What Is a **Chamber of Commerce**, and Why Should You Join One?

Joining a chamber of commerce can help you build your professional network and market your business.

**By:**[**Jamie Johnson, Contributor**](https://www.uschamber.com/co/authors/jamie-johnson)

As a small business owner, you’re always looking for new ways to market and grow your business. Joining your local chamber of commerce can help you do exactly that.

**What is a chamber of commerce?**

A chamber of commerce is a group of businesses that supports the interests of its members. Each chamber of commerce will elect its own leadership and decide what agendas to pursue. A chamber does not create laws, but they may influence pro-business policies by lobbying legislators.

**How does a chamber of commerce work?**

The very first chamber of commerce was [established in France in 1599](https://iccwbo.org/chamber-services/world-chambers-federation/history-chamber-movement/). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce was later [established in 1912](https://www.uschamber.com/about/history). Today, chambers of commerce exist all over the world and are incredibly diverse organizations.

According to the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), most chambers follow two primary models: private law and public law. You’ll usually find public law chambers in Europe, North Korea and most Arab nations.

A public law chamber is established and regulated by legislation, and membership is often mandatory. In comparison, a private law chamber of commerce focuses on the needs of the local business community.

Private law chambers are usually found in North America, Britain, Scandinavia, Belgium and Sweden. This type of chamber is established under private law, and businesses only have to pay the registration fees to join.

**How can joining one help my business?**

If you’ve considered joining a chamber of commerce, you may have wondered how membership can benefit your business. Let’s look at four advantages of joining a chamber of commerce.

**Networking**

Many business owners join their local chamber of commerce for networking opportunities. You’ll meet other members of your community and form business relationships.

Over time, the relationships you build can lead to valuable business partnerships. Plus, if your business ever runs into trouble, you have a network to turn to for assistance.

If you see that there is a problem that needs to be addressed, you can bring the issue to your chamber.

**Publicity**

When you join your local chamber of commerce, your business will be listed in the chamber’s online directory, and your business could be highlighted in other chamber publications.

You can also increase your publicity by sponsoring events and advertising with your chamber. Plus, customers think more favorably of businesses that are part of a chamber of commerce and are [63% more likely](https://eldoradohillschamber.org/images/documents/ValueOfJoiningChamber.pdf) to make a purchase from your business in the future.

**Make your voice heard**

A chamber of commerce exists to support the interests of its members. So if there are proposed regulations that could hurt small businesses, many chambers will get involved.

If you see that there is a problem that needs to be addressed, you can bring the issue to your chamber. As a chamber member, this could be your opportunity to advocate for businesses like yours.

**Access to discounts**

When you join a chamber of commerce, you’ll receive access to discounts on things like shipping, office supplies and software. Plus, members may offer discounts and special rates to other members.

These types of savings quickly add up and could soon repay your membership fees. And you could receive new business referrals as a result of being part of your local chamber of commerce.

**How to make the most of your membership**

If you decide to join your local chamber of commerce, the most important thing you can do is get involved. Attend the meetings, make an effort to meet other business owners and look for ways to help them grow their businesses.

Take advantage of any free publicity you receive through your membership and positive brand recognition. View your chamber of commerce as a valuable business tool, and make the most of all the perks that come with membership.