

Chamber of Commerce Membership—A Great Business Investment

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The great economic engine that is Texas keeps churning every day and because of the businesses that fuel it we as Texans enjoy great places to live, work and play. One key component in that engine is the local chamber of commerce. While often behind the scenes the work of the chamber helps support and create an environment in which businesses can thrive. Beyond the work of the chamber, however, there are incredible business benefits and a great business case for chamber of commerce membership.

In the past, chambers have been viewed by some as socializing bodies where business people come together to network. Although still a valuable networking venue, today's chamber is much more. In every arena from business advocacy, to economic and community development, to education and workforce development, chamber's fight for business interest to ensure there is an environment in which they can thrive. A little known fact, however, is the impact local chambers have on "the business side of business". Among these positive impacts are increased consumer confidence and patronage both of which are critical to business success.

The Shapiro Group, an Atlanta based research firm surveyed 2,000 Americans and found that chamber membership causes consumers to see a business in a more positive light and increases the likelihood that they will shop or purchase services from chamber member businesses. Although these figures vary slightly amongst size of organization and industry sector, the fact remains that businesses that are members of their local chamber garner greater consumer credibility, trust, and loyalty than those that are not affiliated with the local chamber of commerce.

Taking this notion a step further, the study found that the greater the level of involvement of the company in the local chamber (i.e. serving on the board, sponsoring events, etc.) the greater the benefits. A company that is highly involved with its local chamber sees that consumers are 10 percent more likely to think that its products stack up better against its competition and 19 percent are more likely to think favorably of the company in general.

The Shapiro study revealed that there is a distinct correlation between chamber membership and a company's bottom line. Whether in the area of patronage frequency, favorability, or purchase intent, consumers tendencies lean heavily toward involved chamber members. Let's look at a snapshot of the results. Relative to working with chamber members consumers state they are:

- 36 percent more likely to think favorably of insurance companies
- 49 percent more likely to think favorably of small business and 80 percent more likely to purchase goods or services from the company in the future.
- 68 percent more likely to eat at a franchise restaurant.

Small business is the backbone of America and the bulk of chamber memberships. The results for this segment are particularly striking. If a person knows that a small business is a member of the local chamber, the business will see a 49 percent increase in consumer favorability ratings, a

51 percent increase in consumer awareness, and a 80 percent increase in the likelihood of patronage.

There are two keys to receiving the benefits of local chamber membership. First, a business has to be a member. Second, businesses must work internally and with their local chamber to make customers and potential customers aware of their affiliation. This means be active, be visible and proudly display your membership in the local chamber of commerce.

Businesses large and small are always on the watch to ensure they are investing wisely and engaging in organizations and activities that are both productive and yield a good return. In short, membership in the local chamber of commerce is not a luxury item; it is an absolute necessity for all businesses seeking to navigate highly competitive marketplace and sometimes difficult economic waters. Chamber membership gives business a competitive edge in their daily work.

Texas has some of the absolute best chambers of commerce in the nation. During Chamber of Commerce Week (October 19 – 23), stop in, say hello, and get involved today and ensure your future.