

Making the Sale

Sale of Chamber Membership must be based on a thorough understanding of the organizations purpose, present programs and future plans. It must be bolstered by an enthusiastic recognition of the importance of each businesses' investment in the community through the Chamber.

In the following pages you will find a wealth of material relating both to the Chamber's programs and to important sales information. You will also find some background data on the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce. Please become well acquainted with it.

The information includes progress being achieved on Chamber programs, new projects being initiated, and future plans being developed. It will, in fact, with the possible exception of the board of directors, make this committee more knowledgeable about the Chamber than anyone else.

With this knowledge and our own experience judging human nature, you will be well equipped to transform any prospect into a Chamber member.

The following page is an outline for "prospecting" which has proven successful in the past. Adapting some of the ingredients to your own style, you can develop a sales approach which will work for you.

Prospecting Guidelines

- 1.** Know the type of business you will be contacting and make mental notes as to the areas of the Chamber Program of Action which are most likely to be of interest to that business.
- 2.** If possible, do the same thing in regard to the individual you will be meeting. (If you know that he is an avid golfer, be prepared to discuss the Chamber Challenge Golf Tournament for Small Business that is held annually on the first Friday of May.)
- 3.** Make an appointment if possible. This will save your precious time and insure that you can meet the prospect when he has ample time to hear what you have to say.
- 4.** Begin by presenting the general purposes and philosophies of the Chamber.
- 5.** Mention the Chambers five major areas of focus for the coming year: Economic Planning and Development - Attracting new residents and commercial businesses - Small Business Programs - Tourism and Member Services.
- 6.** Be on guard during 4 and 5 above for a spark of special interest on the part of the prospect. Don't let this moment of interest escape—grab it! Discuss past, present and future Chamber programs that relate directly to your prospect's own interest and concerns. (Don't promise a new project that's not in the plans, but if you feel it is worthy of consideration say so -- and pass it on.)
- 7.** Mention other programs of the Chamber that parallel or support the interests expressed by the prospect. Remind him that only through additional funds and greater involvement on the part of the membership can these areas be expanded and improved.
- 8.** State simply that if the prospect feels the Chamber is doing what needs to be done, he should be a member. (In a nutshell, if the prospect offers no criticism, you should have a sale.) He will never find a less expensive way of insuring that this work continues than through Chamber membership. (Where else could you hire someone for \$1 per day -- depending on his minimum investment -- to do this work?)
- 9.** If he has criticism, remind him that the Chamber would like to do more in several areas, but is restrained by lack of adequate financing and volunteer involvement. That is the reason for this membership effort. The best way for the prospect to help get things on track is to become an active Chamber member.
- 10.** If he cannot be active at the present time, don't let it be used as an excuse not to join. Other new members are interested in becoming more active, but additional financing is still needed. "If you can't become active right now, at least help provide the funds for those who can." "You can become personally involved later on."
- 11.** CLOSE THE SALE! Get the application filled out. TAKE THE CHECK! At least suggest a time when you will stop back to pick up the application and check -- then follow up.
- 12.** Be sure to provide the Committee and the Chamber with the comments, concerns, criticisms, and suggestions discussed by your prospect.
- 13.** Notify your new member immediately after his application has been approved by the Board. Congratulate him on becoming an advocate of business in Central Vermont.

Watch Your Language!!

Words to use...

Hire - The prospect should be told that he is hiring the Chamber to do those things that an individual business can't or usually doesn't do for itself. The Chamber is an extension of the prospect's business.

Invest - Use this word in describing "dues" of the Chamber. Anyone investing \$400 will easily receive \$400 in benefits from the Chamber without ever calling on it for special services or being actively involved. These benefits may be indirect and sometimes difficult to pinpoint, but they are there.

Words not to use...

Support - Get rid of the word! No businessman has any moral obligation to support anything but his family. It is up to you to show the relationship between what the Chamber does and the welfare of his business. The word support implies charity. The Chamber can't survive on charity.

Contribute - Same as above!!

Join - Almost everyone is already a member of too many organizations. Your prospect doesn't need another membership card - he needs a business partner.

You'll Hear It -- Be Prepared!!

It's a Regional Chamber, it doesn't help me - While it is a regional Chamber, almost everything the Chamber does affects you. New businesses, new residents and tourists all bring immediate dollars to our community which wind up in your cash register, either directly or indirectly.

The Chamber doesn't work exclusively for my City - The Chamber realizes that the only way to work for the Region is to work for each community within the Region.

I can't afford it - We aren't asking you to give money away, but to make an investment. Your return is continued growth and prosperity in the community. Your membership costs only about \$1 per day. You can hardly afford not to belong.

I was a member once but I didn't get anything out of it - The Chamber may not have escorted customers to your door, but it helped bring dollars to the area, and you're too good a businessman not to have gotten your share of them. The Chamber is constantly working to bring new residents, businesses and tourists to the area.

I'm just a one-man operation - The Chamber may be more important to you than to some of the larger firms. The Chamber is another advertising medium, a promoter of the area and its member firms. The Chamber tackles projects that are too large and time consuming for a small firm to undertake itself. The more investors it has, the better it can do its job. As the community and the local economy grow, so does your business.

The Chamber doesn't do anything - Spend just half a day in the Chamber office or serve on one committee for a couple of sessions. If you still feel the same way, I'll apologize for wasting your time. But I'll bet I get your check.

We're just a branch office - Opening an office here is proof that your firm considers this an important place to do business. That didn't just happen. The Chamber has worked hard in this community for years, and continues to work to keep it a good place to do business. You should feel comfortable recommending that your company invest in the Chamber.

I don't agree with everything the Chamber does - Of course not. Would you have it any other way? With hundreds of member firms, the only way the Chamber could avoid offending anyone would be to do nothing--and that would offend everyone. The best way to change things is to become actively involved.

I'd like to but I just don't have the time right now - Everybody has periods when their business consumes all their time. If you can't invest both time and money right now, at least provide financial help for those who have the time to "carry on" on your behalf. You can always become more active later.

We've cut back on expenses - I know what you mean, my company cut back quite a bit too. Initially, we even cut some expenses that we shouldn't have. Even though things are tight right now, we plan to be here next year and the year after that. We realized that some short-term savings could wind up costing us a lot in the future. We need a solid community around us, and that is one of the reasons we made room in the budget for Chamber membership. Shouldn't you consider renewing your membership?

Too busy - I know what you mean, most of us are busy; we have to be if we are to be successful in our business. I hope that just because I am talking with you, you won't think that I am not busy. I believe that if Central Vermont is to progress and keep abreast of critical community issues, I must take some time from my schedule to help out. If you don't honestly feel that you have time to participate actively, at least help finance those who are taking time to help you.

It costs too much - I can understand how you feel. I might have agreed before I took the time to learn just how important this money is to the community. Each of us must be willing to invest his or her fair share if the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce is to have sufficient funds to bring jobs and dollars back into the region. You are asked to invest only what others of similar size are investing.

It's good for merchants, but not for me - Some people aren't really aware of the Chamber's purpose. The Chamber is not a merchant's association. It is made up of businesses and professionals of all types. Most of them are not merchants. Your business is dependent on satisfied customers and satisfied employees. They must be satisfied citizens. The Chamber of Commerce is working to improve the "community life" as well as the "business life" of this area.

I'm a professional, I don't need the Chamber - Can you recall any professional having prospered in a dying community? It takes a community to give you opportunity. A new factory, increased incomes, some newcomers - they mean new potential clients. Professional people are also taxpayers, and as such, benefit from the Chamber's development activities.

We do most of our business outside of the area - Yes, and you depend on the Central Vermont area for employees, materials, supplies, reasonable taxes, cooperative government and public attitudes to serve your customers. Your home, family, and friends are here. You and your business are affected by what's happening right here.

Not now, maybe later - The Chamber must be active NOW! The permit process is stopping expansions NOW. Town plans are being written NOW. Later may be too late. We could lose jobs, taxes and opportunities that we may never recover. Delaying can be much more expensive than membership. We need your membership NOW!