



CHAMBER NEWSLETTER

CHAMBER NEWS



Travis Palmer,
Executive Director

A Note from the Director

Is your business ready for spring? Not being ready for business can be almost as bad as not being open for it. No matter what the reason, an inability to serve your customers' needs opens the door for competitors to step in and win the business. It also destroys the trust that you have spent countless amounts of time, energy and resources to earn from your customers. Many of Cottage Grove's businesses are about to enter their busiest time of year so now is the time to take advantage of the calm before the storm. The following is a list of ten things that any business owner can do to convert down time into prep time.

1. Check your crucial systems for conducting business and make sure that they are functioning at peak performance. Clean up your hard drive, make sure important data is backed up, and be sure to perform preventative maintenance on all critical equipment. Imagine how you would be able to function if your hard drive fails or if your HVAC or refrigeration system goes down. Think of the most critical pieces of equipment that are imperative to running your business and what you can do to prevent breakdowns and create backup systems in case something goes down unexpectedly.

2. Secure your supply lines. You should know exactly how long it takes to replenish inventory and supplies. Look at your peak usage level and use that to determine when to place an order so that you never lose a sale due to "being out of stock." Survey your vendors and service providers so you'll know about any potential supply or service interruptions and you can stock up ahead of time. Also, find out what other sources you can go to so that if your primary supplier goes away, you'll know exactly where to find what you need and you won't waste valuable time searching.

3. Fix the little things. If ignored, small issues will soon add up to big problems. Change light bulbs, fix broken fixtures, organize supply and storage areas. Lighting is important. If you are using old fluorescent bulbs, it's a good idea to replace them since they turn dingy and dim over time. One bad bulb may not be noticeable but two or three can dramatically change the entire look and feel of the environment. New bulbs will be brighter and whiter which makes everything look better.

4. Clean up your front line. Anything visible to your clients should be clean, organized and presentable. That especially includes the front of your store. A dingy, uninviting exterior will prevent people from walking in the door, long before they've even had a chance to see what you have to offer. Remove graffiti immediately and make sure display windows and sidewalks are clean and free of debris or obstructions. The first minute of every day should be spent looking at your place of business from the outside.

5. Re-evaluate policies and update procedures. Nothing should be off limits when it comes to thinking about how to

improve or streamline your business. Hours of operation, products and services, marketing strategies, displays, even job duties should be looked at from time to time to determine if they are in line with your current mission and goals.

6. Train yourself and your staff. Zig Ziglar said, "The only thing worse than training employees and losing them is not training them and keeping them." The best athletes in the world are constantly training and you should be no different. Keep training yourself and don't forget your staff. If you rely on them, train them every chance you get.

7. Research current trends in your industry. Find out who among your peers are struggling, who is successful and most importantly, find out why. Is emerging technology going to help or hinder your business? Where are your customers going and where are they coming from? Knowing the answers to these questions can help keep you ahead of the curve of innovation and emerging markets.

8. Review your budget for unnecessary expenses or lost income. You should always pay attention to your budget but use slower periods to take the extra time to perform an internal audit. Look for excessive or unnecessary expenses as well as losses of expected income that you may not have noticed when things were busy.

9. Educate your faithful supporters so they can become your sales force. Your best customers should also be your best referral sources. Your fans want to refer business to you but it's up to you to teach them how and it may not be as obvious as you think. The people around you should know what makes a good referral and what you can offer that your competitors can't. Training shouldn't be limited to you and your staff.

10. Use your Chamber of Commerce membership. We are here to promote, advocate, and provide opportunity for businesses. There are chamber networking and educational events all year long. Schedule time to attend these functions and come ready to meet new people and talk about your company. Contact your board representative or the chamber office with any questions or concerns and don't be afraid to ask about what we are doing to help your business.

Almost every business in every industry has slower and busier times of the year. If you take advantage of the slower times, to prepare for the busy ones, you'll have fewer unexpected problems and be able to respond quickly, with clear purpose and greater confidence than your less-prepared competitors. There is no such thing as downtime, there is only prep time.

Travis Palmer, Executive Director
Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce

March Business after Hours

This month Hard Knocks Brewing will host Business After Hours on Thursday, March 19 from 5:30 – 7:00pm, 1024 E. Main Street. Please join us to mingle with and find out more about your fellow chamber member businesses. Bring your business card to enter the door prize drawing, enjoy some delicious hors d'oeuvres, learn something new, and have some fun! Your attendance reinforces the spirit in which the Chamber provides these monthly activities. We look forward to seeing you there! Many thanks to those who support our efforts and your fellow Chamber members by attending this Chamber program.

MEMBER NEWS

We encourage you to support Chamber member businesses and our local economy and "Shop Chamber Members first"!

NEW MEMBER

Please join us and welcome our newest chamber member

Hot Shots Coffee
Adrienne Lewis
185 Thornton Road
(541) 942-7874
Drive-thru Espresso

Renewing Members:

Thank you for your continuous support of our efforts through your membership and your commitment to helping make Cottage Grove a better place to live and do business. We look forward to a successful and profitable year!

Cottage Grove Community Development Corporation, First American Title, Grace Olson, Jonathan Backer, DDS, Lily of the Field, Manngiano's Pizzeria, Earthclick.net, Dirtcheapcopies.com, Carousel House B&B & Catering, Bohemia Sunrises Kiwanis, Coast Fork Watershed Council, CEO Consultants, Cottage Grove Community Foundation, Elisabeth Chandra LaHusen, Cottage Grove Community Acupuncture, Mickey's Affordable Auto Sales, Ziplocal, The Flower Basket & Gift Boutique, Coast Fork Watershed Council, Jack Sprats, LLC.

"Shop Chamber Members first"!

Seeking Great Musical Acts

The Chamber of Commerce Concerts in the Park are a popular summertime tradition for many families in Cottage Grove. We are planning our 2015 band line-up and we want to know who your favorite local musical groups are. Who should we bring back to the Bohemia Park Amphitheater? The new venue has provided us with better sound, better facilities, and better attendance than we've ever had before. We hope that you'll join us starting June 17th through September 9th, every Wednesday evening at 6:30 PM for free music and fun! Send your band suggestions to info@cgchamber.com



2015 Chamber Board of Directors, Advisors and Staff

Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce

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2015 Chamber Board of Directors: Thank you for your hours upon hours of volunteer time, commitment, and service!

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