

# Strong Chambers for the Future

Dr. Bob Rohrlack, CCE  
Tampa Bay Chamber  
and

Pillar and Stone Strategies, LLC



1921-2021 ■ 100 YEARS OF NONPROFIT EDUCATION



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION

# Outline for our time:

- Understanding income, market trends, Chamber industry  
(Opportunities for Chambers)
- Factors influencing effectiveness and how to influence the factors to our advantage.
- How to see over the horizon. (What to anticipate)
- When is the “cutting edge” the “bleeding edge”? (new program or new problem?)





# Are we relevant?

- Boomers? Leaving the workforce faster than when first entered era.
- Millennials? Largest sector of the workforce.
- Gen X, Y, Home-landers?
- Diversity?
- Others?

# Seeing around the bend and over the horizon

- What makes something a:
  - trend?
  - disruptive?
  - flash?
  - shift?

Why is it important to know when this happens?

# Answer this question:

- How do you define effectiveness for your organization?
- *Ef-fec-tive-ness: (noun) the level of accomplishment in a task or process that leads to improved organizational performance or impact.*
- Be effective, not just busy!

# Where are Chambers today and where are we going?

- Q: What are the perceived factors influencing the effectiveness of chambers of commerce in the United States?
- Q: How do these identified factors impacting effectiveness vary between Executive and Chairperson of a Chamber of Commerce in the United States?



# Research process



Almost all phone interviews. One was in person.



Interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded resulting in 722 separate references identified.



The 722 separate references were classified into of 35 factors.

# Most difficult question

- **Quotes:**
- **“Okay. You know nobody knows the answer to the question, right?” (TC3)**
- **“As all things with the chamber of commerce, there's not one simple answer, but I'll take a stab at a handful.” (TE2)**

## Top Five Factors identified by Chamber Leaders (Second round of coding and after consolidation)

### Executive

1. Leadership
2. Advocacy
3. Convening (tie)
4. Competition (tie)
5. Self-Promotion

### Chairperson

1. Leadership
2. Advocacy
3. Convening
4. Competition
5. Self-Promotion

# Key Question:

- Q1: What are the perceived factors influencing the effectiveness of chambers of commerce in the United States?

## *Sentiments:*

- *Chambers should be key influencers*
- *Mixed on relationship with Government (“work with” or “keep in line”).*
- *Collaboration and inclusiveness.*
- *Other organizations: Economic Development Organizations (EDO’s)*
- *Awareness and visibility.*

# Key Questions:

- Q2: How do these identified factors impacting effectiveness vary between the Executive and the Chairperson of a Chamber of Commerce in the United States?

## *Sentiments:*

- *Both saw “Leadership” as the most impactful factor to effectiveness.*
- *Both agreed “Advocacy” was next important (2<sup>nd</sup>) factor.*
- *“Convening” and “Competition” were tied (3<sup>rd</sup>) for Executives; while for Chairpersons, there was a clear distinction (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectfully).*
- *Both listed “Self-Promotion” as 5<sup>th</sup> most important factor influencing effectiveness.*

# Missing ingredient: Mission Statement and a Plan

- **35% of membership organization Executives gave their board a “C”, “D”, or “F” in strategic development efforts.**

(Leblanc and Fraser)

- **“Well, I think that is THE most important question...”**

TC2 (response to define “effectiveness” for his Chamber of Commerce)

- **“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.”**

Benjamin Franklin

# The Missing Ingredient: Mission Statement and Strategic Plan

- Quotes:
- **“We don’t really do any annual plan report. My board chair went through and read the highlights from the past year...it was like blank stares.” (HE2)**
- **“I feel like chambers are falling behind serving a percentage of the business population.” (JE1)**

# Questions/Discussion:

- What did we miss?



Dr. Bob Rohrlack, CCE

Tampa Bay Chamber

[brohrlack@tampabaychamber.com](mailto:brohrlack@tampabaychamber.com)

813-610-6442



**PILLAR+STONE**

---

STRATEGIES

bob@pillarandstone.org