



Marketing Minute

A monthly bulletin to friends & acquaintances of *SmartBiz*

Participate...and business will come!

By Carolyn Touhey

You pay the dues. Your name is in the directory. You even read the newsletter or e-blasts. But, do you participate? You know, *really* participate?

If you belong to a business group, such as a chamber of commerce, do you participate? Do you attend networking events? Do you serve on a committee or head-up a project, which allows you to build deeper relationships with other members as you work toward a common goal?

We all know that whether you're in a business group with an agenda to help members grow their businesses or in a more personal group—a softball team or church committee, for instance—business results from just building relationships with people.

You know how it works—one person asks what you do, and then she or he tells someone else, and that person refers someone with whom you may otherwise never connect. It's that tangled web we weave through the power of grassroots marketing (not to mention the newer social-viral marketing) that delivers to our bottomlines over time.

But, back to more formal business groups. There are many ways to participate if you're going to spend the money on dues.

Here are some suggestions that will give you exposure. Ideally, you will pick a couple of these at minimum, so you can maximize the value of your membership and meet your business goals more easily.

1. Write for the newsletter or volunteer to speak and/or serve as a representative of the group to the public.
2. Volunteer to serve on a committee. Some committees meet on a regular basis throughout the year; others are more event-centered so they meet more frequently in a short period of time in order to coordinate a special event, but then the meetings are over for the year.

Choose a committee with an agenda or task that interests you. If you despise politics, stay off the legislative affairs committee and consider education, membership development, or even the newsletter committee.

3. Contact at least one member a week to suggest a one-on-one, get-to-know-you chat—a cup of coffee or tea during which time you learn more about each other's business and discover how you may work together.

Mixing Business With Pleasure!

On June 17, nearly 130 people visited [Two Eagles Lodge](#) where the 2-year old B&B and [SmartBiz Strategy](#) hosted a "Farewell to Spring—Hello to Summer" mixer for the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce; many non-members came as well. Comox Valley Hospice Society volunteers staffed the very popular bar, which netted more than \$325 for CVHS.

The evening was highlighted by an incredible acoustic jam that made for a rather non-traditional mixer and a lot of fun for all who came. Special thanks to songwriters, Judy & Bruce Wing, for their talent (and for supplying the music equipment), and to songwriters Sue Pyper, Richard Cassie, Anela Kahiamoe, and Perry Johnson. Everyone who attended received discounts to [Two Eagles Lodge](#)—in keeping with the trend for "stay-cations" and weekend getaways for Valley neighbors.



Carolyn On Panelist

Carolyn Touhey was a panelist for the 2nd Annual Vancouver Island Music Business Conference—sharing traditional marketing techniques with musicians from around Canada, 6/24-6/28.

4. Consider some of your “competition” to be strategic allies and complement versus compete.
5. Consider participating in any exhibits or trade shows sponsored by your organization. Participation now only shows that you support the organization (strength in numbers), but your participation is good visibility for you IF your booth looks good and represents you well.

And, if you are doing a show, be sure to develop a campaign that includes pre-show marketing (to get prospects and customer to come and bring others), good booth interaction (there’s even an art to putting the booth together to encourage “flow”), and for sure—follow-up to the show.

6. If doing a show, ask for a list of registrants and build your database. And, consider being a speaker or highlighted panelist if educational programs are offered. Presentations position you as an expert, and credibility is so key to a consumer’s choice.
7. Wear imprinted apparel when you network at events—wearables are walking billboards. Give some away, too, to people when you meet with them or as door prizes for events.
8. Be sure to market your membership (links on your website or at least a logo to say you’re a member of ABC group). This adds credibility, since customers and prospects see you’re progressive when you promote that you are involved in the industry and in business groups with their own credibility.
9. Track your leads. You may get business you don’t even realize.
10. Invite others to join you at appropriate events or meetings. It’s a great way to encourage other business owners to join an organization with you. And, it makes the person you invited feel like you care about him/her and his or her business...a stroke of relationship building that is sure to build goodwill.

Remember, anyone can pay dues to belong to a group. But, you get what you pay for. No participation usually translates to frustration the next time the dues’ bill comes, organization attrition, and the general feeling, “I didn’t get any business from that, so why join again?” Give to get, and your participation in organizations will be a valuable part of your marketing plan.

Carolyn Touhey, MBA, is an award-winning marketing consultant who founded SmartBiz Strategy in 2007 when she moved to the Comox Valley. In addition to running her own business in the US since 1990, she was a member of the faculty at Johns Hopkins University and Loyola College in Baltimore. She can be reached at 250-335-2342 or MakeAnImpact@SmartBizStrategy.com.

About This Bulletin

With marketing being a top concern of most business owners, this bulletin is intended to give practical advice for marketing your business. I hope you find it of interest. But, if you wish to be removed from this list, please email newsletter@SmartBizStrategy.com

SmartBiz Introduces My BizBoard!

For entrepreneurs who are tired of operating in a vacuum, the solution is here. [SmartBiz](#) is introducing My BizBoard in the Valley in September.

My BizBoard provides “mentoring” groups of 10-12 non-competing business owners who meet monthly to act as each other’s sounding board or quasi “board of directors.”

Each meeting, facilitated by Carolyn Touhey, with 20+ years of entrepreneurial experience, will feature a one-hour open forum for members to discuss any issues, challenges, or opportunities with each other, and 1 ½ hours that will feature a “member spotlight” so he or she can get group feedback specific to his or her business.

Getting you out of the office in such a forum is the perfect opportunity to work on your business, not in it. And, rest assured that while this is not a networking group, per se, business often happens among members as a result of the camaraderie and trust that such groups foster.

If you are interested in participating in the no-obligation demo meeting on September 10 (tentative) or just want more information, contact Carolyn at 250-335-2342 or MakeAnImpact@SmartBizStrategy.com.

Where else can you get this kind of seasoned experience, all at one table and available to you, for **less than many people spend on a daily cup of coffee?**

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Thank you for your business!