

2007 Chamber Study

A new national study reveals that membership in a local chamber of commerce can significantly boost a business's image among consumers, as well as among other businesses. In a scientific survey of 2000 U.S. adults, The Schapiro Group, an Atlanta-based strategic consulting firm, found positive perceptions of chamber members in a number of areas, including overall favorability, consumer awareness and reputation, and likelihood of future patronage.

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The study, commissioned by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), IBM, Administaff, Small Business Network, Inc., and Market Street Services, showed that when respondents were told that a particular small business was a member of its local chamber, they were 44 percent more likely to rate it favorably than study respondents who were not told of the chamber affiliation. Respondents were also 63 percent more likely to want to purchase goods or services from a small business that is a chamber member.

“We discovered that informing someone about a company's chamber membership opens the door to substantial increases positive perceptions of that business,” said Alex Trouteaud, Ph.D., senior strategist for The Schapiro Group. “There clearly is a feeling by our respondents that chamber membership is synonymous with quality and desirability.”

To tap into this reservoir of goodwill, a small business should not only join the local chamber of commerce and participate, but also make sure consumers and other businesses are aware of that chamber affiliation.

The positive impact of perceived chamber membership is felt by big businesses, too. For example, when consumers believed that a restaurant chain was a member of the local chamber of commerce, they were 40 percent more likely to eat at the franchise in the future. And if a consumer believed that one of the major automobile manufacturers was a member of its local chamber, that consumer was 9 percent more likely to consider purchasing his or her next car from that automaker.

“This study reinforces research done in 2005 about the perceived capacity of chambers to lead businesses and lead communities,” said Mick Fleming, president of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE). “These new national findings point to even more direct benefits for companies willing to be stakeholders in their local chamber.”

The study results had good news for chambers themselves, where 82 percent of respondents indicated that a local chamber of commerce “creates jobs and promotes economic development.”

“The message from this national study is as simple as it is ground-breaking,” said Jim Blasingame, small business expert and president of Small Business Network, Inc. “Join

your local chamber, be an active participant in your chamber's programs and be sure to let your customers and prospects know you're a proud chamber supporter when they come in your business and when they see your marketing material."

J. Mac Holladay, CEO of Market Street Services, an economic development consulting firm based in Atlanta that helped create the study, said, "It is refreshing to learn what we have suspected for years -- that chamber membership and community involvement are good investments."

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