

Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce

# STRATEGIC PLAN

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2008-2010



SEIZE  
THE  
FUTURE

## Executive Summary

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Peter Drucker was quoted as having said, “The best way to predict the future... is to create it”. The Board of Directors of the Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce, through a disciplined planning process, has taken the first and most critical step in creating a future that will enhance the business climate for the area.

Planning is a management tool, period. As with any management tool, this plan will be used for one purpose only, to help the Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce do a better job. The plan will allow the Chamber to be a truly meaningful, relevant organization to its investors and to the community in general.

The plan will allow the Chamber to focus its energy and ensure that committees and task forces are working toward the same goals. The planning process gave the Board of Directors the opportunity to assess and adjust the strategic direction of the Chamber to meet the challenges of a changing environment. The focus of the organization is now on the future, and the actions that must be taken in order to meet the challenges and changes that will be faced by the business community.

Four strategic goals have been identified as critical to the future vitality and viability of the Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce and business community it serves. The strategic goals and the objectives identified will set forth the direction of the Chamber for the next three years (2008 - 2010). In addition, the Chamber must determine its role with Imagine Anderson.

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The strategic goals are:

Developing Small Business  
Ensuring a Qualified, Skilled Workforce  
Serving as the "Voice of Business"  
Focusing on Our Members

The work now begins in earnest as an organizational structure is designed that will best allow for the objectives to be achieved. A well thought-out staff structure must be developed to best implement and execute the plan. Committees and Task Forces will be created that will need the volunteer resources that only the investors of the Chamber can provide. Strategic Partnerships and Alliances will be sought with other chambers and organizations that are headed in the same direction as the Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce. The Board of Directors is committed to the plan and its implementation. We look forward to the successful execution of the 2008 - 2010 strategic plan.

## introduction

This plan sets forth the direction of the Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce for the next three years (2008 - 2010). The plan outlines a direction with which the Chamber intends to align all of its activities.

## vision

The Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce is a proactive, effective business advocate; recognized as a leader, and for sustaining the economic success of the community.

## mission

The mission of the Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce is to create an environment for healthy economic growth in the Anderson area and provide superior value for our members.

## what we value

- Member-Focused
- Partnerships and Regional Cooperation
- Results
- Advocacy
- Building Community
- Diversity and Inclusiveness
- Respect and Integrity

# Critical Areas For Our Attention

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The following areas were identified through the Board of Directors planning sessions and member focus groups conducted by The Ewart Group.

- Member Growth and Involvement
- Return on Investment
- Small Business Focus
- Workforce Development
- Marketing and Communication
- Engaging Minority Owned Businesses
- Developing and Engaging Community Leaders
- Reaching Out in the County
- The Voice of Business / Government Relations

## 1

## strategic goal one

### Developing Small Business

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Small Business is the driving force of the Anderson business community. This sector of our economy faces numerous obstacles and issues ranging from a stable, trained workforce to insurance, taxes, and burdensome state and federal regulations. To ensure that our smaller enterprises have every opportunity for success and profitability, we must provide meaningful programming and support that will assist them with their ongoing challenges.

#### *Objective*

Provide the programs, projects, workshops, seminars, and services that meet the needs of our small business members.

#### *Action Steps*

- By March 2008, conduct a programming needs assessment of the membership through surveys and focus groups.
- Provide a series of four – six seminars and workshops each year to meet the development needs of small businesses.
- Explore the opportunity to hold a business expo for regional businesses to promote and market their products and services.
- Develop partnerships with SCORE, Tri-County Technical College, Anderson University, Clemson University and others (financial institutions) for providing appropriate programs and services to mentor and advise existing and potential business owners.
- Develop opportunities (awards) for recognizing small emerging and existing businesses on an annual basis.
- Create programming and / or targeted councils that will grow and retain specific segments of our membership.
  - Minority
  - Young Professionals
    - Implement a Young Professionals annual recognition program
- Explore new options for better participation at Chamber functions.

**Objective**

Create programs and projects that will retain and grow our small business, minority, and women-owned business sector.

**Action Steps**

- Host focus groups to determine the specific needs of minority businesses.
- Utilize SCORE Counselors to mentor and advise small business and minority business owners.

**Objective**

Pursue the development of a small business incubator.

**Action Steps**

- Develop a dialogue with Anderson University and Tri-County Technical College to determine feasibility.
- Benchmark other communities with successful incubators.

**Objective**

Develop a small business resource portal.

**Action Steps**

- Utilize SC Chamber and Thurmond Center to determine best approach.
- Create a small business solutions center to educate small businesses on “best practices”.
- Offer a series of educational workshops to assist small businesses in understanding how to become compliant with government regulations, permitting process, etc. (utilize IRS and SBA).
- Post information and appropriate links on website (i.e. Small Business Support Hotline and SC Chamber of Commerce).
- Post legislative and regulatory concerns of small business on Chamber website along with current actions of our Public Policy committee.
- Develop a program to assist members with a Buyers / Suppliers Network.
  - Determine software and staffing needs
  - Host a supply chain forum to educate other businesses about the local capacity, abilities and services that area manufacturers and businesses have and can offer.
  - Utilize consultant to determine best approach

**Objective**

Create a membership Preferred Providers Organization (PPO).

**Action Steps**

- Facilitate discussion with AnMed to determine viability.

**Objective**

Determine the key challenges as it relates to operating a business in Anderson.

**Action Steps**

- Develop a customer call program (written survey or a face-to-face interview) to determine the changes and challenges facing business. What would it take for your company to achieve growth?
- Based on customer feedback, design programs to meet the specific needs of the top tier employers.

**2**

**strategic goal two**

**Ensuring a Qualified, Skilled Workforce**

One of the most critical needs that businesses face now, and will continue to face in the future, is finding qualified, skilled employees. In order to be in a competitive position to attract and retain high paying jobs to Anderson County, we must place emphasis on developing a workforce that is prepared for the numerous job demands of the future.

# 3

## strategic goal three

### The Voice of Business

Businesses are increasingly saddled with burdensome regulations, paperwork, and taxes. The cost of compliance is high and extremely time consuming. To ensure that our members have every opportunity for success and profitability, and are able to compete on a level playing field, the Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce must become the true voice of business and play an active advocacy role with local, state, and national elected and appointed officials.

Develop the public policy agenda of the chamber and create a process to lobby for the passage of key issues.

- Develop guiding principles to filter issues for the Public Policy Committee.
- Public Policy Committee will review key issues and recommend policy positions to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors.
- Include municipalities in the process of establishing our legislative agenda.
- Survey the membership when appropriate.
- Explore the creation of a "PAC" (Political Action Committee) to assist in our legislative efforts.
- Effectively communicate the chamber's positions on issues and publicize successes.
- Establish a process for timely Board approval or action on certain key issues.
- Establish a member "grass roots" effort to assist in passage (or defeat) of critical issues.
- Work with I-85 Chambers on issues of common interest to the Upstate.
- Become a financial partner with the Greenville and Spartanburg Chambers in the hiring of a lobbyist.
- Utilize and work with the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce on certain key common issues.

### Objective

### Action Steps

Determine the labor force needs of the membership.

- Develop a survey instrument to determine labor force requirements of membership.
- Partner with Tri-County Technical College to disseminate information on technical based education.
- Re-engage retirees in the labor force.
- Communicate Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) to the membership and determine how businesses can become involved.
- Partner with Tri-County Technical College to engage the manufacturing sector in actively supporting the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) implementation plan through school presentations.

Develop meaningful Business-Education Partnerships.

- Develop criteria for a meaningful program.
- Develop a marketing plan to encourage internships and co-op programs.
- Create a Speaker's Bureau to facilitate businesspeople speaking to students on skills / attitude needed to be successful in business.
- Create a dialogue with administrators and teachers to discuss critical issues. Establish forums for meaningful, productive communication.
- Determine the status of the "shadowing" program.

### Objective

### Action Steps

### Objective

### Action Steps

### **Objective**

Grow and nurture appropriate relationships to allow the Chamber to effectively serve as “the voice of business” in Anderson County.

### **Action Steps**

- Schedule regularly-held meetings with members of city / county council, state, and federal elected representatives.
- Have Public Policy Committee members regularly attend meetings of county and city councils.
- Present chamber’s public policy agenda to members of city and county council and work proactively for the approval of those positions.
- Host “Toast and Topics” meetings that allow elected officials the opportunity to update and educate chamber members on issues of importance.
- Sponsor “Anderson Goes to Columbia” as a means to update legislators on the public policy agenda of the chamber, and to offer support on those key issues. Develop ways to create greater interaction with our delegation during the visit to Columbia.
- Sponsor “Washington Fly-in” program to serve a similar purpose as our Columbia trip.
- Develop other forums for presentations by, and dialogue with, our elected and appointed officials.
- Build a relationship with the Anderson County Legislative Delegation so as to be able to effectively pursue the legislative agenda.
- Meet on a regular basis with city and county officials to discuss and represent key issues of importance to the economic viability of Anderson County.
- Establish a win-win relationship with the staff of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce so as to be more effective in moving our legislative agenda forward.
- Establish excellent relationships with local and other appropriate media officials so as to “have the ear” of those capable of assisting us in telling our story.

### **Objective**

Represent the interests and issues of the general membership at all levels of government so as to support and stimulate economic growth and a high quality of life.

### **Action Steps**

- Identify and represent key issues to make the Anderson County business community attractive and competitive.
- Develop an annual legislative business agenda to be championed in Columbia by our delegation.
- Develop programs, forums, and events that will inform the business community of issues impacting business and economic vitality.
- Develop programs, forums, and events to inform city council, county council and the general populace of issues impacting business and economic development.
- Develop a Speaker’s Bureau consisting of well spoken, informed officers and staff of the Chamber to proactively seek opportunities to communicate the programs and policy positions of the organization.
- Utilize local and other appropriate media to communicate with and educate the public.

# 4

## strategic goal four

### **Focusing on Our Members**

Business members are the lifeblood of the Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce. In order for us to accomplish the strategic goals outlined in this plan, we must reach our full potential in terms of membership growth and financial resources. We will do this by providing programs, projects, and events that are considered to be meaningful and of value to the members. We will initiate two-way communication with our members to determine what services, programs, and projects they want and need. We will create a mindset among the business community that investing in the Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce is a wise business decision. We will establish a strong connection between the business members and their chamber of commerce.

**Objective**

Grow the membership through the recruitment of new members and the retention of current ones, by a net increase of 20% by December 2010.

**Action Steps**

- Develop and implement both volunteer membership efforts and a full-time commissioned sales program.
- Explore the benefits of hiring a member retention specialist.
- Develop and implement a “customer call” program utilizing Staff, Board, and Ambassadors.
- Review current membership marketing materials and develop professionally designed collateral material to reflect the desired image.
- Develop a comprehensive Marketing and Communication Plan that places an emphasis on customer contacts so as to impact retention.
- Through the Communication Plan, educate our members on the programs and services available to them and promote the benefits and value of investing in the Chamber.
- Explore new member benefits to place emphasis on retention.

**Objective**

Review and evaluate effective membership investment schedules and recommend appropriate changes to the Board.

**Action Steps**

- Establish a Task Force to review the current membership schedule and research and evaluate a structure that will best meet the needs of the Chamber for the 2009 year.
- Develop a DRAFT proposal to be presented to the Board of Directors for approval and implementation by mid-year.

**Objective**

Apply for reaccreditation through the United States Chamber of Commerce.

**Action Steps**

- Submit accreditation documents that will lead to recertification with 5-Stars.

**Objective**

Re-evaluate the Chamber’s committee structure to reduce the number of committees while recruiting additional members and building volunteer support of Chamber programs, services, and initiatives.

**Action Steps**

- Develop job descriptions for chairman and committee members.
- Aggressively recruit Chamber members to committees and explain the benefits of service.
- Streamline councils from five (5) to four (4).



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