

INSIDER

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Webinar Series Deadline to Register Coming Fast

Only a few weeks remain to register for the association’s popular four-part webinar series that is slated for monthly in September—December.

The webinars will be held on the first Wednesday of the month and last for 1 hour beginning at 10 a.m. (Pacific). Below are the dates, topics, brief descriptions and presenters for the 2022 series. Each webinar will also feature a reaction panel of chamber leaders.

- September 14 – Your Message Matters:** As your chamber evolves to serve your business community as a catalyst, convener and champion, your words matter. In this session, you will dig deep into the types of messages, information and data that will excite and engage your members. *Presenter: Sean Mikula, Founder & CEO, Power 10.*

- October 5 – Setting Healthy Boundaries and Managing Stress:** As a membership organization, it can be challenging to balance member needs and your personal and organizational capacity. In this session, you will learn practical tips to help you find a better balance. *Presenters: Jefferson Center for Mental Wellness Instructors.*

- November 2 – Change is Hard:** Chambers have the opportunity to lead by example in deploying a results-oriented approach to change within your organization and community. In this session, you’ll build your change leadership competence and learn frameworks for navigating internal and external change. *Presenter: Pablo Otaola, Thriving Culture LLC.*

- December 1 – Innovative Ideas to Consider:** One of the many perks of the chamber industry is we can practice R&D (rip off and duplicate) to ensure we are providing innovative programming and resources in our communities. This webinar will expose you to a number of game-changing programs and resources

that are worth copying! *Presenters to be announced.*

Registration

Register for the entire series by September 6 for \$150 for W.A.C.E. members or \$300 for non-members. Registration for individual webinars is \$60 for members/\$120 for non-members. [Register here.](#)

Financial Assistance

Thanks to the W.A.C.E. Foundation, a limited amount of financial assistance is available to W.A.C.E. members. Contact Dave Kilby at dave.kilby@calchamber.com or call (916) 930-1202 to inquire.

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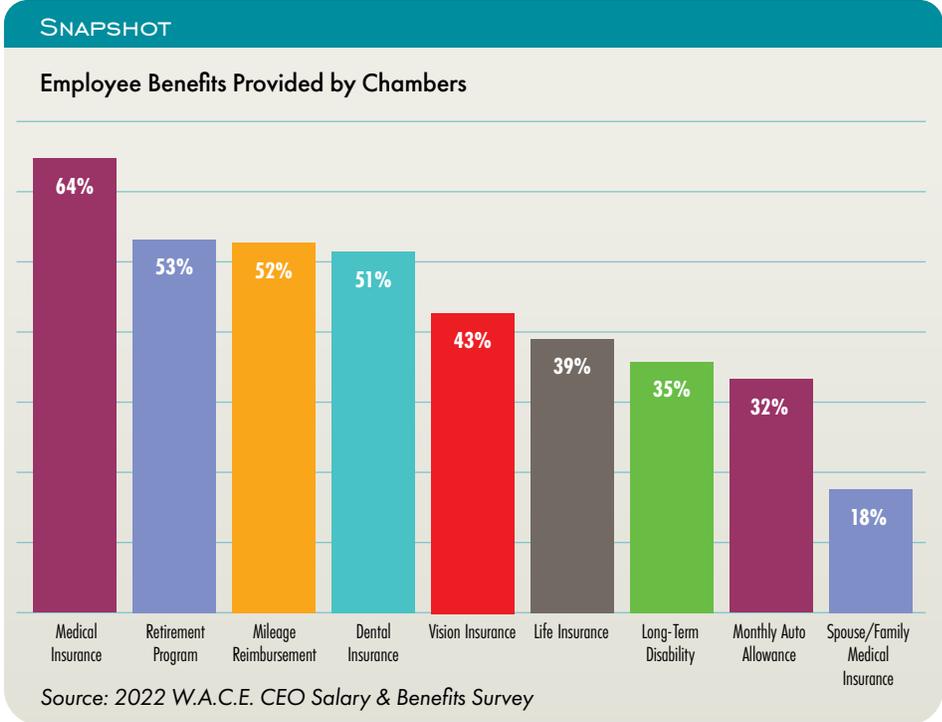
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COMMENTARY

Another Survival Tip: Find Your Wingmen



Dave Kilby

Just like many of you, I recently saw the new Top Gun movie “Maverick.” In the movie (and the original Top Gun), the term “wingman” is used often.

This got me thinking about the chamber business, the importance of surrounding yourself with great people and, basically, finding your wingmen.

So...being a collector of quotes, I went to my files and found one from 10 years ago from Tim Sheehy, the president of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce:

“Pilot any chamber and you learn quickly that no one else in the community has a plane like yours. It’s what makes our jobs unique, and sometimes perilous. But you’re never really flying solo in the chamber skies because you’ve got such great wingmen among your chamber peers. They know how fast and far you can go because they’re always testing those performance limits. If they’ve bailed out or crashed, they’re willing to tell the story, and if they’ve shot down a troublesome piece of public policy, they’ll share the turn-by-turn maneuvers that made them an ace.”

Survive & Thrive

I think Sheehy hit the nail on the head; truer words have never been spoken.

Let’s face it — to survive and thrive in this often-crazy business, having someone (or several someones) that you can turn to who will listen, share experiences and, if asked, dispense advice is essential.

Selecting the right wingmen (or mentors or tribal confidants) who truly understand what you’re going through, and, that you trust, isn’t always an easy order to fill.

As I say often — CHOOSE WISELY. From my experience, it’s also highly likely that the best persons probably aren’t your next-door neighbors.

Ask any long-term chamber exec (aka tribal elder) how they survived all those years, and it won’t take long for them to refer to their mentors and the sage advice that they received. The stories and quotes often flow with an ease that is seldom matched because the relationships meant so much, made a huge difference and had such a lasting impact.

I strongly believe that a good wingman must also be an excellent “truth teller” — who is willing to tell you what you NEED to hear — even if you’re not going to like what you hear.

Don’t Wait

Attending Academy, our annual W.A.C.E. conference or engaging in a peer group can be a great way to start building relationships and seeking out those folks who could end up being your lifelines throughout your career.

I also strongly encourage folks to ask for help early...when the warning light goes on or your gut tells you something’s not right...and, definitely, long before you’re going in for a crash landing.

Trust me — there will be many more successful missions in your life if you find your wingmen.

Dave Kilby is president and CEO of W.A.C.E. and executive vice president of corporate affairs at the California Chamber.

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The Chairman’s Circle is a special group of members that have committed to support W.A.C.E. through sponsorships. If your business would like to become a member of the Chairman’s Circle, please contact Dave Kilby, W.A.C.E. president and CEO, at (916) 930-1202 or email dave.kilby@calchamber.com.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Nuggets from 8,500 Days in Chamber Biz



Diane Schwenke

If anyone would have suggested that I was going to be at the Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce as president/CEO for close to 33 years after I accepted the position back in

1989, I would have said they were crazy. Yet, here I am.

I've watched over the years as some of my mentors and peers have taken the step to retire from the chamber industry and joked that I would die at my desk. But after 8,500 days on the job, I think retirement may be the best option... for me and for the Grand Junction Area Chamber.

So, as I prepare to ride off into the new adventures that retirement is sure to bring, I figured I would share some nuggets of advice from what close to 40 years in the business has taught me. You may find them nothing more than the musings of a "has been," and that is fine, but maybe...just maybe...there is a nugget that will come in handy for those of you still in the "biz."

- **It is not YOUR Chamber!** All of us are merely caretakers of an organization that has its roots in the Middle Ages. We have a duty to serve our business members that pay our salary but they are the true owners of any chamber. And, it is by LISTENING closely to what they have to say about their needs and barriers to growth and ACTING on them that a chamber can continue to be relevant. In other words, their agenda is the one that counts, not yours.

- **Reinvent yourself every year!** Each volunteer leader that steps into the chairman of the board role has their unique strengths and weaknesses. You need to adjust and match your strengths to their weaknesses and find ways to showcase their strengths. That way you will continue to draw strong leaders to your board and your key volunteer leadership position. You will also

cultivate strong chamber champions that will continue to promote the organization long after they become past chairs.

- **'Tis better to be respected than liked!** Early on, I heard that phrase and it kept me going during some pretty turbulent times that sometimes saw personal attacks on me and nasty things being said about the chamber. But if you are doing what is right for small businesses and helping shore up or build a better business climate, then let the naysayers whine away. At the end of the day, I guarantee you that the chamber will have a seat at the table when issues affecting business are discussed and that you will gain members because you have a reputation for being their voice and their advocate.

- **Your team roster determines the outcome of your season!** From who is on your board to who is on your staff, every member of the team makes a difference. Make sure they know their value to the organization! And if they are not bringing value, then trade them — FAST! You don't get to the World Series or the Super

Bowl with a mediocre team! It is easier to fire staff than board members, but you can limit board terms in your bylaws and make sure you are participating in the nominating committee process to build in some protections against a low performer in the board room.

- **Keep learning!** I always budgeted for travel and training for myself as well as my staff. Good training pays for itself and more. And outside of the classes there is the networking that inevitably leads to a chamber peer sharing an idea that you can "plagiarize and localize."

If there is one major thing that I will miss in retirement it will be all of you still in the trenches, fighting the good fight for your members and your communities. Many of you have energized me and inspired me during this lifelong journey and for that I thank you. It is not goodbye (I hate goodbyes by the way). It is till our paths cross again. God Bless!

Diane Schwenke is retiring as president/CEO of the Grand Junction Area (CO) Chamber.

Preparing For Your Planning Session or Board Retreat?

Check out the newly updated **Board Retreat Facilitator List** in the resource library at www.waceonline.com.





Membership Retention & Financial Reserves



In the last 12 months
53%
say their overall membership has increased

74%
rated their chamber's overall financial health 7, 8 or 9 on a scale of 1-9

53%
of chambers have a policy on reserves

In the last 12 months
69%
rate their membership recruitment as good-excellent



47%
of those policies require equal to 6 months of budget

In the last 12 months
68%
rate their membership retention as good-excellent

\$320
average base rate for employee based dues

\$455
average entry level amount for tiered dues

44%
of chambers currently have reserves equal to 6 months of budget

Data collected in July 2022 Opinion Poll with 203 responses from Chamber Executives around the West

LEADER TO LEADER

Execs Work to Boost Business Connections, Develop Workforce, Recruit New Members

What is one goal you want to accomplish before the end of the year?



Sally Harrison
President/CEO
Mesa (AZ)
Chamber

One of our many goals would be to fully realize the benefits of our ongoing workforce development program. Through

the years we have developed strong partnerships with our education members and have developed a framework for connecting students and employers. Our expectation is to scale our program and be an effective resource to meet the workforce needs of our business community.

By connecting the right student to the right business through internships, we intend to keep talented community members employed locally in the jobs that they are going to school to learn.



Kathi Roetter
Executive Director
Troy Area (OH)
Chamber

Currently, I am working on a "Business Friendly Troy" initiative. Our community boasts about being business friendly

but unfortunately that isn't what we hear at the chamber.

Through a series of roundtable discussions, we are listening to what businesses have to say about starting or expanding their business in Troy. The roundtable discussions consist of new businesses that have opened in the last three years, as well as longstanding businesses.

The goal is to have the initiative completed by the end of 2022. We will then share with our city council, economic development staff and our board. We expect the report to guide our local advocacy efforts for the next year.



Pat MulQueeny,
IOM
President
Eden Prairie (MN)
Chamber

The past two years have been tougher for new member recruitment, but with more programs,

promotions and telling our members stories, we have seen an uptick in prospects and participation.

One of our most important goals I am focused on achieving is having 70 new members for the calendar year 2022. We are over halfway there and have our major recruiting luncheon in August that should add between 15 and 20 new members from that one event. Excited for the momentum we have going right now!



Kim Latrielle
President/CEO
Missoula Area
(MT) Chamber
Chambers of commerce are the oldest and most powerful business organizations in our communities and in our state.

Top leadership in our state had a need to connect with businesses statewide. With American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and workforce shortage/hurdles, there is a greater need to inform, engage and hear directly from businesses. Our state found that the cost to attempt to contact every business was prohibitive.

The Missoula Chamber seized this opportunity and personally contacted every chamber in the state of Montana to develop an email database. The efficiency in both time and dollars to reach every chamber in our state not only adds value to us as an organization but strengthens our business membership. It provides the state a direct communication tool to address workforce hurdles: lack of child care, rapid training needs, and shortage of workers.

By the end of this year, my personal goal is to engage every chamber in our state to connect to demonstrate the power of chambers and our local businesses. This brings relevancy, engagement, and connection opportunities for our chamber and our members.

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PRESIDENT DAVE KILBY
@DaveKilbyWACE

<http://twitter.com/DaveKilbyWACE>

NOTEWORTHY

What Chambers Are Doing Around the West

Chamber Expands Efforts to Connect with Hispanic Businesses

The Santa Maria Valley (CA) Chamber has recently launched a targeted effort to better assist Hispanic businesses in their local community in an effort to strengthen their role as a catalyst, convener and champion for ALL local businesses. The chamber gathered local Hispanic leaders and business owners to form a Hispanic Business Outreach Committee.

The committee's role is to help the chamber better understand and meet the needs of the Hispanic business community. The chamber also hired a new Hispanic Business Outreach and Service Representative to improve engagement with, and services to Hispanic-owned businesses. Recently the coordinator worked with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) on client intake calls, addressing small business concerns including grant opportunities, business licensing/permitting, and startup capital to expand services to all businesses in Northern Santa Barbara County. The chamber also held a special mixer to kick off the discussion and committee's efforts.

Interested in learning more about the program? Contact David Hernandez at david@santamaria.com.

Vail Valley Partnership Provides Outdoor Industry Strategy Summit

As a community with a very strong connection to the outdoor recreation industry, Vail Valley (CO) Partnership saw an opportunity to partner with the CU Boulder Outdoor Recreation Economy program to help develop opportunities and discuss strategies to achieve further economic development while fostering collaboration, sustainable growth, and innovation.

Their Outdoor Industry Summit on August 22 will feature a discussion of strategies to balance outdoor recreation and conservation of natural resources, ways to grow and sustain the outdoor industry in the region, and panel and tabletop discussions on key topics facing the outdoor recreation industry. Panel

discussions will focus on the outdoor industry and destination stewardship, and tabletop conversations will be facilitated on topics ranging from financing to supply chain challenges, branding to DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion), and the workforce.

To learn more about the event, read Chris Romer's article discussing the program at <https://www.vailvalleypartnership.com/2022/07/outdoor-industry-summit-coming-in-august/>.



Arvada Chamber Releases First Edition of Local Business Trends Snapshot

In an earlier edition, we discussed the Arvada (CO) Chamber's creation of the Arvada Resiliency Taskforce. With the Taskforce's commitment to using data to support programs, resources, education, and policy shifts, they developed a quarterly briefing to inform strategies and support key leaders in decision making.

The first Local Business Trends Spotlight was released and features local business survey results, labor market data, and an overview of new data that the taskforce is watching, all in a clear, well-organized and easily digestible format. The report also serves as an opportunity for all community members to be accountable to changing trends and to consider action to improve outcomes.

To view the first edition of the snapshot, visit <https://www.arvadachamber.org/local-business-trends-snapshot-first-edition-2022/>.

Phoenix Chamber Encourages Healthy Community with Wellness Initiative

Wellness A to Z Day is an event to celebrate the anniversary of the Greater Phoenix (AZ) Chamber Foundation's community wellness initiative aimed at making the Greater Phoenix region known as a destination for healthy talent and a healthy community.

The chamber recognizes that healthy communities are vital to sustained growth of businesses, leading to a more competitive economy. Attracting and retaining talent requires more than high-wage jobs; it is driven by quality of life. Wellness A to Z complements existing employer wellness programs, highlighting best practices and offering free tools for enhancement.

By encouraging companies to EatWell, PlayWell, LiveWell and WorkWell, the program helps companies invest in their most important resource — their employees. Community members are encouraged to sign up to celebrate Wellness A to Z Day by giving back to the community, fueling with a healthy meal, attending Wellness A to Z Day activities and resources, exploring Arizona outdoors, and practicing mindfulness moments.

Learn more about the program, toolkit, resources offered and anniversary celebration at <https://phoenixchamberfoundation.com/wellness/>.

Are We on Your Mailing List?

Information featured each month in *Around the West* is taken from chamber newsletters and websites that W.A.C.E. receives from its members. We try to share best practices, innovative ideas and programs from chambers working hard to be Catalysts, Conveners and Champions and make a difference in their community. Make sure to subscribe W.A.C.E. to your mailing list, if you haven't done so already, and you may be featured in a future *Insider*!

Send e-newsletters to: jennifer.johnson@calchamber.com.

Send mailings to: W.A.C.E., P.O. Box 1736, Sacramento, CA 95812-1736.

Chamber Executives in the News

Cindy Roth, ACE, has issued her resignation following a successful 45-year career with the Greater Riverside (CA) Chambers. Roth led the chamber for 23 years as the president/CEO and is a past Board Chair of W.A.C.E. A search for her replacement is underway.

The Greater Eureka (CA) Chamber has announced the selection of **Nancy Olson** as their new president/CEO. Olson most recently served at Cal Poly Humboldt, providing professional and organizational development for the campus, focused on leadership development, team building,

well-being, anti-bias training, strategic planning, and more. She also founded and co-led the People-Centered Change Initiative, fostering enhanced change management practices for the university.

Bill Marcum has announced that he will be retiring in early 2023 from the Kelso Longview (WA) Chamber after 10 years leading the chamber. A search for his successor is underway.

The Vallejo (CA) Chamber has selected **Shawna Gilroy** as their new president/CEO. Gilroy is a past Board Chair of the chamber and brings 20-plus years of

advertising and marketing experience to the chamber. Gilroy replaces **James Cooper**, who resigned to take over as the president/CEO of the Pleasanton (CA) Chamber.

MEETING DATES

W.A.C.E. Events • (916) 442-2223
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Fall Webinar Series

Zoom

10–11 a.m. (Pacific)

- **September 14:** “Your Message Matters”
- **October 5:** “Setting Healthy Boundaries & Managing Stress”
- **November 2:** “Change is Hard”
- **December 7:** “Innovative Ideas to Consider”

Other Events

Rural Chamber Summit

Hosted by Calaveras (CA) Chamber
 October 13–14
 Ironstone Vineyards
 Murphys, CA

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 just better together.

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