

## **CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR UPCOMING EVENT – Grand Opening, After Hours Mixer, General Open House**

The success of whatever type of event you decide depends upon your ability to be a good promoter, good host and a bit of a showman. The main idea is to attract people to your place of business and then to keep them interested while they attend the event.

Whether you are an existing business or new to the community, there are various events you should consider; Open House, Grand Opening Events, After Hours Mixers.

### **EXISTING BUSINESSES**

**OPEN HOUSE RECEPTIONS** - These receptions involve sending invitations to friends and family, neighboring businesses, vendors, etc. As a Chamber member, you can utilize the Member News & Events email and the Chamber's website Community Calendar to advertise the event. Opening Receptions traditionally have some type of refreshments available to guests and are designed to introduce them to the business. Tours may be given of the business and business cards and/or brochures may be given to guests.

**AFTER HOUR MIXERS** (5pm to 7pm) – The After Hour Mixers are specific to Chamber members only. Mixers are available to any Chamber member interested in promoting their business, however, before scheduling a mixer, the Chamber requires that you have previously attended and supported other Chamber mixers during the after hours event. There is a cost of \$100 in which the Chamber emails an invitation to the 600+ database.

To host a mixer, the Chamber will email your event to the 600+ business contacts using 1) an invitation created by you in pdf format or 2) the Chamber can create the invitation for the email announcement. The business will also provide food and refreshments during the event. Announcements will be made at 6pm. For more information, please call the Chamber at 847-658-5300.

### **BUSINESS NEW TO THE COMMUNITY**

**GRAND OPENING EVENTS** – When hosting a Grand Opening Event, keep in mind this is the opening phase of your business. Planning and consideration will be the key to your long-term success. This needs to be an event with impact. A Grand Opening usually consists of a marketing plan, advertisements, invitations, in-house specials, etc.

Grand Opening celebrations will incur expenses depending upon the marketing plan. There could be radio, television and/or newspaper advertisements, in addition to invitations and flyers. If there are refreshments, these will add to the cost of the event. A Grand Opening celebration can be as simple or complex as you choose but either will have expenses. You may also decide to have a ribbon cutting along with your grand opening.

**RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY** - Ribbon cutting and ground breaking events consist of a formal ceremony with Chamber Ambassadors, Chamber Staff and Chamber Board members in attendance. The Chamber will supply the scissors and ribbon for the cutting ceremony. You are encouraged to send invitations to friends, family and customers.

When planning your event, be sure to consider the following:

1. **Develop a budget:** Establish a budget based on available finances. An event need not be expensive but the amount of money available will determine whether or not you have invitations printed, food catered, etc.
2. **Set the date and time:** You will need to check with the Chamber to determine when the best time is for your Mixer. Usually 5:00PM to 7:00pm is best typically Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. In addition, you need to allow time to secure and mail invites as well as make other arrangements for your event.
3. **Space restrictions:** You need to look at the space available for the event. Determine how many people the space can adequately handle. Consider the need for certain space for people to gather and talk in small groups, the need for a refreshment table, the need for space to take a picture, etc. The space restrictions will determine how many people you invite.
4. **Invitations:** Invitations can be hand-made, computer generated or store bought. Any of these is acceptable but the simpler, the better. Do not clutter the invitation with a lot of pictures or wording. Get the point across in short one-line bullet points. Be sure to mention your business name, address, phone, email, web site, time, date, place, what the event is, if an RSVP is necessary, call back number, etc. If you are going to serve food and refreshments, you should also mention this. Develop a guest list and recheck it several times to be sure that no one has been inadvertently overlooked. Be sure to send the invitations well in advance. When using the Chamber's bulk permit, allow plenty of time for delivery.
5. **Food & Refreshments:** The budget you develop will determine whether or not the event will be catered or if you will make the refreshments. If money, time, etc. is an issue, possibly partner with a local restaurant to arrange cross promotion.
6. **Alcohol vs. No Alcohol:** The decision to offer alcohol is strictly up to you. The Chamber assumes no liability if alcohol is served. Your responsibility in regard to the law is to: not serve to a minor (under 21 yrs. of age), not allow someone who is already impaired to consume alcohol, and to not allow someone who is already impaired to leave your event and get behind the wheel of a vehicle. If alcohol is served, no one is to go outside with alcohol in their hand in a commercial setting. Be sure no one leaves with an open container.
7. **Be prepared to do business:** At a Chamber event, members will come to your event and will possibly do business. If you provide a service, expect to get some leads to follow-up and if you are a retail business, expect to do some business. Have your cash register unlocked and if necessary, have someone helping you with the event and sales. You will need to be moving around the crowd to greet as many people as possible and to possibly give tours of your business. Having help will free you to do this.
8. **Miscellaneous:** There are many other considerations in planning your event. Below are a few examples and you will probably think of your own. Give each some thought and integrate whatever you decide into your overall plans and especially your budget.
  - \* Themed Event and/or Decorations
  - \* Drawings for door prizes (gets you the names and addresses of attendees for a future mailing)
  - \* Tours of the business / facility
  - \* Background Music
  - \* Pictures (other than Chamber-arranged pictures)
9. **Thank You Cards:** Remember that your opening event establishes your relationship with the community, business partners and all who took part in the event. Sending Thank You cards to all who attended keeps your event and business fresh in everyone's mind in addition to bringing back memories of the event. This is a great way to solidify your business in the community!

*Sandy/chamber/forms/2010/event considerations*