

Good News for Chamber Members

A new national study reveals that membership in a local Chamber of Commerce can significantly boost a business's image among consumers, as well as among other businesses. In a scientific survey of 2,000 U.S. adults, The Schapiro Group, an Atlanta-based strategic consulting firm, found positive perceptions of Chamber members in a number of areas, including overall favorability, consumer awareness and reputation, and likelihood of future patronage.

The study, commissioned by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), IBM Administaff, Small Business Network, Inc. and Market Street Services, showed that when respondents were told that a particular small business was a member of its local chamber, they were 44 percent more likely to rate it favorably than student respondents who were not told of the Chamber affiliation. Respondents were also 63 percent more likely to want to purchase goods or services from a small business that is a Chamber member.

"We discovered that informing someone about a company's Chamber membership opens the door to substantial increases in positive perceptions of that business," said Alex Trouteaud, Ph.D., Senior Strategist for The Schapiro Group. "There clearly is a feeling by our respondents that Chamber membership is synonymous with quality and desirability."

"To tap into this reservoir of goodwill, a small business should not only join the local Chamber of Commerce and participate, but also make sure consumers and other businesses are aware of that affiliation. The positive impact of perceived Chamber membership is felt by big business when consumers believed that a restaurant chain was a member of the local Chamber, they were 40 percent more likely to eat at the franchise in the future. If a consumer believed that one of the major automobile manufacturers was a member of its local Chamber, that consumer was 9 percent more likely to consider purchasing his or next car from that automaker.

"This study reinforces research done in 2005 about the perceived capacity of Chambers to lead businesses and lead communities," said Mark Fleming, President of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE). "These new national findings point to even more direct benefits for companies willing to be stakeholders in their local Chamber."

Chambers themselves are also highly regarded, Eighty-two percent of the survey respondents indicated that a local Chamber of Commerce "creates jobs and promotes economic development."

The full study results are available on the ACCE web site, www.acce.org/chamberstudy.aspx