

6 Reasons To Participate In Your Local Chamber of Commerce

Relationships

This isn't just about networking — this is about gaining friends, associates and even advocates. The people you get to know may or may not do business with you, but the social and emotional return in building meaningful, lasting relationships can be more meaningful than the financial return you seek. As you attend events, serve on committees and interact with people outside your normal routines, you will have the opportunity to interact with all types of people. Your connections will naturally increase, along with your confidence, opportunities and satisfaction from helping others.

Visibility

The age-old adage applies here — “out of sight, out of mind.” While many companies are looking to be seen in the cyber world and are doing a very good job of it, nothing sells your business better than being in front of people face to face. Business is so much more than simple transactions of money for goods/services with its root in relationships.

You are the business; the business is you. The client is more likely to buy when they know you are the brains behind the operation and have seen you regularly participating in non-transaction-based functions. Chambers provide so many opportunities to spend time with potential friends (read: potential clients) in non-transaction-based functions that you will be top of mind when they or someone they know is looking for your product/service.

Promotion

Chambers offer a wide range of advertising options and sponsorship packages. A business can sponsor entire programs or events through a chamber. Beyond the paid advertising options, chambers also have ways to provide additional business promotion for free through monthly and annual awards, social media, regular newsletters and even printed materials. Amazingly, however, some member businesses do not take advantage of even the free marketing opportunities provided through chambers of commerce. Many chambers have weekly newsletters, including “member news” sections, or flyers from local businesses advertising sales, discounts or special events.

Chambers are always looking for member-related news to share with the community through their own advertising networks and social media. Chambers rarely spend money advertising the chamber as an organization; they spend on advertising opportunities that members can utilize.

Community connection

Some business leaders in large companies have expressed the feeling they're too big or not local enough to need local chambers of commerce. One flaw in that thinking is they and their employees are very much a part of the local economy, regardless of the number of franchise locations they have in other states.

Chambers are not-for-profit organizations desired to lift the economy. They work very closely with governments to provide a representative business voice when needed. Participating in a chamber provides business with an avenue to express their legislative policy questions directly to the legislatures. Sometimes being a good “corporate citizen” means being the community partner that all the “little

guys” expect you to be. If a major player in the local economy isn’t involved in discussions about the local economy, then the conversations (and potentially decisions) are missing a key point of view.

Ongoing training and education

For companies that do not have a large training budget, getting to national conferences or bringing in experts is out of the question. Chambers provide an inexpensive way to bridge the gap between no training and topic-expert training. There may not be better organizations at providing relevant speakers and guest trainers in a timely manner than chambers of commerce.

Chambers can provide speakers at events or links to expert articles through emails and newsletters. Business leaders are essentially enrolled in a continuing education course in business management provided through the chamber — they simply need to attend.

Programs and events

Membership in a chamber of commerce provides access to all their programs and events, which are many. Chamber events include business training luncheons, networking specific events, awards banquets, golf tournaments, city celebration events and many others specific to each chamber. All these events are designed to build your business in some fashion, whether through training, promotion, networking or community service, and can be the perfect addition to the other methods a business employs for building their business

Because of these six reasons, and many others, chambers are known to stimulate business-to-business commerce in the local economy. Research shows that a major part of small business typically comes from business-to-business services, so participating in local chambers of commerce as a small (or large) business is an easy way to increase local visibility, build credibility, and expand your contacts.