

Knoxville Chamber
Marketing & Communications Plan
2015-16

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Who We Are

The Knoxville Chamber has been part of the fabric of the Knoxville community for 146 years. While the name of the organization has changed many times since its founding as the Board of Trade in 1869, the purpose has remained the same – to advocate on behalf of the business community.

Today, the Knoxville Chamber is made up of more than 2,200 member businesses, 85% of which employ 50 or fewer employees. The organization is led by a 45-member board of directors, and an 11-member executive committee. Volunteers are a key to the organization's success with more than 130 actively engaged as Ambassadors or committee members. The Chamber employs 28 full-time staff members. Marketing and communications efforts are overseen by the Senior Vice President of Membership, and led by a staff of four (Vice President of Marketing & Events, Art Director, Communications and Marketing Manager, and a Marketing Coordinator dedicated to economic development efforts), with input from a 10-member marketing committee.

In addition to serving its member businesses by providing a full-range of benefits, the Chamber also serves as the contracted economic development agency for the City of Knoxville and Knox County. The Knoxville Chamber also manages Innovation Valley, a regional economic development initiative made up of eight partner agencies.

The Chamber's mission has long been *Driving Regional Economic Prosperity* and everything the organization does is with this outcome in mind.

What We Do

The Chamber helps drive the region's economic prosperity through our economic development efforts and through the expansive menu of benefits we provide our members and the business community at-large.

As the contracted economic development agency for the City of Knoxville and Knox County, the Chamber's economic development staff is charged with attracting new businesses to the area and helping existing companies expand. We market the city, county, and region to global businesses in an effort to have them relocate or expand their businesses here. While this sounds elementary on the surface, it is a complex process that requires confidentiality and patience. Our efforts in this arena are predicated by a five year strategic plan – Innovation Valley Blueprint 2.0, which was launched in 2013 and drafted by a consultant. Innovation Valley has a dedicated marketing budget for economic development activities that is separate from the Chamber's marketing budget.

Less sexy but just as important to the economic vitality of area are the business development resources, opportunities, and support the Chamber provides its members and the area business community at large. Operating on a tiered benefits model which was adopted in 2008, we recognize one size does not fit all and that the number of employees a company has does not necessarily dictate the desired depth

of Chamber engagement that businesses desire. Members are able to join one of six base-tier levels or one of five Premier Partner levels. They select the level they join at based on the benefits they want to receive. There are nearly 50 different benefits offered to members at the six base tiers and just over 30 additional benefits offered at the Premier Partner levels.

Benefits include but are not limited to:

- Networking opportunities
- Educational seminars for professional and business development
- Marketing opportunities
- Member discounts
- Access to business mentors through the Propel Program
- Exposure on iKnowKnoxville.com – the Chamber’s online business directory
- Access to business news and information
- Access to ChamberMemberMD, an online business assessment tool
- Advocacy efforts at the local and state levels to protect the interests of the business community

While the majority of our benefits are exclusive to our members, we do support all businesses in the area through our economic development efforts to retain and expand existing businesses, as well as through our advocacy efforts.

Who We Do It For

Part of the challenge we have found in marketing the Chamber in the past is that we have a wide variety of target audiences we need to cater to. Each audience has a very different message they are wanting to hear. Our target audiences include:

- Chamber Members
 - Can be divided into as many as 11 different sub-audiences based on membership tier and what we are trying to communicate
- Prospects
 - Membership – requiring different messages for companies of various sizes and stages of maturity
 - Economic Development – requiring targeted communications depending on the sub-audience (site selectors, target industry representatives, etc.)
- Area Business Community At-Large
- Government/Elected Officials
- General Public

How Are We Doing

A snapshot of the Knoxville Chamber would reveal it to be a highly successful organization. We were named the 2011 Chamber of the Year by our peers at the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE). Membership numbers are impressive for a market the size of Knoxville. The Chamber experienced two consecutive years of 2-point increases in retention, boasting a 90% retention rate for 2013-14. Our account executives are recognized annually by ACCE as some of the leading sales generators in the country. Our Vice President of Economic Development was named one of the Top 50

economic developers in the country, and our Executive Vice President was honored with the 2015 Site Selectors Guild Excellence in Economic Development award.

All that said, we do not rest on our laurels. We are very introspective about areas where we need to improve. Within the last 18 months we have conducted a SWOT analysis, a membership survey, and a messaging retreat with the Chamber's marketing committee. All three exercises have provided us with valuable information to help us not only develop this marketing and communications plan, but also enhance our organizational strategic plan.

Issues brought to light that we want to address over the coming year:

- 49% of our Chamber members do not know their membership level (much less the benefits they receive at that level)
- Many new members are intimidated by networking at our events
- New members need better direction on taking advantage of their membership benefits
- The perception of longstanding members is that the same people attend our events

2015-16 GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

What We Want/Why We Want It

On the macro level, we would like our marketing efforts to lead to two significant outcomes: new member acquisitions and increased member engagement. We will use the following metrics to determine our progress towards these goals:

1. Increase new users on knoxvillechamber.com by 10% (37,335 in 2013-14) – The more new users we expose to our website the better chance we have of increasing online applications submitted.
2. Increase the number of online membership applications submitted each month from an average of 7 to an average of 10. Warm/hot leads are always better than cold calls and while our conversion rate for people who visit our online application and actually join is good we see this as an area for growth (927 visits to the online application; 83 application submissions equating to 72 new members in 2013-14). Attempt to structure the application so we can have an idea of at what point the process is being abandoned by so many people.
3. Increase open rate of Chamber email communications to an average of 27% (currently average 25%). The more people who read our emails, the more people know what we are doing and how we are impacting the business community. This will help increase event attendance and general awareness about the Chamber.
4. Increase retention of first year members from 48% to 55%. Engaged members are happy members so improving our first-year retention numbers will be an indicator that we are having success with engaging new members sooner. This percent increase would equate to one total point in the overall retention percentage which is worth approximately \$17,000.
5. Increase promo page views on iKnowKnoxville.com by 120,000/year (587,679 page views in 2014). By providing our members with an online marketing platform that is heavily trafficked we are providing them with a valuable, measurable benefit which warrants engagement.

6. Increase the number of members who know their membership level to 70% (a 21-point increase from the 2014 Membership Survey). If we can better educate membership on their membership level we can better educate them on the benefits available to them.
7. Continue to increase social media engagement by 10% across each of our three actively used platforms (Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube). Social media provides us yet another avenue to connect with the general public and not only tell our story but help to tell our members stories.
8. Increase Chamber member spending through the Office Depot Chamber Advantage program by \$100,000 (\$495,000 for 13-14 and a \$100,000 increase in member spending would equate to \$5,000 in residuals to the Chamber). Once again, engaged members are more likely to utilize the Chamber Advantage discount on a regular basis.

How We Are Going to Achieve It

- Drive more traffic to knoxvillechamber.com to increase online application conversions; better inform our members about programs, benefits, and events; and create more awareness about who we are and what we do.
 - Engage in a comprehensive inbound marketing campaign that integrates the following digital marketing assets and allows us to customize our message by buyer persona:
 - Blogging – establish ourselves as a thought leader in all things business by creating blog content that is regularly updated, relevant, and informative.
 - White Papers, e-Books, “how to” videos – by creating a library of high-value resources for businesspeople and promoting them through social media channels, we can drive more traffic to our website and identify prospects through pre-download questionnaires (landing pages).
 - Social Media – continue to use social media to not only promote Chamber programs, services, and events, but also promote our members. Continue to look for ways to engage our audience to move them from passive followers to active promoters.
 - Website Analytics – better utilize website analytics to enable us to understand the traffic patterns and needs of our online audiences.
- Engage new members sooner through a combination of automated and personal touches.
 - Continue to send auto-generated email to new members reminding them how to take advantage of the benefits now available to them.
 - Resurrect the member-to-member “welcome” phone call utilizing the membership committee and ambassadors. Chamber staff will “match-make” the member-to-member assignments instead of randomly assigning them to make them more productive. An updated script or list of bullet points for the conversation will be provided by Chamber staff.
 - Craft personal email from the designated account executive to new members within the first 60 days personally inviting them to attend the next New Member Orientation. This will replace the event-specific invite sent out through Constant Contact.
 - Continue to develop the “Connector Table” at Chamber networking events – providing new members with the opportunity to connect with a veteran member and get connected to other members.

- Be more personal in our member-directed communication efforts in order to both inform and encourage engagement.
 - Personalize all Chamber email blasts utilizing the member's name, their company, and their membership level at the top of the email correspondence.
- Be more targeted in our member-directed communication efforts.
 - Better utilize our database to identify and communicate topics our individual members want to hear about.
 - Send out a short survey asking members the type of communication they want to receive and enter responses in database. We will pull lists based on this information.
- Utilize traditional marketing vehicles to continue to promote the following Chamber programs/benefits:
 - Office Depot Chamber Advantage Program – Per directives from OD, market the program twice a month via email to our members and update webpage to adhere to new call-to-action guidelines.
 - iKnowKnoxville.com – Utilize trade agreement to re-engage a billboard campaign. Promote in applicable print ads (Dogwood Arts Special Insert, UT Football Program, Chamber publications, etc). Buy Facebook ads during the Fall to drive traffic during UT football season.
 - Customer Satisfaction Survey – Continue to use Chamber-owned assets to promote the Customer Satisfaction Survey in order to maintain a finger on the pulse of our membership and the business community at large.
- Continue to communicate with our members, the local business community, and/or the media about who we are and what we do through the following channels:
 - *Commerce* – Our newsletter is the last 12 pages of the *Greater Knoxville Business Journal*. In the Annual Membership Survey, the subscription to the GKBJ was identified as the most valued benefit by survey respondents. We need to continue to effectively utilize this important and popular communications piece.
 - *Weekly Email Digest* – With an average open rate of 24%, which is significantly higher than the industry average (9% for membership organizations), our weekly email update that is sent out to more than 5,000 individuals is an important piece of our communications/marketing efforts.
 - Meltwater PR – Continue to utilize Meltwater PR solution to send out Innovation Valley and Chamber press releases to global media outlets and track social media and traditional media mentions about both entities.
 - *Know Knoxville* Relocation Magazine – Continue to partner with Visit Knoxville to publish a comprehensive publication targeted to both tourists and people looking to relocate to the area.
 - General Chamber collateral materials – Everything from event signage to sales brochures to public advocacy materials are created by the marketing team.
 - Surveys – Continue to survey our membership at least once a year about the benefits they find valuable to ensure we are remaining relevant. Survey non-members on their feelings and perceptions about the Chamber and what we do.

How Much Will It Cost

We have budgeted for an additional \$16,000 on top of our annual marketing expense budget of \$30,000 to cover the subscription fees associated with the marketing automation software.