



Mobile Chamber

Grand Openings, Open Houses & Ribbon Cuttings



Mobile
Chamber

One of the most exciting events for a business, whether new or existing, is celebrating a grand opening, a new location or a recent expansion. The Mobile Chamber is available to assist with your event if your business:

- Is within the first year of opening
- Has recently moved to a new location
- Has recently expanded or completed major remodeling

What type of event is right for your business?

- **Grand Opening**
Can be a casual or formal event that lasts 1-2 hours. Refreshments are optional.
- **Open House**
Casual event which lasts several hours. Guests come and go informally and visit your business. Refreshments are optional.
- **Ribbon Cutting**
Formal ceremony with a specific time for guests to be at your business. The owner and/or manager greets guests and cuts the ribbon. Public officials may also be chosen to participate in the ceremony. Refreshments are optional.

Setting a Date

You should allow yourself plenty of time to organize the details of the event. Planning should begin at least three to four weeks ahead of the actual event date, if possible. Before choosing a date, here are some important things to consider:

- Avoid planning your event on holidays when many local businesses and government offices are closed.
- Coordinate the date with the Mobile Chamber at least two to three weeks in advance. This allows time to include your event in the weekly e-newsletter and notify possible attendees. A reservation form must be submitted in order to reserve your date. Complete and return the ribbon cutting event registration form included in this packet.
- The best days of the week for good attendance are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Mondays tend to be too busy for most people to leave the office and many people take Fridays off to start their weekend early.
- Avoid holding a weekend event. Most people have their own personal plans on Saturdays and Sundays. The Mobile Chamber does not participate in weekend events in consideration of our staff and volunteers.

Setting a Time

The time of day you choose for your event is also critical to its success and will help determine the type of event you'll conduct. Morning functions, for example, have an entirely different atmosphere than a late afternoon cocktail reception. Consider the following when making your decision:

- Morning events should begin no earlier than 8 a.m. and are often held as a business opens for the day.
- Lunchtime events (11:30 a.m. ribbon cuttings) are usually successful since most people eat a mid-day meal. However, luncheons require more advance notice in sending out invitations. Many people schedule lunch arrangements weeks in advance and will need to be notified as early as possible to get your event on their calendar.
- Late afternoons are popular if the location accommodates people to drop by at their convenience after work. The best time for an afternoon event is starting at 4:00 p.m.
- Try to avoid mid-morning and mid-afternoon time periods. Many people are unable to break away from work in the middle of the day.

Invitation List

The invitation list should include people who are important to you and to the success of your business. Inviting the 'right' people will vary depending on the event but they might include some of the following:

- Current and potential customers
- Contractors, suppliers and vendors
- Employees and their significant others
- Family, friends and personal associates
- Fellow business people in your area and neighboring businesses
- Those who helped you get started - your banker, accountant, attorney, advisor
- Mobile Chamber members - see page 6 for information on obtaining a list
- Local government officials - the mayor, city council member or public officials from your district.



Invitations

Once you have identified your guest list, here are some tips to remember when sending invitations:

- Prepare an invitation that is simple and to the point. Make sure all of the basic information is included – who, what, when, where and why.
- If desired, include an RSVP. This will give you an idea of how many people may attend and how much food/beverages to have on hand.
- Allow a sufficient amount of time for guests to reply to your request. A week to 10 days is suggested for most events, although two weeks would be preferable.
- Be sure to include a map or clear instructions on how to get to your event. A street address alone isn't always sufficient.
- Will parking be an issue? If so, use the invitation to indicate where you would like guests to park.
- If you choose to do an elaborate invitation, get help from a professional graphic artist or designer.

Food and Beverages

Although an added expense that you may prefer to avoid, providing food and beverages for your guests adds a nice touch.

- Coffee, juices and pastries are appropriate choices for morning ceremonies.
- Sandwiches or light buffet items work well for lunch.
- Hors d'oeuvres or finger foods are appropriate for late afternoon and early evening events. Consider chips, dips, cheeses, vegetable plates or deli meat trays.
- Alcoholic beverages have their place and time and are only advisable for late afternoons or evenings. If serving alcohol, remember to have some non-alcoholic beverages for guests who don't drink.
- For larger events, consider enlisting the help of a professional caterer. They can give you good advice and are not as costly as you might think. Check the Chamber's online membership directory at www.mobilechamber.com for a list of catering members.



Planning Your Program

A brief program of some kind helps get your event started. It provides valuable recognition for you and your key people, makes the event more purposeful and allows you to explain more about your business. Consider these suggestions:

- People generally anticipate spending no more than about a half-hour at a ribbon cutting or grand opening ceremony, so plan your agenda accordingly.
- Limit the number of speakers and the length of their speeches. To help keep the program flowing smoothly, set a time limit for everyone asked to participate.
- Conclude your program with the appropriate ceremonial or symbolic activity like a ribbon cutting for a grand opening. This lets guests know the formal program is over and creates good photo opportunities.
- If your event includes an open house or tour of your facilities, be sure friendly and knowledgeable employees conduct group tours. Unguided self-tours by your guests are not as valuable as guided tours.
- Consider having some kind of door prize or drawing as part of your program. Winning a sample of your product or dinner for two at a nice restaurant can add to your guests' enjoyment and build attendance.
- Send thank-you letters the day after your event to anyone who played a key role in the program. If you collected the names and addresses of guests, consider sending a thank-you note to them as well.

Media Coverage

Do not automatically rely on the media to give coverage to your special event. They are often swamped with business and community news and are often unable to provide good coverage to them all. The following are several things you can do to increase the chances of getting coverage for your event:

- Send a media advisory to the local news outlets at least a week ahead of your event. More time may be needed for print media.
- Your news release should include the journalistic basics of who, what, when, where and why. A sample media advisory is included in this guide.
- Have a camera or photographer on hand so that if the media could not attend, you can send a follow-up press release with photo and information about your event and business.



What the Mobile Chamber Can Do for You

- Provide guidelines for planning your event which include:
 - Contact information for local elected officials:
[Mobile Mayor's office](#), [Mobile County Commission](#)
 - Contact information for [member caterers](#) for food needs
 - Contact information for [member photographers](#)
 - Contact info@mobilechamber.com to purchase the Mobile Chamber "members list"
 - Contact information for [Mobile Azalea Trail Maids](#) (if you would like to request an appearance)
- Promote your event on the Mobile Chamber's website on the Calendar of Events page by submitting your information here:
<https://my.mobilechamber.com/ap/Event/Submit/9p8AoYPv>
- Promote your event on the [Mobile Chamber Connections](#) Facebook Group.
- Promote your event in the [Business View Weekly](#) email newsletter.
- Invite the Mobile Chamber's Ambassadors (a group of volunteers from area member businesses). Typically, 5-10 Ambassadors and the Director of Member Relations attend.
- Provide ceremonial scissors and ribbon for Ribbon Cuttings.
- Provide camera/pictures taken by our communications staff. Your company photo and name will be featured on the Chamber's social media feeds and in the Mobile Chamber magazine.
- Provide a media advisory template & media contact list. Please be advised that, due to a large number of new company openings, members of the media do not usually attend the actual event, but the newspaper may carry your announcement if you send them a release. See page 8.

While the Mobile Chamber will extend the above-mentioned invitations and list your ribbon cutting on our Event Calendar, we strongly encourage you to conduct your own promotions to increase the attendance and awareness of your event.

Promotion

- Before the event, we will help promote on the Mobile Chamber Connection Facebook Group facebook.com/groups/chamberconnection and in the Business View Weekly email newsletter.
- After the event, we will share photos from your ribbon cutting on each of the Chamber's Social media feeds.
 - Facebook: facebook.com/MobileChamber
 - LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/mobile-chamber
 - Instagram: instagram.com/themobilechamber
 - Twitter: twitter.com/MobileChamber

Tips for promoting your event on social media

- Before your event, promote it on your social media pages with your followers.
- After the event, share the Chamber's post celebrating your event to your social media feeds.
- Tag yourself and team members in the post.

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