



Guide to Successful Chamber Blogs Part One: Creating a Blog Strategy & Hooking Audiences with an Engaging Topic

Introduction

Blogging is a cost effective public relations tactic that allows chambers to facilitate and enhance their relationships with the community. The blog format is a unique tool that allows you to communicate with a greater speed and precision than traditional media. Visitors to your blog will be able to view information that is easy to find, fresh, and pertinent.

As great a tool as a blog is, many chambers find it challenging to decide how and what to write about. Incorporating your blog into your marketing mix is not always simple. After working with chambers for many years on social media, online strategies, and website development, Accrisoft has developed a 12 part white paper series guiding chambers on successful blogging with tips, tactics, and engaging topics. Learn how to develop a winning strategy and hook audiences with this hot topic: membership.

Create a Strategy that Creates Attention

Your blog, like any part of your marketing, public relations, and communications plan, needs a strategy, including determining objectives, creating an editorial process, and informing readers that your blog has debuted.

Determining the objective of your blog is key. It can be used to communicate your purpose, initiatives, benefits of your city, support for public policy, announcing events, and talking about important issues facing your area's business leaders. One way to prioritize objects is to seek a reference point for the community. Peruse other area blogs – what are people talking about? What is most important to businesses and residents? Offer comments to these blogs on behalf of the chamber. Your comments can also include a link to the chamber's blog.

You will also want to create an editorial process for blogging. Think about who needs to look at the piece and offer feedback before it goes live and schedule accordingly. Also, this is the time to determine tone and voice. Blogs should be written in a conversational tone, less formal than the majority of some of your other web content, yet it should sound consistent as though all your communications have a common voice. The tone of your blog is important in engaging readers. Remember to write to your audience, keep blogs concise, and inform your readers.

People need to know about your blog before they can read it. They also need to know when it is updated. Get the word out with email campaigns, social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, and updating your home page when you create new content. Sites like Technorati list popular blogs for further recognition.

You can freely 'tag' a blog post with more than one subject if the content matches multiple subjects. Tagging makes the blog – taken as one long, continually updated document – more searchable for readers and bloggers alike.



On Topic: Membership

The more relevant the content is to readers, the more interest you generate. What do your members or potential members want to read or be informed about by the chamber? A great start to hooking readers is to create membership-oriented blog posts. This type of blog post reminds readers how much the chamber appreciates their commitment to the community and that their chamber membership empowers them to contribute their opinions to critical discussions in a meaningful way. A successful chamber engages its members before it acts on their behalf, and an updated, open blog will facilitate immediate input and feedback from members.

Key Tips and Ideas for the Blogger:

- ROI on membership: Identify in specific terms the value of membership and update members on upcoming or new benefits to membership.
- Promote events, meetings and other activities: Encourage participation by members and non-members for upcoming events. After events, post photos and comments about how great the event was.
- Membership advantages: Do your members receive discounts or other perks because of their membership? Highlight current advantages and spotlight any new ones.
- Request feedback from members on current matters: Start an open dialogue with members to better gauge opinions about those issues in your neighborhoods. Create a post that defines the facts about an issue so that members know they can trust the blog as a legitimate resource. Make sure you are providing information not misinformation.

Blogging may seem like sending sentences out into the abyss of the Internet, but with a strategy in place that defines your objectives, process, and information loop, those posts will be landing on numerous screens across your city. In addition, good content makes a blog memorable and keeps readers coming back for more.