

Chamber Channels

A PUBLICATION OF THE AFFILIATED CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
OF GREATER SPRINGFIELD, INC.

Serving Agawam, East Longmeadow/Longmeadow, Hampden/Wilbraham,
Ludlow, Springfield, West Springfield and the Women's Partnership

September 2009

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**Affiliated Chambers of
Commerce of Greater
Springfield, Inc.**

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President's Message

The ACCGS is proud to announce a partnership with a new virtual membership organization dedicated to connecting business professionals and to stimulating environmental business development and economic growth in Western Massachusetts. Called GreenSpringfield, the new organization brings professionals from small businesses, green initiatives, and green businesses together online to share their knowledge about a wide range of topics, including new developments in green technologies, best practices in business, and business-building information.

ACCGS members will be able to take advantage of reduced membership fees in GreenSpringfield, paying just \$35 a year for membership. This is a \$50 savings from the regular GreenSpringfield dues of \$85 a year.

GreenSpringfield members will receive a business Web profile on the social network that increases their exposure on the Internet, access to a blog where they can both read information provided by local business owners and post their own information, an events calendar highlighting area seminars and workshops, and a monthly eNewsletter keeping members up to date with new business and green information.

To join GreenSpringfield, visit
<http://www.greenspringfield.com>.



Legislative Update

The summer grinds on with no major legislative activity on Beacon Hill. Some data has come out though that will certainly have an effect on what will take place in the fall.

Revenues for the month of July came in \$ 29 million below what had been forecast. While one month does not make a very accurate predictor of the full year ahead, it caused enough concern that the Governor vetoed some of the money for many programs that the legislature had passed in a supplemental budget for Fiscal Year 2010. It seems any action such as overriding some of these vetoes will wait until the fall when revenues for at least August will be known.

Some other data that has come in is that the Unemployment Insurance Fund is running out of money due to the double effect of higher unemployment and less money being paid into the fund by employers due to lower payrolls. In rough numbers, for calendar year 2009, employer contributions will be around \$ 1.5 billion, while benefit payments will total \$ 2.6 billion. While the fund does have a surplus now, that balance is expected to be down to around \$ 240 million at the end of the year and by the end of 2010 will have a deficit of over \$ 600 million. The good

We're excited about this new partnership and the benefits it will bring to our members. Using the power of the Internet to meet new people and to learn about green initiatives and green businesses in our region is sure to provide greater visibility and new business opportunities to our members who join GreenSpringfield. I encourage everyone to take advantage of this partnership.

As always, please remember, should there be issues or concerns that you have that you believe the Chamber should be more closely involved in, feel free to contact me directly at denver@myonlinechamber.com.

Russell F. Denver
President, ACCGS

Happy Anniversary!

Every month the Affiliated Chambers of Commerce honors those members who have continuously supported our mission throughout the years. The following members joined in the month of September. Happy Anniversary!

1 Year Anniversary

America's Box Choice, LLC
Curry Printing
Hatch Mott MacDonald
Home Instead Senior Care
Maria Acuna Real Estate, LLC
McCaffrey's Public House
Morgan Stanley
Rick Forgay Leadership Institute
The Magic Spoon
Tighe & Bond, Inc.
T-Mobile USA
WP- Jill Wallis
WP- Michelle Cavo

5 Year Anniversary

Score Western Massachusetts

news is the Massachusetts fund is healthier than most other states. The bad news is that as the fund balance declines, contribution rates (UI Tax) go up. While the Chamber is aggressively seeking ways to keep this increase as small as possible, the administration's projections are for a 30% increase for 2010. Our efforts with the administration and legislature will continue. If you are concerned, you should express that concern to your legislators now.

Other issues were listed in the email that you as our member should have received on August 4, 2009. The email listed the priority issues being dealt with by the Legislative Steering Committee's sub committees.

On the federal level, the Chamber is closely watching the health care debate; a debate that mirrors the one Massachusetts engaged in for over one year ending with the health care reform law of a few years ago. Much has been said about the Massachusetts model during the federal debate, and much of what has been said has not been factual. Michael Widmer, President of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, has countered these claims stating that the Massachusetts model has worked, over 96% of our residents are enrolled, and the cost to the state has been less than an additional \$ 100 million per year.

We are concerned that changes on the federal level will not be as effective as on the state level, penalties assessed on businesses, mostly small businesses will be onerous, and

WP- Jennifer Midura D'Amour

WP- Michelle P. McBride

10 Year Anniversary

Bombard Insurance Agency, Inc.

CMD Technology Group, Inc.

Vinson Associates

WP- Jane Lawrence

WP- Judy Borrero

15 Year Anniversary

Balboni Associates, Inc.

Mercier Carpet Service, Inc.

Waters Associates, LLC

WP- Patricia Macmillan

20 Year Anniversary

Allard & Allard, CPA's

Dion & Sons Masonry, Inc.

Silverson Machines, Inc.

Yankee Technology, Inc.

25 Year Anniversary

Reliable Temps, Inc.

30 Year Anniversary

Carellas Insurance Agency, Inc.

How to Make Marketing Work

(if you're serious about
making marketing work)

By John Graham

Successful marketing depends on one basic concept. To find it, start by peeling away the corporate jargon and the pompous pronouncements of the would-be gurus. If you're lucky, you may stumble on marketing's core

that our effective health care providers and insurers in Massachusetts will be put at risk. We will continue to monitor this situation and we will continue to work on issues on the state level to reduce the increase in health care premiums and hopefully move from increases to actual decreases in premium cost.

Much of what takes place in Boston will probably take a back seat to what is anticipated to be a spirited debate on legalizing gaming in Massachusetts. The Chamber continues to be concerned about issues regarding this subject that could affect our members from the availability of workers to the diversion of dollars from existing businesses. It is felt this debate will begin in earnest later in September and continue until they break for the year on November 18, 2009.

The fall is a busy time on Beacon Hill. The session ends on the 18th of November which makes the Government Reception, on the 19th of November a great opportunity to unwind with our elected officials and have some timely conversation. Register now! In the mean time, if you do have some thoughts you want to share with me, feel free to get those thoughts to me at ciuffreda@myonlinechamber.com

Jeffrey Ciuffreda

Vice President,
Government Affairs

Welcome New Members!

concept: *focus total attention on the customer--not on the product or the company--just the customer.*

To state the issue as clearly as possible, marketing fails when companies act as if telling their story is the main objective. Such thinking undermines marketing by pushing the customer out of the picture.

"We have a program that's a perfect fit for your client," the radio sales rep announces. This is a person who doesn't know anything about the client except that it has nearly 50 locations throughout the region. This is the same person who doesn't have the foggiest notion about the client's marketing objectives, but who announces boldly that his media outlets are "a perfect fit."

Although this is the perfect strategy for marketing failure, it doesn't need to be this way. That said, here are seven guidelines for making marketing work.

1. Don't think about anything other than the customer. To put it bluntly, most companies get in the way of good marketing. No matter what they say, they act as if their marketing should be about them. It should showcase what they sell or what they do. Absolutely nothing could be farther from the truth.

A company serving high-end consumers developed a new website with excellent eye appeal. While it looked good, they failed to take the consumer into consideration. The website is all about the company.

Someone sold the company the website they wanted. There's no effort to engage the customer, other than to sign up for a service and even then, there is no provision for using a credit card, let alone get more information or express an opinion.

This wasn't done deliberately. Chances are it happened because the web designers spent their time meeting with company management. No one thought about who would be using the website--the customers. And of course, management thought it was a great site.

Companies and organizations listed here have made an important investment in their business and in the community by joining the Chamber. Do business with Chamber members-it's good business!

Castlehill Management & Consulting, LLC

85 High Pine Circle
Wilbraham, MA 01095
Thomas Canty, Owner
(413) 599-0437
Management Consultant

Ledoux Investment & Retirement Solutions

P.O. Box 657
Ludlow, MA 01056
Pete Ledoux, Certified Financial Planner
(413) 636-9082
Financial Planning Consultants

Tanya's Beauty Salon

991 Main Street
Springfield, MA 01103
Tanya Torres, Owner
(413) 732-9533
Beauty Salons

USI Insurance Services

540 Meadow Street Ext. Suite 101
Agawam, MA 01001
Robert Croteau Jr., Vice President
(413) 304-2698
Commercial Insurance

2009 ACCGS Legislative Reception

The ACCGS' Annual Government Reception is set for Thursday, November 19, 2009 at the Carriage House at Storowton Tavern. **Mark your calendar to save the date** and join us for one of the Chamber's premier events. The annual reception has always proven to be a great social occasion, with no formal program, but with plenty of opportunity for attendees to talk one-on-one with our elected officials.

If anyone had asked, "What does the customer want?" the result could have been quite different.

2. Stop trying to manipulate customers.

Attempts to get recipients to open email messages with the lure of receiving "helpful information" often turn out to be nothing more than thinly veiled attempts to sell something.

Scam artists aren't the only offenders. Well-known companies use this ploy, as well. As soon as the customer is faced with a form with fifteen spaces of "required" information, the veil is lifted and the brand is damaged.

But that's not the worst of it. The objective is finding ways to connect with the customer in a mutual value alignment that establishes a relationship. It's out of this experience that sales are made.

3. Demonstrate your company's values.

Avon, which describes itself as "a company for women," does an effective job of aligning itself with the values of its constituency. Its mission is "improving the lives of women" in economic empowerment, the environment, governance, people and diversity, philanthropy, product responsibility, stakeholder engagement, supply chain and workplace safety and health.

As John King, a talented young branding mind at Minneapolis-based Fallon Advertising said recently in *AdvertisingAge*, "We believe that the future belongs to generous brands." He describes them as "additive to people's lives and to culture." Then he adds, "They help build ideas in the world; they leave something behind."

This is what Avon's marketing is all about.

4. Recognize that just getting people through the door doesn't make them customers.

Macy's is known for its "Star Rewards," credit card-size coupons touting "Extra 20% off" or "Take \$25 off."

Thanks to this year's sponsors, Baystate Health, Bay State Gas Company, Comcast, Verizon and the Western Massachusetts Electric Company, the reception will again feature great hors d'oeuvres and a complimentary bar. For more information email Diane Swanson, ACCGS Events Manager at swanson@myonlinechamber.com.

It sounds very rewarding until you discover that two-thirds of the back of each card is filled with tiny type listing everything you want to buy--as exclusions. The message is clear: "Hey, you suckers. Come on in."

If the "rewards" aren't rewarding, why would anyone want to be known as a Macy's customer? Unless there is a value proposition that connects with the recipient, there is no customer.

5. Don't fall for every gimmick that comes along. But don't avoid them, either. Just remember that your messages are out there for all to see. It's easy to become all atwitter about Twitter, but ask yourself, "Whatever happened to MySpace?" It fell flat on its face in less than a year.

There's another reason to be cautious about what you're doing. It's easy to find yourself in trouble. One person joined a "placement community," indicating that he was looking outside his present employer. As it happened, someone who knew the employer read the message. You may be linked in more than you expected or wanted.

If you want to explore the possibility of social networking, start by blogging, building a reputation for your ideas and using Twitter and other social media to drive traffic to your blog. That may be an effective way for your company to share its thoughts and ideas.

6. Whatever else you do, be consistent. Even the best marketing can go bad by a lack of consistency. In 2008, Kia, Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen all increased their advertising an average of 42.8% over their 2007 expenditures, according to *USA Today*. This occurred when overall auto sales had plummeted and other brands were slashing their marketing budgets.

While others lost market share, Kia's rose from 1.9% to 3.1%, Mercedes went from 1.6. to 1.8%, and VW's rose from 1.4% to 1.9%

Modest gains? Not to these car companies. "When we invest in marketing, this happens," VW's

marketing chief, Tim Ellis, told *USA Today*. "We think it's important to stick to our roots and stick to our value message. We're getting a higher percentage of the dwindling marketplace. And when this crazy situation comes straight side up again, we'll be positioned to increase our share even further." It's no accident that VW is introducing three new models in 2009.

Consistency wins customers.

7. Focus on pleasing the customer. Even the most compelling marketing messages are worthless, if the customer isn't satisfied. Several people had been patiently standing in line waiting to make a purchase at a well-known auto parts store. After waiting for about 10 minutes, no one was available to help them. Finally, a worker came by with a Coke in his hand and a fellow employee asked him if he would like to take care of the customers. His reply left everyone aghast. "I'm on my break" and disappeared around the corner, leaving the customers waiting for someone to help them.

Contrast that with a visit to an Apple store where you are greeted, assigned a knowledgeable personal shopper who is charged with the task of taking care of you for however long you are there.

In the first example, the customer leaves annoyed, if not disgusted. In the other, the customer is totally pleased. Yet, both share their experiences with others.

When the focus is on the customer rather than on making the sale, the difference is transforming. It's what it means to make marketing work.

John R. Graham is president of Graham Communications, a marketing services and sales consulting firm. He writes for a variety of business publications and speaks on business, marketing and sales issues. Contact him at 40 Oval Road, Quincy, MA 02170; 617-328-0069; jgraham@grahamcomm.com. The company's web site is grahamcomm.com.

ACCGS Calendar

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September 1

Springfield Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors Meeting

TD Banknorth Conference Center
12pm - 1pm

September 2

ACCGS Breakfast

The Log Cabin Banquet & Meeting House, Holyoke
7:15am - 9am

General Admission: \$30, Chamber Members: \$20
Speaker: Kevin Rhodes, Conductor of the Springfield Symphony Orchestra

September 9

ACCGS After 5

Cafe Lebanon, Springfield
5pm - 7pm

General Admission: \$20, Chamber Members: \$10

September 11

ACCGS Legislative Steering Committee

TD Banknorth Conference Center
8am - 9am

September 14

Ludlow "Golf for Kids"

Ludlow Country Club
\$110/Individual, \$400/Foursome
Registration & Lunch 12pm - 1pm
Shotgun/4-Person Scramble 1pm
Sponsorships Available

September 16

ERC5 Board of Directors Meeting

The Gardens of Wilbraham, Community Room, 2 Lodge Lane, Wilbraham
8am - 9am

*

Women's Partnership Meeting

Hilton Garden Inn, Springfield
11:30am - 1pm

General Admission: \$25, Members: \$20

*

Diplomats Meeting

EDC Conference Room
4pm - 5pm

September 17

ACCGS Board of Directors Meeting

TD Banknorth Conference Center
8am - 9am

September 22
WRC Board of Directors Meeting
Captain Leonard House, Agawam
8am - 9am

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