

Stay positive, be proactive

THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



How does one survive challenging economic times? By staying positive, being proactive and

voting in knowledgeable leaders who understand the importance of a strong economy and business sector and who have solid plans for our future.

At the Maui Chamber of Commerce, we are continuing to focus on both short- and long-term solutions to help businesses grow and to maintain a robust economy. We deliver a variety of programs to meet our members' needs, such as:

- Ongoing business advocacy: We address legislation that will impact businesses and the community. A few initiatives that we have been tacking include card-check bill veto; workers' compensation bills; Hawaii Superferry; harbors modernization; affordable housing and rentals; transient-vacation rentals; and home occupations.

- Helping members understand the economy: Every business needs reliable economic information for its planning. We present forums to keep our members informed. On Friday, Terry Vencl of the Maui Visitors Bureau gave our members an update on the visitor industry, MVB marketing efforts, and thoughts for positioning in this changing market. Also, we partner with our local banks to bring in Hawaii's top economists so our members can hear the latest economic forecasts firsthand. Our next economic update luncheon is in October.

- Networking opportunities: We hold annually more than 20 networking events, at which our members and invited guests build reliable contacts, develop important relationships and make new friends. The monthly Business After Hours events are

great opportunities for networking, refreshments and fun at the members' bargain price of \$10. It is a cost-effective way to connect with approximately 75 to 125 of Maui's business leaders. Our next Business After Hours will be Wednesday.

Also, given the high-level speakers, regular luncheon events typically draw crowds of 200. And, our free quarterly New Members Social for new and existing members provides an opportunity for new members to give a three-minute presentation on their business. The next social will be Friday.

- Retain clients and expand market share: Right now businesses are looking to retool, reduce costs, and keep people coming through their doors. We are lending a hand with discounts, offers, and training.

In this regard, The Maui News offers chamber members a 5 percent discount on retail display or classified display advertising when they include the chamber logo. Each week, Business Builder Tips provide digestible suggestions sent via eNews to help members expand their business.

An import/export seminar was held July 23 in partnership with Foreign Trade Zone 9. Free sales training, to be delivered Tuesday, is sold out. Leadership Island Style - a world-class leadership experience with Glenn Furuya - will begin Thursday.

A Maui Community College partnership provides a discount to chamber members on "The 7 Habits for Managers" course. And a Disney Institute alliance will give members a substantial discount off the "Disney Keys to Excellence" on Sept. 16.

- Member promotion: We provide effective marketing and promotional opportunities for our membership. They include weekly eNews filled with chamber and community information, along with Made in Maui and member news promotion. In partnership with Paradise Television, Made in Maui commercials will air this year on the Vis-

itor Channel. The quarterly Connections Newsletter, distributed to more than 5,000 businesses on island, provides advertising opportunities. The chamber Web site promotes our members through an online directory and advertising opportunities. Lastly, sponsorship opportunities are available, ranging from forums to Business After Hours events, to major functions and more.

- Examining systems and future opportunities: We need solid plans for our sustainable future. We are examining the draft Maui Island Plan, reviewing the Directed Growth Strategy criteria and assumptions, the urban boundaries, and what is or isn't included in the plan. Toward the goal of economic diversification, we are supporting our existing industries and seeking to expand upon agri-tourism, alternative energy, health care and other areas.

- Supporting pro-business candidates: Is there any question that we need to elect business-friendly candidates with business acumen and an understanding of economics? Through a Legislative Scorecard, we will share, from our perspective, how well our elected officials did this past year on chamber issues. Regarding candidate endorsements, we once again are embarking on our process to meet candidates, educate the public on where they stand on business issues, and endorse business-friendly candidates.

Lots of positive things are happening. Let's keep the momentum going, help each other succeed, design our desired future, ask elected officials and those running for office for their economic plans, elect business-friendly candidates and hold them accountable. Through foresight and ingenuity and by standing strong together, we will help our economy rebound quicker and move forward with growth and prosperity.

■ Pamela Tumpap
is president of the
Maui Chamber of Commerce.