

Chapter Three

Joining the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce

Memberships

As a voluntary, not-for-profit organization, the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce is dependent on the dues investments and participation fees it receives from business and professional firms for 100 percent of its operating budget. While most larger and long-established businesses are already members, many smaller and newer businesses are not.

New Members

The Sustainable Resource Development concept grew out of the traditional membership campaign and selling new members remains a top priority. Since every business can benefit from membership in the Chamber, every non-member is a prospect.

Where to begin? Check to see if the company is already a member by consulting the member list in the “Miscellaneous” section of this book or by calling 762-2611, ext. 0.

How much should they pay? Chamber investments are based on the company’s stake in the community. For most businesses, dues are \$340 *PLUS* an incremental amount based on the size and type of business. A one-time \$35 administration fee is charged upon joining. The Chamber’s dues formula is found in this section along with the membership application.

Example: If a service firm has 13 employees, you should collect the base amount (\$340) paid by all firms, plus \$3 per employee as well as the \$35 one-time processing fee for a total of \$414.

Bringing new members in at the fair-share rate helps insure that all members carry their proportionate share of the load. And it helps you realize your goals sooner!

What it takes. A completed and **signed** application plus the new member’s check or credit card information is all it takes to enroll a new member (include the credit card expiration date and security numbers listed on the back of the credit card). **No credit is given until the completed paperwork is done!**

What happens after they join? Once a completed application and investment check are received, several steps are taken to welcome and involve your new member:

- A letter of welcome from the President/CEO is sent, expressing our appreciation for the new member’s support.
- Each new member receives an invitation to the next Member Orientation.

- The new member is placed on our membership database so we can refer business inquiries to the member.
- New Members will be listed on the Wednesday New Member Information list and sent to 1,700 Chamber members.
- New Members will receive our newsletter, Friday ROI and Wednesday's New Member Information list. They will also begin receiving meeting notices and other current information.
- New Members will be added to the Chamber website Business Directory. A free link is provided from the Chamber's website to the new member's site.
- A membership decal is provided to the new member.
- A Chamber Ambassador will visit the new member and deliver a New Member Packet that includes the Greater Wilmington's Best Business Directory and information on upcoming events, programs and marketing opportunities.

Member Renewals

Since many members join the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce based on the relationship they have with their sponsor, the Sustainable Resource Development campaign enables volunteers to renew memberships they sold in the prior year. You will receive full incentive credit when your member renews his/her dues (three years maximum).

If you participated in the campaign last year, you will receive a list of your accounts to renew. The only membership accounts you can renew are those assigned to you.

If you are new to the campaign, renewals are something to look forward to next year as you recruit new members this year.

Why Join the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce?

As a member of the oldest Chamber in North Carolina (1867), you're joining a powerful, diverse team working to build a healthy economy for the Cape Fear area. As a member of the Chamber, you will always enjoy these benefits.

CONTACTS Beginning with the Member Orientation, where you are introduced to networking the Chamber of Commerce way, we offer opportunities to make contacts with other Chamber business members at meetings, seminars and special events.

REFERRALS We receive thousands of requests each year for recommendations on goods and services in the Greater Wilmington area. Only Chamber members get the nod.

MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS You get two FREE listings in our Business Directory. Your membership also includes a subscription to *ROI: Return on Investment*, our bi-monthly newsletter. A weekly Chamber update is sent to members on Fridays to remind them of upcoming events and committee activities. A list of the newest Chamber members is also sent to all members on Wednesdays.

EXPOS Two annual expos and two Mega Business After Hours are conducted which allow members to market their products and services to the community.

LOBBYING EFFORTS Local and state legislation affecting business is closely monitored and lobbied for by committees, task forces and Chamber staff. Your interests are being protected on such issues as transportation, the port and beaches, health care, the environment, liability insurance, mandated employee benefits and others. We also meet regularly with our state and local elected officials to offer input from the business community.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT The Chamber is working to improve the quality of life in the Greater Wilmington area in many ways. The Chamber's education initiatives, designed to ensure excellence in education resulting in a well trained workforce, are a primary example. These programs benefit the area by producing qualified employees to work on businesses and to serve their customers.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT The Chamber has a direct impact on the economic growth of the membership and the community by assisting local businesses in expansion efforts and working to attract new residents and businesses to the community.

**Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce
2007 Annual Events**

Winter Mega Business After Hours – January 18

Excellent opportunity for Chamber members to market their products and/or services from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. to other Chamber members at the Coast Line Convention Center. Door prizes, networking, food and beverage. Sponsorships available. Ext. 212.

140th Annual Meeting – February 22

12:00 noon at the Coastline Convention Center. Meeting to honor the outgoing 2006 Board and introduce the 2007 Officers and Board members. 2007 Program of Action presented. Ext. 202

Campaign 2007 – March through June

Chamber's annual fundraising event. Involves 150 volunteers for 12-week campaign. Weekly luncheon meetings, incentives, networking, special recognition and door prizes. Ext. 209.

Executive Overview – March & October Sessions

One-day overview which provides an opportunity for members (especially new executives or those new to the area) to meet community and government agency leaders and learn about the on-going initiatives and projects that are important to the business community. Ext. 204.

13th Annual Retirement Living Showcase – March 8

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Coastline Convention Center. Over 50 exhibits. Opportunity for Chamber members to market to the 20,000+ retirees in the area. Last year's expo drew over 500 retirees. Ext. 212.

Legislative Weekend – April 20-22

Chamber invites our State Legislatures and the Governor to Wilmington for the weekend. This bi-annual event is an opportunity to show our elected officials Wilmington's specific items on our Legislative Agenda. Ext. 204.

Hands On Wilmington (HOW) April 28

This is an annual community service event under the Chamber Foundation's leadership that is part of a national movement bringing people together to tackle community projects with specific needs. Just four hours of volunteer work produces tangible and durable results.

Ext. 213.

1st Annual Women's Golf Tournament – May

This event will be an enjoyable way to assist the Chamber. The funds raised in this event support Chamber services and programs, Sponsorships are available. Ext. 212.

Summer Mega Business After Hours – June

2nd excellent opportunity for Chamber members to market their products and/or services from 5:30-7:30 p.m. to other Chamber members. Door prizes, networking, food and beverage. Sponsorships available. Ext. 212.

Elected Officials Appreciation BBQ – June

This informal event will provide the Chamber and its members the opportunity to say "thank you" to the local elected officials from New Hanover County, City of Wilmington, Wrightsville Beach, Carolina Beach, and Kure Beach, along with our U.S. Senators, U.S. Representative and State Senators and Representatives. Ext. 204.

32nd Annual Safety Awards Banquet – June 12

Annual Dinner for NC Department of Labor's award recipients featuring NC Labor Commissioner and the community.

1st Annual Business Achievement Awards – August

A special recognition of Chamber members that have greatly impacted the local economy, the Chamber and the community.

D.C. Business Issues Conference – September

This annual event is held in Washington, DC in September. It is a unique opportunity to meet with federal government elected and administrative officials to discuss policies that may affect a business owner's ability to do business. It is hosted by the North Carolina delegation and includes business briefings and discussions featuring key administration and Capitol Hill leaders. Last year's Chamber delegation included 30 business leaders from Wilmington.

Leadership Wilmington – September through March

Series of one-day workshops for a class of 30+ individuals, covering a variety of timely community issues/topics. Mission is to provide a continuous, diverse supply of creative leaders to the community by developing their knowledge of the region and providing them the opportunity for meaningful action. Ext. 204.

Executive Dialogue – Meets monthly September through May

Executive Dialogue is a program for CEO's, owners or principle managers to provide them with an opportunity to interface with one another regarding the challenges of operating a business. Ext. 209.

17th Annual Chamber Bud-Light Open – October

Held at Porter's Neck Plantation Golf & Country Club. This popular tournament is an enjoyable way to assist the Chamber. The funds raised in this event support Chamber services and programs. Sponsorships are available for T-Signs, beer stands, corporate sponsors and grand sponsors. Ext. 206.

Candidates Forum – October

Although the Chamber is non-partisan, we offer information about the candidate pool to help our members elect those that are most qualified and that represent the interests of area businesses. Televised candidate forums are broadcasted on area public access TV channels for upcoming City and New Hanover County elections.

13th Annual Fall Business Expo – October

Wilmington's only business-to-business expo. Over 50 exhibits. Average attendance is 500. Ext. 212.

2nd Annual Coasta Roasta – November

The Chamber's social event of the year that helps to raise funds to support our services and programs.

Business Before Hours, Business After Hours and Open Houses

Excellent networking opportunity for Chamber members for two hours each month. Door prizes, networking, food and beverage. Sponsorships available. Ext. 212.

Member Orientation

The Chamber presents a one-hour orientation in the Chamber's Board Room. Orientation is designed to help members learn more about the Chamber, how to get involved and how to benefit from your membership. A must for every member. Ext. 212.

"Tips from the Pros" Seminars

Workshops & lunch seminars series focus on topics that are important to business owners and employees. These educational workshops & seminars are limited in registration and held in the Chamber's Board Room. Ext. 212.

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Salute to Local Delegation

Annual breakfast held following the General Assembly adjournment to honor the members of our regional delegation.

Newcomer Lead Program

Information on prospective newcomers who contact the Chamber is published weekly for chamber members. The bulletin is sent electronically to subscribers. Ext. 202.

Brochure Distribution

Chamber members may distribute brochures to prospective new residents, tourists, prospective new businesses and area residents in the Chamber's lobby. Racks are provided for Chamber members. Ext. 200.

Website – www.wilmingtonchamber.org

Business directory, demographics/statistics, banner advertising, business links. Ext. 216

For more information on the above programs, call (910) 762-2611 plus the extension number listed or email info@wilmingtonchamber.org.

Selling Products and Recruiting Members: A 3-step process

1. **Want To**
If you believe in the Chamber and want to do something good for your community, you have accomplished the first and most important step.
2. **Can Do**
If you say you can't sell, you're wrong! You sell something every day—probably without making conscious effort. If you understand people, you're ready to sell Chamber products.
3. **Will Do**
The easy part comes when you make the sales calls. Like you, the people you meet all have wants, needs, ideas, fears, and they'll appreciate the contact you'll be making. After all, you'll be providing them with information they should have! In essence, you're an educator.

Telephone Tips

Preparing for a Successful Telephone Call:

1. Stand up (or at least lean back in your chair)
2. Look at the ceiling
3. Take three deep breaths
4. Think of something happy
5. Pick up the phone and dial

Sample Membership Sale Phone Script:

“Hello, I’m (YOUR NAME) with (YOUR COMPANY) and I’m calling for the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce. I know you’re busy – do you have a few minutes to talk.”

If YES – continue with script.

If NO – “when would be a convenient time to call back?”

“As a business owner, what is your greatest business or community concern? I believe that the Chamber may offer a solution to your problem. Can we meet for 15 minutes so I can share what the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce is doing to deal with this issue?”

If YES – Set date and time.

If “SEND INFO IN MAIL” – continue with script.

“I will do that, but the information may create more questions than answers. I can tell you’re busy and if you want to make productive use of your time, can we meet for 15 minutes so I can review the information and respond to any questions you may have?”

If YES – Set date and time.

If “SEND INFO IN MAIL” – “I’ll get some information out to you in today’s mail. I’ll call you next week to make sure you’ve received the information and answer any questions. Thanks for your time.”