

Chamber membership – a solid move!

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



During these times of increased costs, economic slowing, reduced visitor counts, chal-

lenging legislation and infrastructure issues, it is getting tougher for businesses to survive. Yet, at the Maui Chamber of Commerce, we help members move forward by being proactive, staying positive, making connections, improving ways of doing business, and standing strong together.

Our services to build and enhance business, economic and community prosperity include:

- Legislative advocacy

We serve as an effective non-partisan, nonsectarian voice for business on legislative, business, social, governmental and community issues affecting Maui.

Business owners are so busy running their business and sustaining operations and employees that it is impractical for them to get involved in the legislative process — a fact often misunderstood by legislators, who ask why business owners do not attend meetings. Yet, businesses constantly are faced with a barrage of legislation that impacts the cost of and how they do business.

The Maui Chamber of Commerce advocates on a wide variety of issues, providing testimony, holding forums and workshops, making recommenda-

tions, preparing reports and suggesting language for legislation. We presently are working on home occupation, transient-vacation rentals, and workers' compensation (we hope the governor will veto several measures) legislation.

- Proactive planning

We strive to identify and overcome obstacles that are detrimental to the business climate and community growth.

Currently, we are reviewing and will make recommendations on the Maui Island Plan because this document will guide future development.

We are addressing existing infrastructure challenges (such as airport expansion, modernization of Kahului Harbor, additional hospitals, improved roads/highways, the Lahaina Bypass, parking solutions, water- and waste-treatment system expansion and upkeep, protection against alien species, etc.) and planning for the future to sustain our economy, environment and quality of life.

- Networking and relationship-building opportunities

We continually present opportunities to meet people, make contacts and exchange ideas — averaging more than 24 events a year. Our monthly Business After Hours sessions average 100-plus attendees at a cost of \$10 per member. It is a great deal for an evening of networking, refreshments, fun and prizes. The major luncheons and gatherings draw crowds of 200-plus.

All of our functions are attended by Maui business leaders: business owners and upper-management members who are the

decision makers for their companies. Priced affordably, the events allow chamber members to make numerous contacts in a relatively short period of time and help build long-term relationships, essential for sustaining a business and making lifelong friends.

- Advertising and promotional opportunities

When things slow, a knee-jerk reaction can be to curtail marketing efforts when businesses instead should improve their presence, make their name “top of mind,” get essential messages out, bring in new customers and expand sales. A variety of cost-effective advertising and promotional opportunities exists for members to meet those objectives.

Print advertising is available in our quarterly Connections newsletter and our annual directory. Both reach more than 5,000 Maui businesses and appeal to visitors. Electronic-media advertising is offered on our Web site that reaches a broad audience of those interested in Maui, as well as local businesses and residents; and in our eNews sent to 900-plus members each week. Event sponsorships are also an excellent way to reach large groups of industry leaders and share your support with the community.

- Business education and training, and work-force development

Encouraging lifelong learning, we deliver a variety of education and training programs to strengthen businesses and further develop the work force. Recently, we continued our Maui

Business/Education partnership, bringing business leaders to Lahainaluna High School to assist students in considering career choices beyond the agriculture and visitor industries; held our annual labor law seminar; joined Maui Community College to hold the TIPS (Training in Interpersonal Skills) program; linked with the Small Business Administration to bring a veterans-outreach program to Maui; co-organized a video teleconference between Hong Kong, Honolulu and Maui to aid companies interested in doing business with China; and co-hosted the Maui Tech Expo, where technology seminars were held.

We are now teaming up with Glenn Furuya of Leadership Works to provide “The Leadership Code” — practical thought and behavioral patterns that yield peak individual and team performance — as free workshops to chamber members June 6.

- Being solutions driven

We are a solutions-driven organization, assisting members with the challenges they face individually and collectively on a daily basis. Using our extensive resources, we help businesses connect the dots.

Annual membership begins at \$284.35, and our value proposition gives new members an immediate return on that investment. In these economic times, businesses can't afford not to be a Maui Chamber of Commerce member. Join us. It not only makes sense; it is a solid move!

■ *Pamela Tumpap is president of the Maui Chamber of Commerce.*