'd apparel to identify them as the hosts.
- **Serve hors d'oeuvres & beverages.**
 - Hire a Chamber-member caterer to make this easier (we can provide a list of members).
 - Plan for about 20-40 chamber members (plus those you invite).
 - Food options range from cheese & crackers, cookies, coffee, soda, cider to hot appetizers that are easy to eat standing up (skip messy items like chicken wings or ribs or those that require silverware).
 - Include a description of hors d'oeuvres on your invites (i.e. mouth-watering bacon wrapped Jalapeno poppers) which will draw more people to your event. Who doesn't LOVE food right?
 - Beverages – it's up to you whether you serve "adult" beverages (beer/wine). Guests tend to be more relaxed and stay longer if it's an option. Make sure there is always a non-alcoholic beverage.
- **Post a "Welcome to Business After Hours/Club 505" sign on the door(s)** the day of the event
- **Greet guests at the door** with a "greeter" preferably YOU.
 - Provide name tags (Optional) & provide a place for coats

- Have a “Register to Win” box for business cards (need not be present to win). Grand Prize or prizes – gift certificates from your business (or from your best clients), logo’d items, **Fergus Bucks**, gift card from the caterer – your choice
- Hand out “Chamber special” coupons/discounts to encourage future business, 60+ day expiration date. Make sure you have information available.
- Light background music can fill the air until the crowd begins to chat
- You choose the level of structure for the event – program, networking games, prizes etc.
- **Encourage staff to participate in your events, as well as other Club 505’s prior to yours.**
 - Have as many staff members as possible attend the event to network & answer questions.
 - Encourage staff to take guests on tours, talk about the business, register for prizes, assist with food – give them some conversation starters
- **Follow-up with your guests.**
 - Send a note to those who attended, using your “Register to Win” blanks

Here’s what the Chamber will do to promote a successful event for you:

- Post the event details on the Chamber’s Events Calendar online.
- Newsletter promotion – your event will be listed in our newsletter & on the calendar of events
- Mailing labels of Chamber members provided at no charge for invitations
- Friday eNews – listed at least one month in advance
- Promote the event on “Find it in Fergus Falls” TV show on PRTV with an opportunity to be the “Featured Chamber Member”
- Send an email blast reminder to Chamber members 2 days before event
- Provide a list of non-profit Chamber members for you to partner with
- Event photos may be featured on the Chamber’s social media or newsletter

We encourage you to promote by announcing your event at luncheons, special events, and other places that could benefit your business.

Have Fun, Increase Business Exposure, & Show Your Gratitude: *Host CLUB 505!*



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