



HOSTING A MEETING FOR BUSINESS OWNERS



ABOUT THE SOLUTION CENTER

The Main Street Solution Center is a free access portal to resources for communities and organizations working to revitalize and strengthen their local economies. The Solution Center's curated resources are designed to help guide and inspire local leaders and advocates as they navigate the complexities of downtown and neighborhood business district revitalization and economic growth.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

This Main Street Solution Center publication was underwritten by Michigan Main Street and Main Street Iowa. Their generous support demonstrates a shared vision and ongoing commitment to freely share knowledge, experience, tools, and best practices to fuel revitalization and economic growth in their own communities, and in locales spanning the nation.



ABOUT THE CREATORS

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Ben Muldrow is a partner at Arnett Muldrow & Associates, a consultancy renowned for its creative approach to economic development, branding, and marketing strategies for small towns and cities across the nation. He brings an innovative mindset and a deep understanding of the unique dynamics of community branding to each engagement, blending traditional community values with modern marketing techniques to help communities and districts unlock their potential.

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Guide to Hosting Business Owner Meetings

Most all downtown or district leaders and advocates would agree that opportunities to bring business owners together to learn, plan, share news, collaborate, and build a strong sense of camaraderie and teamwork are good things that stand to advance district revitalization and enhancement goals. Still, some organizations struggle in their efforts to gather interest or to maintain attendance and participation at business owner meetings. While there may not be a single format or fix, some common denominators of engaging and productive business owner meetings include:



- Consistency in the meeting schedule
- Multiple touchpoints and reminders for invitees
- Punctual start and end times
- A well-organized agenda with topics that are timely and relevant
- Opportunities for attendees to actively participate



HINTS & TIPS FOR ORGANIZING & HOSTING BUSINESS OWNER MEETINGS

Consider the following hints and tips as part of your plan to start, grow, or put a new spin on business owner meetings.

- **Select a regularly scheduled meeting interval** (e.g. monthly, quarterly, etc.), day and time (e.g. third Thursday at 8 AM) for consistency.

- **Select a “neutral” location** for hosting meetings.

- Typically a location without a governmental or political affiliation.

- **Consider the benefits and drawbacks** of hosting meetings at a set location for consistency versus rotating meeting sites among businesses and facilities for exposure and to enhance awareness.

- **Determine “eligibility”** for attendance – for example:

- Open to any and all interested individuals, including non-business owners

- Open to all business owners (or owner representatives)

- Open only to member businesses (for membership-based organizations)

- **Develop and maintain a current business list** with owner contact information to ensure all are invited to attend and participate.

- **Use multiple channels to promote** the meetings and to extend invitations and reminders to business owners (e.g. email, texts, social media, etc.).

- **Consider using an alternative to the word “meeting”** (e.g. roundtable, summit, collective, huddle, assembly, etc.) to promote business owner get togethers.

- **Enlist the help of regular attendees** to personally invite new business owners, and those who have never or only infrequently attend.

- **Develop a “Master Agenda”** built around recurring agenda items or segments that can be easily updated. Examples of standing meeting topics could include:

- Updates from the organization

- Hot topics (pressing issues or subjects)

- District news and happenings

- Business spotlight or inside scoop

- Table talk (discussion and ideas-generating time devoted to a specific topic or pressing issue)

- **Designate a facilitator or emcee** who will take responsibility for shepherding the meeting agenda, activities, and discussions.

- Consider enlisting and/or training two or more individuals who are able and willing to share facilitator or emcee responsibilities throughout the year.



- **Be punctual**, start and end meetings on time, and stick to time parameters outlined in the agenda.

- Schedule and adhere to a one-hour meeting duration to better attract and retain attendees.

- **Designate or assign tasks** for taking attendance (consider using a simple sign-in sheet) and for compiling and distributing meeting notes to all district businesses.

- Be prompt and share meeting notes within one week or, better yet, within one or two business days of each meeting's conclusion to encourage follow-up and attendance at future meetings.

- **Include opportunities** for fun, and for attendees to engage in discussions, ask questions, and explore new ways to work together. For example:

- Use a "Show & Tell" segment for businesses to share news and announcements (e.g. business or personnel changes, new products and services) and to help build awareness, referrals, and relationships.

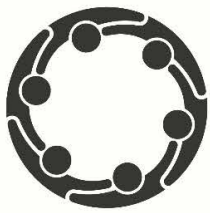
- Invite other important economic development partners and technical assistance providers (e.g. EDC, SBDC) to share resources and promote strong ecosystem relationships.

- Include a training component, possibly at regular scheduled intervals (e.g. quarterly), and always focused on one specific topic. Poll business owners to identify topics for inclusion based on need or areas of interest (e.g. social media, business planning, inventory control, etc.)

- Include one "table talk" discussion item per meeting/agenda. Pose a single question to focus the discussion and generate feedback and ideas relevant to the organization, business owners, and the district as a whole.



Sample Meeting Agenda



**DOWNTOWN
BUSINESS
HUDDLE**

Monthly Meeting
Emcee: Christine Zarkovich
December 4, 2018 • 8- 9 a.m.

MEETING AGENDA

8:00 a.m. Welcome

Introductions

8:05 a.m. Sponsor Update: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

BJ Puchala, Senior Community Liaison

8:15 a.m. Downtown Lansing Inc.

Mindy Biladeau, Executive Director

Layna Anderson, Communications and Marketing Manager

8:20 a.m. Downtown Community Policing

Lansing Police Department, Officer Tony Rodriguez

8:25 a.m. Downtown Happenings

- **Toasting the Artwork of Gordon C. Boardman**
Pam Heos, Director of Alumni, WMU-Cooley Law School

- **Holiday Cabaret**
Tom Ferris, Riverwalk Theatre

- **Festival of Trees**
Michael Beebe, Turner Dodge House

8:35 a.m. The Inside Scoop: New Business

Fudge and Frosting, Roxann Mills, Owner

8:45 a.m. Table Talk

See question below

8:55 a.m. Wrap Up

Table Talk and 50/50 drawings

Notes:

NEXT HUDDLE: Tuesday, January 8, 2019

TABLE TALK QUESTION: The number of people coming to downtown Lansing on the Saturday morning of Silver Bells weekend is going to continue to increase. What kinds of things can we do to increase the benefit to downtown businesses due to the extra visitors?

