

# CHAMBER NEWS



Snow-capped Blue Mountains in late winter.

January 2019

## NINETEEN FOR '19

### 19 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL 2019



Steve Owens  
Member Services

When you run a business, you have to make a lot of decisions about how and where you spend your resources, whether they be financial, staff time, or hard goods. Sometimes those can be very tough decisions, and sometimes a simple reminder here and there can help you sort through the options.

Here are 19 simple steps you can take to help your business thrive in 2019:

#### 1. Publish and engage on social media sites

Creating a presence for your business on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and others is a great way to get the word out about your products, services, employees, values, mission, etc. But the key to a successful social media campaign is that once you start, you have to keep going. Good information, like that leftover eggnog in your fridge, has an expiration date. Keep it fresh.

#### 2. Create original content

When you create original content, your customers not only notice—they also remember. You likely already are the person customers and employees reach out to when they need help, so why not share your expertise on a blog, LinkedIn post, or YouTube video?

#### 3. Build an email or SMS marketing list (and send value to your subscribers)

Thanks to smartphones, email and text messaging has become one of the primary ways companies communicate with current and prospective customers. Text is a great way to keep in touch with your current client list, which will also aid in customer retention.

#### 4. Speak at events

Volunteering to speak at local or industry events, and even Chamber events, is a great way to connect with other businesses and future customers. All you need to do is be proactive, be organized, and be confident in the value you can give to others.

#### 5. Get involved in a cause


The average consumer today is highly tuned

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# New restaurant in town

Come and try our new menu!

**Business After Hours**  
**Tuesday, January 8, 2019**  
**5:30-7:00pm**

**BIG HOUSE BREW PUB**

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Chamber Ambassador lunch at the new Tokyo Japanese Steakhouse in Walla Walla.

## CELEBRATING A YEAR OF SUCCESS



**Rob Blethen**  
Baker Boyer

Happy New Year members and friends of the Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce! As your new Board Chair, I look forward to a successful year ahead for everyone.

Before we look to 2019, I want to celebrate some of the many successes the Chamber had in 2018 delivering on our mission of fostering a sustainable, healthy and vibrant economic environment through business promotion, advocacy, education, and services. In 2018 the Chamber:

- Held several events related to our important advocacy role. This included a candidate debate for the contested congressional seat that was broadcast on both radio and television, a candidate forum for all local races, and a legislative luncheon with local, and state elected officials.
- Held 12 Business After Hours networking events with attendance of over 1,000 people.
- Hosted four quarterly luncheon events focused around Women in Business covering topics ranging from 'Positive Thinking' to 'Inspirational Leadership.' A fun, free 'Summer Hat Soiree' hosted by Northstar Winery, was yet another opportunity for women in business to connect, promote, and learn from one another. Over 465 women in total attended this series.
- Held 20 ribbon cuttings, grand openings, and open houses giving exposure to—and celebrating—vital new businesses to the WW Valley.

- Handled hundreds of visitors from out of town at the Chamber Visitor's Center.
- Mailed over 350 relocation and tourism packets to prospective businesses and visitors.
- Held one of our most successful Annual Banquets ever December 2018 awarding important community achievement awards including the recently added categories of educator, firefighter and law enforcement.
- Strengthened relationships with key partners including the City of College Place, City of Walla Walla, Walla Walla County, Port of Walla Walla, Downtown Walla Walla Foundation, Visit Walla Walla, Walla Walla Wine Alliance, and many others.
- Converted Chamber News to a digital newsletter to increase audience and save printing expenses.

2019 is a year of continued evolution for the Chamber and Walla Walla, and I am optimistic it will be one of the best yet for the Walla Walla Valley.

Walla Walla is seeing tremendous development with new businesses like Eritage, Walla Walla Steak Company, La Quinta, Tractor Supply, Ingeniux, the exciting new retail stores at The Town Center, and so many more. Wages continue to rise, the unemployment rate is as low as it's been in recent memory, and Walla Walla citizens stepped up and passed a very successful school bond that will help us educate students. This investment in education will pay long-term dividends enabling the businesses of the Valley to attract the talented employees we need to continue to make Walla Walla the best it can be.

The Chamber will have a new Executive Direc-

tor shortly. The expectation for this vital role will be a laser focus on ensuring the relevancy of the Chamber to the membership while strengthening our financial position. Exactly who that will be has yet to be determined at press time, but we have an excellent pool of candidates both locally and from outside the area. Strengthening our efforts in small business and economic development, public policy and advocacy, community and workforce development, and leadership development will all be key focus areas from the new director, staff and the board in 2019 and beyond.

Speaking of board members, we are in the process of bringing on four new members to replace the same number of outgoing members. The new group—diverse and talented—will be announced after the New Year. I am confident they will all bring new energy and ideas. We would like to thank Shannon Bergevin (Express Employment), Doug Simcock (Windermere Real Estate), Doug Henry (Ace Hardware), and Mabelle Colligan (Allstate Insurance – Colligan Agency) for their many years of service on the board. Thanks also to outgoing Board Chair Roger Esparza for his dedicated service this past year.

Finally, I would like to give huge Kudos to the entire Chamber Staff and especially acting director Steve Owens. This group worked tirelessly the past few months and we are very appreciative of their efforts.

The plaque on the Chamber entryway reads, "The things we do best we do together." Here's to an incredible 2019 working together Walla Walla Valley!





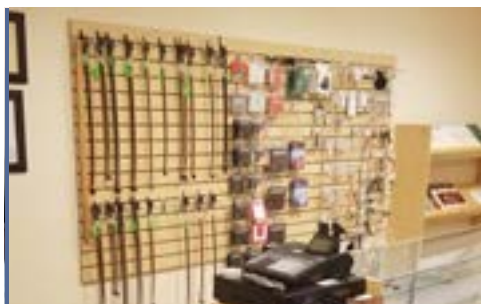
### DECEMBER BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Business After Hours hosted by Armstrong Family Winery Dec. 11.



## PHOTO GALLERY

PHOTOS FROM OUR RECENT EVENTS



### RIBBON CUTTING CELEBRATION

Ribbon Cutting at Hart's Bow Shop in Walla Walla on November 8.

## MEMBERS' NEWSFLASH

### BORDEAUX & BOARD GAMES – EVERY THURSDAY

Join Browne Family Vineyard every Thursday in the Walla Walla Tasting Room for an extended Happy Hour! Enjoy \$2 off red wine glass pours for the entirety of the evening. Sip on your favorite vino and choose from a variety of board and card games to play at your leisure.

### SALSA DANCING – JANUARY 4

Enjoy another night of beautiful salsa dancing in the dance hall at CAVU Cellars. DJ ALAN will be providing the rhythmic sounds for the evening for this very popular and fun evening. Complimentary lessons by Ian Gregoire from 8:30-9:30. Be prompt for these lessons please so you don't miss a step! These lessons are extremely popular, educational and fun! Wine, Beer, and red and white wine Sangria! This event will also feature the release of our ever-popular Barbera Rose' and Sauvignon Blanc! \$10 Cover at the door. Cash/Credit Cards excepted. Call 509-540-6352 for VIP Reservations and Information.

### WE THREE – JANUARY 19

Gesa Power House Theatre presents We Three in concert on Saturday, January 19 at 7:00 p.m. We Three (siblings Joshua, Bethany and Manny) warmed hearts with their unforgettable 2018 "America's Got Talent" audition in which they poured all their emotions into an original song, which they dedicated to their late mother, who passed away two years ago after a battle with cancer. They finished the season as semi-finalists and release their self-titled debut album in December. Reserved seating tickets (\$35-\$30) and are available online or by calling the box office at 509-529-6500. For group ticket sales, please call 509-876-1662. Beer and wine will be available for purchase, and may be taken into the theater. No outside food or beverages allowed.

### CORK & COOK – JANUARY 26

Join Canoe Ridge Vineyard for an evening of blending & cooking! Winemaker Haydn Mouat will be leading a blending seminar where you will create and label your own bottle of Canoe Ridge. After bottle your creation, enjoy a cooking class with Canoe Ridge Chef Sierra Garden where you will hand-make Gnocchi for dinner! Sides will be provided. Bring your spouse or your best friend!



# NINETEEN FOR 19

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

into issues that affect the world. Supporting a charity or cause that relates in some way to your business or values can cost money and time, but even a little can go a long way toward making a lasting impression on your customers.

## 6. Help solve problems

Your customers come to you because you offer a solution. Positioning yourself as a problem-solver on your blog, on Facebook, or in person does not require an investment of your money—all it requires is your time and your ability to bring value and be authentic.

## 7. Learn (and remember) the names of your customers

People like doing business with people, especially people they feel a connection with. Take time to learn the names of your customers. Show them you care.

## 8. Hire great employees

Hiring employees is definitely an investment, but well worth the time, because hiring the wrong employees will cost you more money and time in the long run. Measure twice... hire once.

## 9. Offer loyalty discounts

Launching a loyalty program might cost a little bit in the beginning, but once you have it in place, your customers will likely end up spending more and visiting you more often than they might have before you had a program in place.

## 10. Send handwritten thank you cards

The world moves fast these days. A personal, handwritten note can go a long way. Your customers will notice, appreciate, and remember the time you spent to personally thank them for their business.

## 11. Hire an intern

If you need to be spending more time on customer service, launching that new website, or improving upon products, it might be beneficial to hire a high school or college student looking to gain some experience in your field.

## 12. Talk (and listen) to your existing clients

As mentioned earlier, your existing customers likely have a lot of insight to share with you. Talk to them. Get to know them. Do some "field research." It doesn't cost you a penny.

## 13. Make someone's day

Sometimes the smallest act of kindness can make the biggest impact. Try to think of inexpensive, easy ways to make someone's day better. It might not lead to instant business, but as they say, "what goes around comes around!"

## 14. Ask your customers to fill out surveys

Thanks to services like SurveyMonkey and Google forms, it doesn't take much time or money to create and launch a survey these days. Consider creating one for your customers, and use the free information you get from them to make changes that matter.

## 15. Run a test and/or audit of your website

Whether you make manual changes to your

site or use something more strategic and robust, a good website audit periodically is still very important. This strategy can be especially useful for businesses that sell actual products or services online.

## 16. Build a team of volunteer "beta" testers

Everyone likes early access and being a part of something "exclusive." Reach out to your most loyal customers and invite them to become part of an elite group of people that always get first dibs on new products or concepts.

## 17. Meet with other business owners

As mentioned earlier, other business owners can be a good source of new business for you. Spend time developing relationships with other business owners in the community. Chamber events are a great way to network with other business owners!

## 18. Work on the front lines for a day

A little "hands on" experience never hurt anyone. If you're wondering why your customers aren't buying a certain product or staying longer at your business, work the front lines for a day and see what they see.

## 19. Let your current employees do the talking

If you are growing but you don't have the time or resources available to search for the right talent to add to your team, make sure you spend time connecting with your employees. They likely have a few people in mind who would be perfect additions to your team.



April 20-29, 2020

### Highlights:

- Beijing
- Shanghai
- Hangzhou
- Suzhou
- Great Wall
- Xi'an (optional)
- Forbidden City
- Summer Palace
- Temple of Heaven
- West Lake

### Inclusions:

- Roundtrip Motorcoach from Walla Walla
- Roundtrip Intl Airfare (Seattle, WA)
- Chinese Domestic Airfare
- Airline Fuel Surcharges, Taxes & Fees
- All Meals
- 4-and 5-Star Hotels
- Sightseeing Per Itinerary
- Professional Tour Guides
- Baggage Handling
- Hotel Transfers
- \$155 Chinese Visa Application Fee

### Tour Rates:

|               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Regular Rate: | \$2,099 pp double |
| Single Rate:  | +\$500            |
| Xi'an:        | +\$200            |

\* Save \$100 when you book by August 15, 2019 and pay by check for your remaining balance.

### Contact Information

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## NEW MEMBERS

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MOD Pizza

## RENEWING MEMBERS

|  |  |
|--|--|
| American Rock Products ('09)                 | Misbehaven Spa & Salon ('05)                   |
| Anderson Perry & Associates, Inc ('78)       | Napa Auto Parts ('05)                          |
| Better Together ('18)                        | New Vision Properties ('18)                    |
| Bisnett Insurance, Inc ('11)                 | Nick Taruscio Farms ('83)                      |
| Blue Mountain Realtors (?)                   | Northern Quest Resort & Casino ('12)           |
| Colonial Motel (?)                           | Patton & Associates, LLC ('11)                 |
| Columbia Bank ('10)                          | Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington ('83) |
| Community Council ('10)                      | Ponti & Wernette, PS ('71)                     |
| Dunning Irrigation Supply ('09)              | Providence St. Mary Medical Center ('61)       |
| EK Riley LLC ('14)                           | Rack & Maintenance Source, LLC ('09)           |
| Essential Massage ('18)                      | Sherwin-Williams ('13)                         |
| Eternal Wines & Drink Washington State ('17) | Sherwood Trust ('09)                           |
| Figgins Family Wine Estates ('01)            | Ski Bluewood ('11)                             |
| Forgeron Cellars ('01)                       | Super 8 Motel Walla Walla ('91)                |
| Graphic Apparel ('96)                        | Tokyo Japanese Steakhouse ('18)                |
| Green Gables Inn ('10)                       | Treasure Valley Coffee Company ('91)           |
| Hart's Bow Shop ('18)                        | W3 Tours ('17)                                 |
| J. Eric Kimball, CPA ('09)                   | Walla Walla Community Hospice ('09)            |
| John L. Scott - Walla Walla ('09)            | Walla Walla Symphony ('93)                     |
| Kontos Cellars ('12)                         | Weinhard Hotel ('05)                           |
| Long Shadows Winery ('09)                    | Wenzel Nursery ('09)                           |

# THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE SCENES

## CHAMBER BOARD MEMBERS

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Rob Blethen - Board Chair</b><br>Baker Boyer   | <b>Adam Keatts</b><br>Banner Bank                           | <b>Kathy Covey</b><br>Blue Mountain Action Council         |
| <b>Roger Esparza - Immediate Past Chair</b><br>Walla Walla Sotheby's International Realty | <b>Breanna Maiuri</b><br>Castillo de Feliciano              | <b>Keith Burghardt</b><br>Community Bank                   |
| <b>Todd Brandenburg- Past Chair</b><br>PocketiNet   | <b>Shannon Bergevin</b><br>Express Employment Professionals | <b>Bill Clemens</b><br>Pacific Power                       |
| <b>David Elmenhurst - Treasurer</b><br>CliftonLarsonAllen                                 | <b>Doug Simcock</b><br>Windermere Real Estate               | <b>Kari Isaacson</b><br>Blue Mountain Community Foundation |
| <b>Tawnya Richards - Secretary</b><br>Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce              | <b>Toby Salazar</b><br>T-Barbershop                         | <b>Doug Henry</b><br>Henry's Ace Hardware                  |
| <b>Brian Hunt</b><br>Walla Walla Union-Bulletin   | <b>Chuck Reininger</b><br>Reininger Winery                  | <b>Derek Brandes</b><br>Walla Walla Community College      |

## VISIONARY MEMBERS

|                     |                   |                            |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Baker Boyer         | Gesa Credit Union | PocketiNet                 |
| Banner Bank         | Inland Cellular   | Walla Walla Union-Bulletin |
| Elkhorn Media Group | KUJ               | Wine Valley Golf Club      |
| Columbia REA        | Pacific Power     |                            |

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# JANUARY EVENTS

Check online for updates & to register for events

- 08 **BUSINESS AFTER HOURS @ Big House Brew Pub – 5:30pm**
- 10 **AUSTRALIA PREVIEW NIGHT @ The Chamber – 5:30pm**

# FEBRUARY EVENTS

Check online for updates & to register for events

- 06 **MEMBERSHIP FAST TRACK @ The Chamber – 8:30am**
- 07 **ITALY PREVIEW NIGHT @ The Chamber – 5:30pm**
- 12 **BUSINESS AFTER HOURS @ The Thief Fine Wine & Beer – 5:30pm**