

**Communication Audit
South Carolina Chamber of Commerce
Conducted Fiscal Year 2007-08
Executive Summary**

RESEARCH

Research for this Communication Audit was conducted by K. Mock & Partners, MarketSearch, and MetroMark Research.

KEY FINDINGS

- Attitudes toward the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce tend to be very positive.
 - ✓ Most feel that the SC Chamber is effectively addressing its mission;
 - ✓ Satisfaction is high; and
 - ✓ Most feel that the SC Chamber fairly represents all geographic areas and business sizes.

- Members identify a key benefit of membership in the SC Chamber as awareness of up-to-date information that impacts business. Other important benefits include: networking, seminars and training sessions, being a voice to state government/legislature, monthly newsletters and lobbying on behalf of business and industry.

- Priorities for the SC Chamber include: funding for workforce initiatives, making the healthcare system more efficient and affordable, defeating anti-business legislation, funding to improve the state's road infrastructure, conservation of natural resources, comprehensive tax reform, and identification of future energy resources.

- More than four out of five say that membership in the SC Chamber is a good value, with 31% saying it is a *very good value* and an additional 53% saying it is a *good value*.

- Attitudes are positive and generally consistent across all sizes of business. The medium-sized businesses, however, tend to be most positive about the SC Chamber overall.

THE SOUTH CAROLINA CHAMBER BRAND

- Attitudes toward the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce tend to be very positive.
- The South Carolina Chamber's mission, as presented to respondents: The South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, as the unified voice of business and industry, serves as catalyst for statewide increased per capita income and global competitiveness. Fully 87% say the SC Chamber is effective in accomplishing this mission, with 31% saying it is *very effective*. This attitude tends to be consistent across all business sizes.
- The key perceived benefit of the South Carolina Chamber is its awareness of current information that impacts business. Other benefits include networking, seminars and training sessions, and being a voice to state government and/or the legislature.
- In order of importance, respondents support the SC Chamber's direct involvement with:
 - ✓ Funding for workforce education initiatives;
 - ✓ Efforts to make the healthcare system more efficient and affordable;
 - ✓ Helping to defeat anti-business legislation;
 - ✓ Funding to improve the state's road infrastructure;
 - ✓ Conservation of the state's natural resources;
 - ✓ Pushing for comprehensive tax reform;
 - ✓ Identification of future energy resources;
 - ✓ Continued port expansion;
 - ✓ Investments in the tourism industry; and
 - ✓ Passage of meaningful immigration reform at the state level.
- Virtually all are satisfied with the SC Chamber's focus and performance in serving the interests of all South Carolina businesses, serving as an advocate and lobbyist for South Carolina businesses, and serving the interests of respondents and their organizations. Satisfaction is also very high with the Chamber when it comes to increasing global competitiveness for the state and growing per capita income. The proportion of respondents who are *very satisfied* with respect to these latter dimensions, however, tends to be smaller.
- Most feel that the SC Chamber fairly and appropriately represents the whole state and all sizes of business. Still, approximately 30% say it's too focused on certain sized businesses (especially large) and 26% say it's too focused on specific geographic areas (especially the major market areas).

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

- Evaluations of SC Chamber communications tend to be quite positive. Overall, 19% say they are *completely satisfied* and an additional 58% say they are *very satisfied*. Only 2% say they are not satisfied.
- Study findings also identify positive attitudes toward the SC Chamber's communications. The study tested familiarity and impressions of 13 specific communications, including: South Carolina Business magazine, Competitiveness Agenda brochure, Competitiveness Update, Competitiveness Agenda pocket card, Annual Report, Legislative Year-End Review, Legislative Pocket Card, Tourism brochure, Membership brochure, Legislative Year-in-Review, Membership Directory, Competitiveness Update e-mail, and ChamberBiz e-newsletter. All 13 communications are rated favorably relative to value/relevance.
- While findings identify mixed levels of familiarity with the various communications, three (3) – SC Business magazine (88%), ChamberBiz e-newsletter (85%), and Competitiveness Update e-mail (78%) -- have very broad penetration and familiarity.
- At a general level, SC Chamber communications are rated favorably relative to general quality, layout/appearance, timeliness, frequency, relevance, and grassroots network/connections.
- Key topics of interest include: economic development, healthcare, workers' compensation, workforce development, comprehensive tax reform, and energy/environmental issues.
- There are some variations in topic priorities based on business type. Top communications topics by type of industry follow.
 - ✓ Manufacturing: workman's compensation, healthcare, workforce development, and reforming state government.
 - ✓ Professional: economic development, energy/ environment, comprehensive tax reform, and healthcare.
 - ✓ Service: economic development, healthcare, workman's compensation, comprehensive tax reform, energy/ environment, and reforming state government.
 - ✓ Tourism/Hospitality: healthcare, workforce development, energy/environment, economic development, workman's compensation, and immigration.
 - ✓ All other: economic development, workman's compensation, workforce development, healthcare, tax reform, and infrastructure

- Overall, all types of business tend to give favorable ratings to each of the communications. In general, however, Service, Tourism, and “Other” organizations tend to find the communications most relevant/important, while Manufacturing and Professional organizations tend to give slightly lower ratings to each of the specific communications.
- Respondents clearly identify a preference for electronic formats for communications from the SC Chamber relative to:
 - ✓ Information on events and activities (86% indicate they’d like to receive this type of information via e-mail, 39% via the e-newsletter, and 15% via the SC Chamber website);
 - ✓ Legislative information (84%, 39%, and 12% respectively);
 - ✓ Topical messages and updates (82%, 44%, and 19% respectively); and
 - ✓ General information (78%, 36%, and 13% respectively).
- At the same time, traditional formats such as publications and traditional mail continue to hold some appeal and have relevance for other types of communications.

MarketSearch asked survey participants to rank the perceived value of communications tools on a 5-point scale, with 5 equal to very high value/relevance. K. Mock used a 3-point scale.

PRINT

Tool or Channel	Rating - K. Mock & Partners	Perceived Value - MarketSearch	Notes
Competitiveness Agenda Brochure	2	3.5	
Competitiveness Update	2	3.6	
Competitiveness Agenda pocket card	2	3.2	
Letters	2	N/A	People don’t read anymore; handwritten is better. Public Policy information may be read.
Invitations	3	N/A	Membership receptions, etc.
<i>S.C. Business</i> magazine	3	3.7	Not immediate reading but very broad penetration and familiarity.

Legislative Report Card	2.5	N/A	Going back to scorecard. Effective for legislators but not members.
Legislative Pocket Card	2	3.4	Good educational piece
Legislative Year-End Review	2	3.7	Strong familiarity.
Legislative Year-In-Review	2	3.7	Strong familiarity.
Membership Packages	2	N/A	In transition to CD
Membership Directory	N/A	3.5	
Membership brochure	2	3.1	Moderate familiarity.
Annual Report	2	3.2	Well done, but how many does it reach?
Weekly/Monthly/Quarterly Reports and Updates	3	N/A	A lot of work for senior staff. Good for benchmarking and credibility.
Brochures (general, tourism)	2.5	3.0	Moderate familiarity.

ELECTRONIC

Tool or Channel	Rating - K. Mock & Partners	Perceived Value - MarketSearch	Notes
ChamberBiz e-newsletter	2.5	3.8	Spurs interaction. Has very broad penetration and familiarity.
Website	2	N/A	Improved. However, too much content. Not updated frequently enough. Difficult to find information.
Email	3	Strong preference indicated.	
E-casts (Including Legislative Alerts)	3	N/A directly but content highly valued.	
S.C. Business Week website	2	N/A	
Competitiveness Update email	3	3.7	Very broad penetration and familiarity.

PERSONAL/FACE-TO-FACE

Tool or Channel	Rating - K. Mock & Partners	Perceived Value - MarketSearch	Notes
Committee meetings (Education, HR, Tourism, Communications, Small Business, etc.)	2.5	N/A	Some committees appear to be more active and hands-on, while others are more advisory. Meeting frequency varies, as well.
Monthly Staff Meeting	1	N/A	Seems to be viewed as ineffective in current format.
Board Meetings	3	N/A	Sometimes not well attended.
Grassroots	3	N/A but content highly valued.	Builds support with local Chambers. Garners widespread news coverage.
Reception process (main lobby)			Receive a lot of inquiries about tourism or relocation.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Tool or Channel	Rating - K. Mock & Partners	Perceived Value - MarketSearch	Notes
Summit	3	N/A	Perceived as a “big business” event. Some members can not afford to attend. Good content.
Human Resources conferences/Works hops/ Training Sessions	3	N/A	Good channel to reach key contact within member orgs.
Manufacturer of the Year/Appreciation event	2.5	N/A	Quieter event in recent years.
Business Speaks and Washington Night	3	N/A but content highly valued.	Seems to be among the Chamber’s strongest events of the year. Well attended.
Diversity event	2	N/A	Good topic, but doesn’t seem to affect membership.
Business Week	3	N/A	“Camp” for high school students.

			161 attended last time.
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OTHER TOOLS AND CHANNELS

Tool or Channel	Rating - K. Mock & Partners	Perceived Value - MarketSearch	Notes
Media Relations (Includes Editorial Board meetings, news releases, responding to inquiries, etc.)	3	N/A	Garnering considerable print media coverage throughout the state on a variety of issues.
Calendar of Events	N/A	N/A	There may be as many as 4 separate calendars currently referenced by the Chamber.