

Planning a Grand Opening, Anniversary or Special Event

Are you planning a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony for your new or expanded business? Perhaps your firm is celebrating a significant anniversary and you want to celebrate the occasion? The Adams County Chamber of Commerce is delighted to help your business celebrate with a ceremony if the company has:

- ❖ Opened its doors in the last 6 months
- ❖ Changed ownership or is under new management
- ❖ Moved to a new location due to expansion
- ❖ Has been remodeled or expanded at its present location
- ❖ Is celebrating a milestone anniversary. (10 years, 25 years etc.)

Inside this guide are steps to planning a *successful* event. The steps range from selecting the date to getting media coverage. ***Do not worry; we can help make your event truly special!***

Keep in mind there are many local companies who can assist with your printing needs, your advertising needs and your catering needs. Call the Chamber of Commerce office for a current listing of member businesses that provide these services.

Date Selection

Before you make your decision consider the following:

- ❖ Allow plenty of **preparation time**. If possible, give yourself at least three to four weeks to make arrangements.
- ❖ Avoid holding your event on a major holiday. If you are trying to attract bankers or government, take note of their **holiday work hours**.
- ❖ Avoid conflict with major **community events and activities**. You may lose when competing for attendance.
- ❖ **Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are the best** attendance days for community leaders and business people.
- ❖ Try to **avoid weekends**, unless absolutely necessary.

Choosing a time

- ✔ An important step in the planning process is to determine the **type of special event** you will conduct. Morning functions, for example, will have an entirely different atmosphere and style than an evening cocktail reception. Luncheon gatherings usually require food and beverage.

Consider the following:

- ✔ Few successful special events are early **in the morning** (7:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m.). Morning events should begin no earlier than 8:00 a.m. as a rule.
- ✔ Avoid **late evening** functions. Few people will want to go home change clothes and go out again.
- ✔ **Half-day events, open hours or tours** of your company are not necessary unless you wish to promote your business (such as hotels or new housing developments). If you select a half-day event, be sure to have a designated time for a ribbon cutting or other special ceremony to focus your event.

Invitations

- ✔ **Who you invite** to your event is as important as having the event. Here are some people you may consider inviting:
 - Current, past and potential customers
 - Family and friends
 - Suppliers
 - Your employees and their spouses/guests
 - Media

- Those who helped you get started: Banker, Accountant, Lawyer, Architects/Engineers, all advisors
- Neighboring business people
- Representatives from the Adams County Chamber of Commerce
- Key government officials: Mayor, Town Council Members, Provincial and Federal elected officials.

Note It is important to have correct and current contact information. Even though the contact information can be found at the end of this guide, it would be prudent to confirm the details. Know the proper person in the organization to whom you should be sending information.

- ✔ Prepare a written letter or **very basic invitation** and be sure all critical information is included: who, what, where, when and why.
- ✔ Be sure you identify a **method for confirming attendance**. This may be a request to confirm their attendance by phone. This will allow you to plan for your food and beverage requirements.
- ✔ Allow **plenty of notice**. Two weeks is preferable, but 10 days to a week is ample for most local participants.
- ✔ Depending on the size & type of event (personal invites or open house), a follow-up phone call may be appropriate.
- ✔ It might be necessary to include a map for out of town attendees who require it. The Chamber office can provide maps.
- ✔ Predicting **how many people** will attend is tricky. You can estimate between 20-40 percent of those invited to attend. The percentage of friends and relatives will be much higher than the percentage of courtesy invitations sent.
- ✔ Always provide easy-to-find and **accessible parking** for your guests. Difficulty in finding space to park discourages attendance.

Food and Beverage

- ✔ For **morning events**, coffee, juice, fruit and pastries are perfect.
- ✔ During **late afternoon or early evening** events, light hors d'oeuvres or finger foods are appropriate.
- ✔ It is advisable to enlist the **help of a caterer** if you do not have time to provide your own food and beverage. Caterers can offer good advice. Please check with the Chamber of Commerce office for the most current listing.
- ✔ If you decide to provide your own refreshments, remember to provide sufficient plates, cups, napkins, trashcans and other supply items.

Program Planning

- ✔ Whether you are celebrating a groundbreaking, grand opening, or an anniversary, a brief program adds focus to an event. It provides not only valuable recognition for you and your key people but it makes the event more purposeful and permits you the opportunity to explain more about your business.
- ✔ **The shorter the better**. As a rule, no program or official ceremonies should last longer than 15 minutes. The ideal program time is 10 minutes.
- ✔ An **effective MC** will keep the program moving smoothly and inject some humor when needed. You can run the program if you wish, or ask an experienced friend or request the assistance of the Chamber of Commerce.
- ✔ **Limit the number of speakers** and the length of their speeches.
- ✔ Although the temptation will be to acknowledge nearly everyone attending, **introduce only those who need to be introduced**. Typically, these include elected and civic leaders and your closest associates.
- ✔ **Conclude your program** with some appropriate ceremonial or symbolic activity to commemorate the event; a ribbon cutting for a grand opening, shoveling the first load of dirt for a ground breaking, or cutting a cake for a 50th anniversary of your business. The Chamber of Commerce can supply the **oversized scissors and ribbon** for the ribbon cutting. These are nice ways to let guests know the formal program is over and they create great photo opportunities.

- ✔ **Speakers in any formal program** should include appropriate municipal government representatives, a Chamber of Commerce spokesperson and you. Also include partners to your program, place a reminder call to them the day before the event to confirm their attendance. The Chamber of Commerce can help you with the appropriate order of introduction and speaking of officials.
- ✔ Be sure to **send thank-you letters** soon after your event to anyone who played a key role in staging it, particularly those who took part in the program or ceremonies. A thank-you in the paper may also be appropriate.
- ✔ **Always** try to have a **back-up plan for a rainy day**. This may involve moving indoors at your place of business or to a nearby restaurant, hotel or meeting room.
- ✔ You may want to consider having a door prize or drawing as part of your program. Winning a sample of your product or even dinner at a nice restaurant can add to your guests' enjoyment and perhaps even build attendance.
- ✔ **Donating a financial gift** to a local non-profit group, community group, school or any other special group is a nice way to build rapport with the community. Many companies include the **presentation of the gift** as part of your program.
- ✔ Presentation of the **Chamber Membership Certificate/Package** can also be included in the ceremony for a new member.

Media Coverage

- ✔ Realistically, **you should not expect extensive coverage**, but inviting the media to your special event is definitely worthwhile. Here are some **suggestions** of things you can do to assist the media with covering your event.
- ✔ Send your **invitation to the news directors or editors** at least a week prior to your event. Include a personal letter explaining some details about your company and **why your event is different** or has some significance to the community. Be sure your invitation includes the journalistic basics of who, what, where and why as this may form the basis for the reporter assigned to covering the event.
- ✔ A follow-up or **reminder call** the day before the event is a good idea.

In Summary:

The Chamber of Commerce's role is to:

- ✔ Provide and maintain bookings for the 'big scissors' and ribbon
- ✔ Extend invitations to public officials and media.
- ✔ Ensure the Chamber of Commerce President or designate attends and do a welcoming presentation if requested.
- ✔ Present a Chamber of Commerce Package and/or certificate.
- ✔ Offer additional assistance and referrals as requested by the business.
- ✔ Communicate the special events to the membership

The Business Owner's role is to:

- ✔ Notify the Executive Director of Chamber of Commerce of the date, time and location of the event.
- ✔ Provide a brief bio of the business and its owners to assist the presenters with their welcoming speeches as well as the media with its write up.
- ✔ Book the scissors and ribbon from the Chamber of Commerce.

CALL 544-5454 WITH ANY QUESTIONS!