

## Make Small Numbers Look Big

By Patrick H. McGaughey CPF, IOM

Chambers of Commerce historically represent 25 to 40% of the total number of businesses in their communities or regions. Knowing the value we offer, we remain confounded as to why the larger percentage of businesses do not join our membership roles. If this sounds familiar, think about creating a new *desire* to join.

One of the great lessons offered by author Dale Carnegie in “How to Win Friends and Influence People” is this; *create an eager want in others!* This philosophy will work for our organizations if we start focusing on those that do belong to our membership roles and highlight them for what they are; the best businesses in our community!

If we look closely at a Chamber of Commerce with 325 members in a community with 1,000 businesses, doesn't it make sense to promote these businesses as something very special? A sample slogan may read: “*Our-Town Chamber of Commerce, representing the Top 325 Businesses in our community.*” If this little statement can be made fluid and increase with every new member (and even decrease when some drop) your ‘list’ becomes much more desirable. On a retention note, most people don't want to be the reason for failure so dropping will now take even more consideration. On the other hand, people like being part of successful ventures and would *desire* to be member 326!

Now imagine if the cover of your published or electronic membership directory indicated “**The Top 35% Businesses in Our Town**” were listed inside. Non-members will more likely notice their absence and current members will have a higher sense of belonging and see this image as additional value from their membership.

This kind of thinking has worked for years in McDonald's™ marketing when they began by saying, “Over 1 Million Sold.” It went from one million to two million, to three million and so on until they finally had to simply say “Billions Sold!” That original statement proved they must be good and people just naturally went to a business that established their value through a very positive statement.

Go even further and imagine how you could expand this idea for the Chamber of Commerce. If you added all of the employees of your members and said, "Serving over 10,000 employees and the Top 35% of businesses in Our Town," wouldn't you be making a low percentage look much bigger? More important, wouldn't you be making the Chamber of Commerce **image** bigger and better than the actual numbers indicate?

The same thinking should be used in promotion of slow-starting events. If you only had 16 of your 325 members registered for an upcoming event, couldn't you positively state, "The first 5% of our membership is already registered!" This sounds better than, "We only have 16 members signed up." We are not deceiving anyone or being unethical. Only if our membership and our programs are not worth the ticket price are we being unethical. In fact, when we know our membership value and the value of our programs is so good, we are letting our members down if we don't highlight the positives to help make them aware.

You and I are inundated with negative thinking everyday just in the news we hear and see. It is the media's job to cover crashes and not landings so we are subliminally trained to talk about the negative. It's even true in your board meetings where your board will talk more about why members drop than discuss why that list of new members joined.

Put the numbers in your favor. We should make negatives look positive every chance we get. When we do, we will create that "eager want" that's so important to our growth.

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