

BY: Cathi Hight: Hight Performance Group
2010 Annual Management Conference Speaker

It's been a hard 18 months for you and your members and hopefully 2010 will be a strong year for recovery and growth. As the first quarter comes to a close, be thankful you and many of your members made it through one of the toughest times in history! Take time to be proactive and develop stronger loyalty with the Chamber by using these 6 ways to celebrate members!

1. **Acknowledge the anniversaries of your members' businesses** in your newsletters, on the web site, or through other recognition vehicles. Help them celebrate their success and receive community recognition, too. Make sure 'Date Established' or a similar field in your membership database is filled in. If the info is missing, add it to paper or electronic applications and renewals. Besides using this field to celebrate how long member companies have been established, you can also use it to understand membership demographics, analyze survey feedback by segment, and understand your members' growth patterns.
2. **Celebrate your members' accomplishments.** Be on the lookout for news about your members in local or trade media. They may be mentioned for acquiring new contracts, launching new products, hiring new staff, or for doing something for the community. Cut or print out articles or announcements and mail them to members in a card with your congratulations. Ask your members to contribute to a Good News section on your web site or newsletter and celebrate the positive happenings. Positive energy begets more positive energy. Make it contagious!
3. **Honor members for their longevity with the Chamber** in your newsletters, on the web site, or through other recognition vehicles. Not only is it important to recognize members for their commitment, it's also a critical factor for retention. Those who have been members for at least 3 years are more likely to be retained and see value in being members. Consider staging an "Anniversary Blitz" can organize Ambassadors and other volunteers to stop by with a small gift and card celebrating 3, 5, 10, and 20 year anniversaries. Or hold a Pancake Breakfast for those who have members for 10 years or more and honor members with their other loyal peers!
4. **Send out press releases to recognize** incoming and continuing board members, council and committee chairs and members, and to recognize exemplary volunteers for their contributions. Everyone appreciates being in the spotlight. Leverage your connections to showcase these volunteers.
5. **Recognize and reward your most active and invested members.** Run reports and discuss which members are providing you with the highest value by participating in events, programs, and driving the momentum of the Chamber. Send them a thank you note, offer a small token of your

appreciation, or just call them. Consider offering these members better seats at events, a complimentary seminar, or free passes to a networking event. After all, loyalty has its privileges!

6. **Celebrate your loyal members who invest a lot of their time to help you be successful.** Honor your best volunteers with monthly, quarterly and annual awards. Host a special red carpet venue with breakfast or late afternoon appetizers to thank all volunteers and to honor them amongst their peers. It's like hosting your very own Academy Awards!

Leverage these ideas and others generated from the staff to celebrate your members. After all, we're all in this together and together we'll grow stronger.

Cathi Hight is President of Hight Performance Group and is the developer of the Member Retention Kit, a step-by-step guide for developing member retention strategies and retention plans. The Kit is also distributed through the American Chambers of Commerce Executives (ACCE) and over 350 associations around the country currently use the Kit to improve their retention rates. Cathi has presented for ACCE at its national conventions and for DIALog webinars. She is also an instructor for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for Organization Management. It's been a hard 18 months for you and your members and hopefully 2010 will be a strong year for recovery and growth. As the first quarter comes to a close, be thankful you and many of your members made it through one of the toughest times in history! Take time to be proactive and develop stronger loyalty with the Chamber by using these 6 ways to celebrate members!

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