

# LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

TO STREAMLINE

YOUR  
NON-DUES  
REVENUE

(Or here's why  
your Chamber should  
ditch that underperforming  
networking social)



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membership, marketing & website solutions

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Building a Healthy Chamber Through Non-Dues Revenue** ..... **PAGE 02**

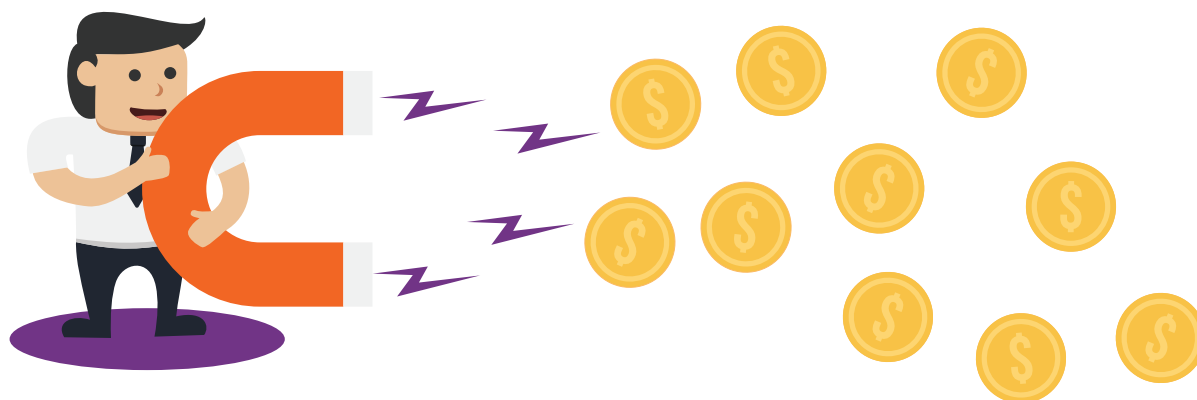
**Why Non-Dues Revenue Matters** ..... **PAGE 03**

**Impact of Technology on Non-Dues Revenue** ..... **PAGE 04**

**Digital Advertising Options That Boost Non-Dues Revenue** ..... **PAGE 04**

**So, What Are Your Options?** ..... **PAGE 06**

**The Time for Change is Now** ..... **PAGE 08**



### Building a Healthy Chamber Through Non-Dues Revenue

#### Technology & Non-Dues Revenue



Chambers rely on non-dues revenue to remain financially solvent. But what if increasing non-dues revenue didn't necessarily mean hosting another golf tournament or Chamber dinner? What if you could boost revenue by using technology to bolster an underutilized service you may already be able to offer members?

Gone are the days when Chambers could solely rely on membership dues to remain financially sustainable. Chambers must work harder than ever in this post-recession economy to keep members happy by providing more benefits, while also continuing to organize the annual member award dinner and by finding ways to add new events, like a 5K run, that keep community members happy, too.

Diverse revenue streams fuel a successful Chamber operation. Historically, membership dues accounted for 70 percent or more of most Chambers' annual revenue, but this number has steadily declined for the past 30 years, according to a 2012-13 operations survey by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives.

In fact, in most metropolitan area Chambers of Commerce, membership dues account for only 27 percent to 37 percent of total revenue, while even smaller Chambers now receive less than half of their annual budgets from membership dues. On average, 44 percent of Chamber revenues are generated from non-dues revenue, the ACCE survey reported.

Membership dues remain the fiscal backbone of each Chamber, **but alone they won't sustain or grow your Chamber without an increase in non-dues revenue.**



# WHY NON-DUES REVENUE MATTERS

03

## Why Non-Dues Revenue Matters

Non-dues revenue is considered any income your Chamber may generate from a source other than membership dues. It's a broad category that could include a basketball tourney, a wine-tasting event, business workshops or seminars, selling ads on the Chamber website, or a trip for members to the U.S. Capitol.



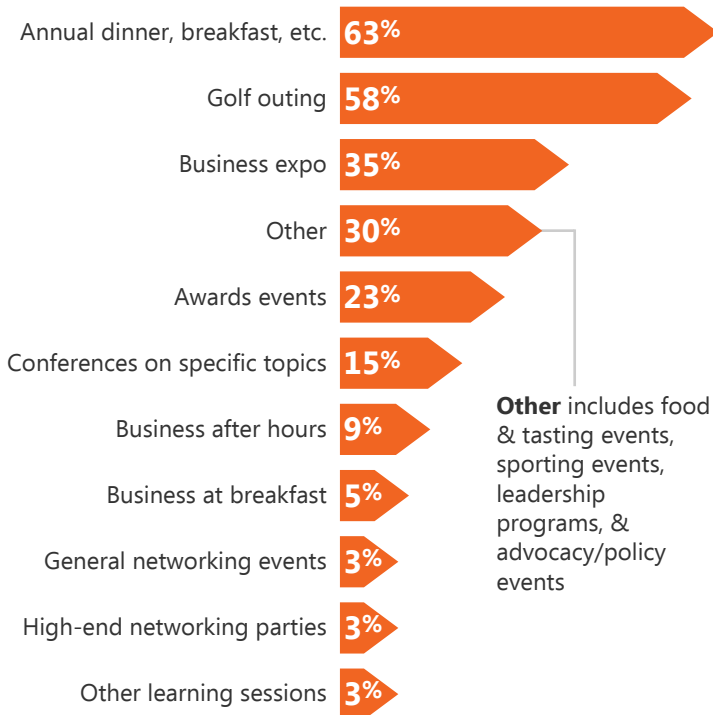
Chambers discovered long ago that when they increase the value of their membership by hosting events or workshops, they usually make more money,

either by raising membership dues or earning additional non-dues revenue.

Non-dues revenue options can include:

### Traditional Non-Dues Revenue Generators

The most successful non-dues revenue streams, based on 264 responses to a 2015 ACCE Chamber poll, include:



- Affinity programs, such as a discount card or special rates offered to members that promote and benefit both the Chamber and businesses involved in the partnership.
- Capital campaigns, a fundraiser held within a specified time frame by the Chamber to fund a project or program.
- Special events and programs. These may include meetings, conferences, social events, parties, and more. Some Chambers find creative ways to increase revenue while also providing the communities they serve with fun, popular activities.



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### Impact of Technology on Non-Dues Revenue

Nearly every Chamber has its own golf tourney or Chamber banquet, but how do you manage yours? How do you know it's successful? Is a successful event defined by attendance or profitability?

The right technology can help Chambers streamline their non-dues revenue sources and provide the ability to track and compare each event or program. This ensures that they are not wasting time and money on events that may be a tradition, but they provide little to no benefit to anyone, the Chamber included.

The most effective Chamber management software should allow Chamber staff to:

- Manage events, both in and out of the office, using cloud-based software and mobile apps
- Track sponsors, donations, and expenses
- Let members pay and check-in online using their smartphones or other mobile devices
- Create a cost analysis comparison for all Chamber-sponsored events and programs
- Provide members with the tools to manage their own member sites, include uploading and editing content

The software should be easy to use and efficient, freeing up time for Chamber staff to focus on other tasks.



### Digital Advertising Options That Boost Non-Dues Revenue

Members want new and improved services they can utilize themselves. They want to see that they are getting something back in return for their investment. Offering a greater online presence through a Chamber website is a value-added benefit for members.

Unfortunately, many Chambers aren't maximizing the online advertising opportunities they could offer to their members, even when the Chamber is already using a Chamber-based marketing software package that offers those options.



# WHY NON-DUES REVENUE MATTERS

05

Chamber digital advertising options are a cost-effective way for businesses to market their goods and services online, and also demonstrate to the community that they are a proud member of their local Chamber.

These online advertising revenue streams can include:

- Enhanced member listings, including priority placements in the business directory and website search results.
- Advertising on the Chamber website, such as banner ads, member business directory, events calendar, hot deals, and member-to-member deal pages.
- Press releases about member businesses and sponsors on the Chamber website.
- Member sites that allow members to build search engine optimization (SEO) results and change their own keywords.
- Promotional advertising for event sponsors or for use during special events or occasions.

Even if a Chamber has an interest in capturing more digital advertising revenue, they may not have the staff to successfully pull it off. It's important to acknowledge your Chamber's strengths and weaknesses.

Not everyone is a salesperson – or wants to be.

In smaller Chamber offices, in particular, employees wear many hats and can often be forced outside of their comfort zones when asked to perform sales duties to boost non-dues revenue.

"I've never met a Chamber person who loves selling," said Wade Thompson, vice president of business development for ChamberMaster. "But they love money."

"It takes more than a sales person to build a successful advertising campaign," Thompson added. "Sales are just the beginning."

To build a successful advertising program, a Chamber would need its own creative team, including some or all of the following team members:



- Copywriter, to write ad copy,
- Graphic designer, to work with clients on designing ads,
- Proof reader, to ensure no errors are made,
- Advertising coordinator, to schedule and track ads,
- Website designer, who strategically places ads on the website as specified in the ad contract,
- And lastly, an administrative staffer, who manages invoices and collections.

The entire process requires attention to detail and follow-up that can be difficult unless you have the staff to manage it. If advertisers aren't happy with the results or have an unsatisfactory experience, they won't renew their ads, costing you in future ad sales.

"Happy members make happy Chambers," Thompson said.

## So, What Are Your Options?

### Do it yourself.

Your Chamber's marketing software should provide materials and website resources to create your own advertising campaign, allowing you to market ads and listing enhancements to your members.

### Hire someone.

If you don't have the time or energy to provide a full-service advertising campaign for your members, then outsource the work to a company that offers a revenue-sharing program. They do all the work, including providing a dedicated internet marketing consultant, along with promotion, sales, ad creation/design, fulfillment, maintenance, and invoicing/collections for digital upgrades and ads. There are no out-of-pocket expenses for the Chamber, which receives a percentage of gross-collected sales paid on a quarterly basis.

### Hire someone to show you how it's done -- correctly.

Even if you decide to do it yourself, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Hire an internet marketing consultant to get you started, someone who can help analyze your website metrics,



give advice on pricing ads, and recommend a marketing approach to take back to your members. A consultant should help build your first year sales base, getting the program off to a successful start. This service could be either fee-based or a revenue-sharing arrangement.



This service for one year should include:

- Staff training on software and sales
- Promotional templates for editable emails, newsletters, proposal forms, checklists, etc.
- Sales
- Ad design
- Fulfillment
- Invoicing/collections

## Before You Take the DIY Approach:

If your Chamber decides to implement its own digital ad sales campaign, there are other factors to consider before you make that first sales call.

Gena Buchite, campaign coordinator for ChamberMaster, said the most successful DIY ad campaigns are usually boosted by the following efforts:

- Educating members about the online benefits and opportunities offered by the Chamber.
- Offering well-designed ads, either provided or outsourced by the Chamber or provided by each member.
- Supporting members who use the online software by helping them complete their enhanced listings, upload ads onto the site, answer questions, take care of any technical difficulties, and provide billing and collections services.

"The Chamber should have a dedicated staff member who is familiar with the software, its online features, website statistics and sales," Buchite recommends.



# WHY NON-DUES REVENUE MATTERS

08

## The Time for Change is Now

Every Chamber operation is unique, but the struggle to find new streams of non-dues revenue is universal. To remain solvent, Chambers are tasked to find more innovative and efficient streams of non-dues revenue.

If your Chamber has a website and social media profiles, it's a start. But it's time to discover how your online content can be maximized to bring in additional revenues and, surprisingly, it may take less work than you think.



## About ChamberMaster

ChamberMaster Member Management Software is powerful, easy-to-use, and designed to manage all of the day-to-day operations of member-based organizations. Thousands of people trust ChamberMaster to manage their most important information, succeed with non-dues revenue generation, and help promote and grow the communities they serve. See for yourself how the feature-rich ChamberMaster member management system can benefit your chamber.

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It's got everything you need to make an informed decision, including what criteria to look for and all the questions you need to ask.



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