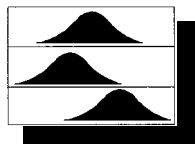


An Empirical Assessment of Attitudes and
Preferences from Members of the
Biloxi Chamber of Commerce

Prepared for:
Biloxi Chamber of Commerce

April 2004



Decision Scientific

A Management Consulting and Applied Research Firm

Descriptive Assessment of Findings

The most frequently cited length of membership in the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce was 10 or more years (48.9%) (Question 1). The average number of years of membership was 7.9 years. Please see **Table 1** below for details.

Table 1 Length of Membership	
Less than one year	4.3%
1-3 years	26.6%
4-6 years	13.8%
7-9 years	6.4%
10 or more years	48.9%

Just under 32% of the respondents indicated they had served on a Chamber committee sometime in the past (Question 2). Notably, 16% of the respondents indicated they were currently serving on a committee (Question 3). Please see **Tables 2 and 3** below for details.

Table 2 Have You Ever Served on a Biloxi Chamber Committee?	
	Proportion
Yes	31.6%
No	68.4%

Table 3 Are You Currently Serving on a Biloxi Chamber Committee?	
	Proportion
Yes	16.0%
No	84.0%

When asked about the awareness of specific events and programs sponsored by the Biloxi Chamber, the event/program with the highest awareness level was the Biloxi Seafood Festival (97.9%), followed by Breakfast with the Mayor (96.9%) (Question 4). Please see **Table 4** for details. Further, when asked which events/programs the respondent had attended in the past (of those listed in Question 4), the most frequently cited response was the Biloxi Seafood Festival (80.2%), followed by Morning Call (53.1%) (Question 5). Please see **Table 5** for details.

Table 4 Biloxi Chamber Event/Program Awareness	
Event/Program	Proportion
Biloxi Seafood Festival	97.9%
Breakfast with the Mayor	96.9%
Morning Call	89.6%
H.S. Scholarship Awards Presentation	70.8%
Educator Awards Presentation	61.5%
Chamber Challenge	58.3%
Other	2.1%

Table 5 Biloxi Chamber Event/Program Participation	
Event/Program	Proportion
Biloxi Seafood Festival	80.2%
Morning Call	53.1%
Breakfast with the Mayor	51.0%
Chamber Challenge	28.1%
Educator Awards Presentation	21.9%
H.S. Scholarship Awards Presentation	13.5%
Other	2.1%

In Question 6, respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance of various administrative functions carried out by the Biloxi Chamber. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each function on a 5-point bipolar scale ranging from 1-Very Unimportant

to 5-Very Important. Of note, both public communication and community relations had the highest mean scores (4.68) and are perceived as the most important functions carried out by the Biloxi Chamber. Please see **Table 6-14** for details.

Table 6 Perceived Relative Importance of Biloxi Chamber Functions	
Administrative Function	Importance Rating Mean Score
Public communication	4.68
Community relations	4.68
Military affairs relations	4.52
Membership recruitment	4.41
Junior Leadership development	4.20
Breakfast with the Mayor	3.80
Morning Call	3.73
Chamber Challenge	3.38

Table 7 Public Communication Importance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Very important	67.7%
Important	32.3%
Neither important nor unimportant	0.0%
Unimportant	0.0%
Very unimportant	0.0%

Table 8 Membership Recruitment Importance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Very important	47.9%
Important	45.8%
Neither important nor unimportant	5.2%
Unimportant	1.0%
Very unimportant	0.0%

Table 9 Military Affairs Relations Importance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Very important	54.2%
Important	43.8%
Neither important nor unimportant	2.1%
Unimportant	0.0%
Very unimportant	0.0%

Table 10 Community Relations Importance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Very important	66.7%
Important	33.3%
Neither important nor unimportant	0.0%
Unimportant	0.0%
Very unimportant	0.0%

Table 11 Breakfast with the Mayor Importance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Very important	15.8%
Important	50.5%
Neither important nor unimportant	31.6%
Unimportant	2.1%
Very unimportant	0.0%

Table 12 Morning Call Importance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Very important	11.8%
Important	51.6%
Neither important nor unimportant	34.4%
Unimportant	2.2%
Very unimportant	0.0%

Table 13 Junior Leadership Development Importance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Very important	28.1%
Important	63.5%
Neither important nor unimportant	8.3%
Unimportant	0.0%
Very unimportant	0.0%

Table 14 Chamber Challenge Importance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Very important	6.5%
Important	29.3%
Neither important nor unimportant	60.9%
Unimportant	2.2%
Very unimportant	1.1%

In Question 7, respondents were asked to rate the performance of various administrative functions carried out by the Biloxi Chamber. Respondents rated the performance of each function on a 5-point bipolar scale ranging from 1-Poor to 5-Excellent. Of note, public communication had the highest performance rating mean score. Please see **Table 15-23** for details.

Table 15 Perceived Performance of Biloxi Chamber Functions	
Administrative Function	Performance Rating Mean Score
Public communication	4.29
Military affairs relations	4.24
Community relations	4.23
Membership recruitment	4.00
Junior Leadership development	3.90
Breakfast with the Mayor	3.84
Morning Call	3.76
Chamber Challenge	3.46

Table 16 Public Communication Performance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Excellent	43.0%
Good	45.2%
Average	9.7%
Fair	2.2%
Poor	0.0%

Table 17 Membership Recruitment Performance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Excellent	25.6%
Good	51.2%
Average	20.9%
Fair	2.3%
Poor	0.0%

Table 18 Military Affairs Relations Performance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Excellent	38.6%
Good	48.2%
Average	12.0%
Fair	1.2%
Poor	0.0%

Table 19 Community Relations Performance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Excellent	38.3%
Good	48.9%
Average	10.6%
Fair	2.1%
Poor	0.0%

Table 20 Breakfast with the Mayor Performance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Excellent	19.4%
Good	46.3%
Average	32.8%
Fair	1.5%
Poor	0.0%

Table 21 Morning Call Performance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Excellent	16.4%
Good	44.8%
Average	33.7%
Fair	1.5%
Poor	0.0%

Table 22 Junior Leadership Development Performance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Excellent	21.9%
Good	46.6%
Average	31.5%
Fair	0.0%
Poor	0.0%

Table 23 Chamber Challenge Performance Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Excellent	6.6%
Good	36.1%
Average	54.1%
Fair	3.3%
Poor	0.0%

In Questions 8-12, the respondents were asked how often they read Biloxi Chamber-related material in various publications and other forms of communication. The responses are detailed in **Tables 24 - 28**.

Table 24 Readership Frequency of Articles in the South Mississippi Business Journal	
Response	Response Proportion
Regularly	34.4%
Occasionally	44.8%
Rarely	7.3%
Never	11.4%
Unaware of articles	2.1%

Table 25 Readership Frequency of Articles in The Sounder	
Response	Response Proportion
Regularly	57.3%
Occasionally	25.0%
Rarely	5.2%
Never	10.4%
Unaware of articles	2.1%

Table 26 Readership Frequency of Articles in The Bay Press	
Response	Response Proportion
Regularly	25.0%
Occasionally	19.8%
Rarely	9.4%
Never	42.7%
Unaware of articles	3.1%

Table 27 Readership Frequency of E-Mail from the Biloxi Chamber	
Response	Response Proportion
Regularly	56.8%
Occasionally	10.5%
Rarely	4.2%
Never	16.8%
Unaware of e-mails sent to me	11.7%

Table 28 Readership Frequency of the Biloxi Chamber Website	
Response	Response Proportion
Regularly	15.6%
Occasionally	15.7%
Rarely	26.0%
Never	39.6%
Unaware of website	2.1%

The majority (82.3%) of respondents rated the value received from the Biloxi Chamber as good or excellent (Question 13). Please see **Table 29** below for details.

Table 29 Biloxi Chamber Value Rating	
Response	Response Proportion
Excellent	37.5%
Good	44.8%
Average	15.6%
Fair	2.1%
Poor	0.0%

When asked to select the best benefit of belonging to the Biloxi Chamber (Question 14), the plurality (36.5%) of respondents cited networking opportunities followed by business referrals (16.7%), and company exposure in the visitor center (15.6%). Please see **Table 30** below for details.

Table 30 Best Benefit of Belonging to the Biloxi Chamber	
Response	Response Proportion
Networking opportunities	36.5%
Business referrals	16.7%
Company exposure in the visitor center	15.6%
Legislative initiative	12.5%
Event access	6.3%
Membership directory	6.3%
Other	3.1%
Newsletter	3.1%

In Question 15, respondents were asked to list (via open-ended question) other services the Biloxi Chamber should offer to better serve their business needs. The listing, paraphrased, was as follows:

- Advertising
- Anything to benefit small business
- Better interaction with small business issues
- Continue unified presence
- More exposure
- Good job; would like more tourist business
- Group insurance
- Have frequent luncheons (like Rotary)
- Help local government communicate with local businesses
- Improve website (make it more interactive)
- Let us know what committees need help
- Lobby local government and casinos to use local products
- More customers
- More exposure
- More minority participation (and members)
- More unity, inclusiveness
- Need to sell the benefits of South Mississippi

- More participation in military affairs
- More exposure for my company
- Promote small business owners
- Hold ribbon cutting ceremonies
- Take a more active stance
- Update website more often
- Work on more economic development

The majority (69.5%) of respondents indicated they would prefer the Biloxi Chamber to hold regularly scheduled meetings for the membership at large (Question 16). Further, when asked how often the aforementioned meetings should be held, the plurality (43.9%) of respondents indicated quarterly (Question 17). Please see **Tables 31 and 32** below for details.

Table 31 Prefer Regularly Scheduled Chamber Meetings?	
Response	Response Proportion
Yes	69.5%
No	30.5%

Table 32 Suggested Frequency of Meetings for Membership At Large	
Response	Response Proportion
Monthly	24.2%
Quarterly	43.9%
Semi-annually	18.2%
Annually	10.6%
Other	3.0%

When asked whether they were aware that their current membership in the Biloxi Chamber also meant they were a member of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber, the vast majority (91.7%) of respondents answered in the affirmative (Question 18). Further, the vast majority (99.0%) of respondents indicated they would recommend membership in the Biloxi Chamber (Question 19). Please see **Tables 33 and 34**.

Table 33 Aware of Membership in Gulf Coast Chamber?	
Response	Response Proportion
Yes	91.7%
No	8.3%

Table 34 Recommend Membership in the Biloxi Chamber?	
Response	Response Proportion
Yes	99.0%
No	1.0%

The majority (95.8%) of respondents indicated that they planned to renew their membership while the remaining proportion were undecided (Question 20). Please see **Table 35**. Of those members that were undecided, none (although prompted) provided a reason (Question 21).

Table 35 Plan to Renew Your Membership in the Biloxi Chamber?	
Response	Response Proportion
Yes	95.8%
No	0.0%
Undecided	4.2%

Lastly, respondents were asked to provide any other comments regarding the Biloxi Chamber (Question 22). Below is a paraphrased listing of those comments:

- Would like to participate on a committee
- Would like all members to experience the Biloxi Shrimping Trip
- Keep up the good work
- Update website calendar more often
- The Executive Director does a great job
- The surveys are wonderful
- Rachel is pleasant and Kim is a wealth of information
- Overall good job
- Need Chamber decals; offer seminars on involvement

- Keep up the good work
- More unity with small business workshops
- Make sure Chamber uses services from members
- Keep up the good work
- Keep own identity
- Hold general meetings to discuss issues facing members
- Have lost good members; need better leadership
- Good Chamber
- Get involved in noise ordinance
- Executive Director does a great job
- Keep up the good work
- Every member should have an ambassador
- Doing a great job; keep up the good work
- Doing a great job
- Need better speakers at Morning Call (suggested Eric Clark)
- Bay Chamber and Biloxi Chamber should unite

Weighted Average Quadrant Analysis - Program Performance vs. Importance

In order to assess the current relationship between program performance rating scores and the perceived importance of these programs, a quadrant analysis was developed. In a quadrant analysis, each program is placed in one of four quadrants based on the program performance mean score and the perceived program importance. These quadrants are labeled 1-4 (see definitions below the table). Attributes in quadrant 3 are considered, on an internal comparative basis, a weakness of the Chamber. Moreover, attributes in quadrant 2 are perceived as the current strengths of the Chamber. Please see **Table 36** below and the graph on the following page for details.

Table 36 Quadrant Analysis			
Program	Program Performance Rating	Program Importance Rating	Quadrant
Public communication	4.29	4.68	2
Membership recruitment	4.00	4.41	3
Military affairs relations	4.24	4.52	2
Community relations	4.23	4.68	2
Breakfast with the Mayor	3.84	3.80	4
Morning Call	3.76	3.73	4
Junior Leadership Development	3.90	4.20	3
Chamber Challenge	3.46	3.38	4

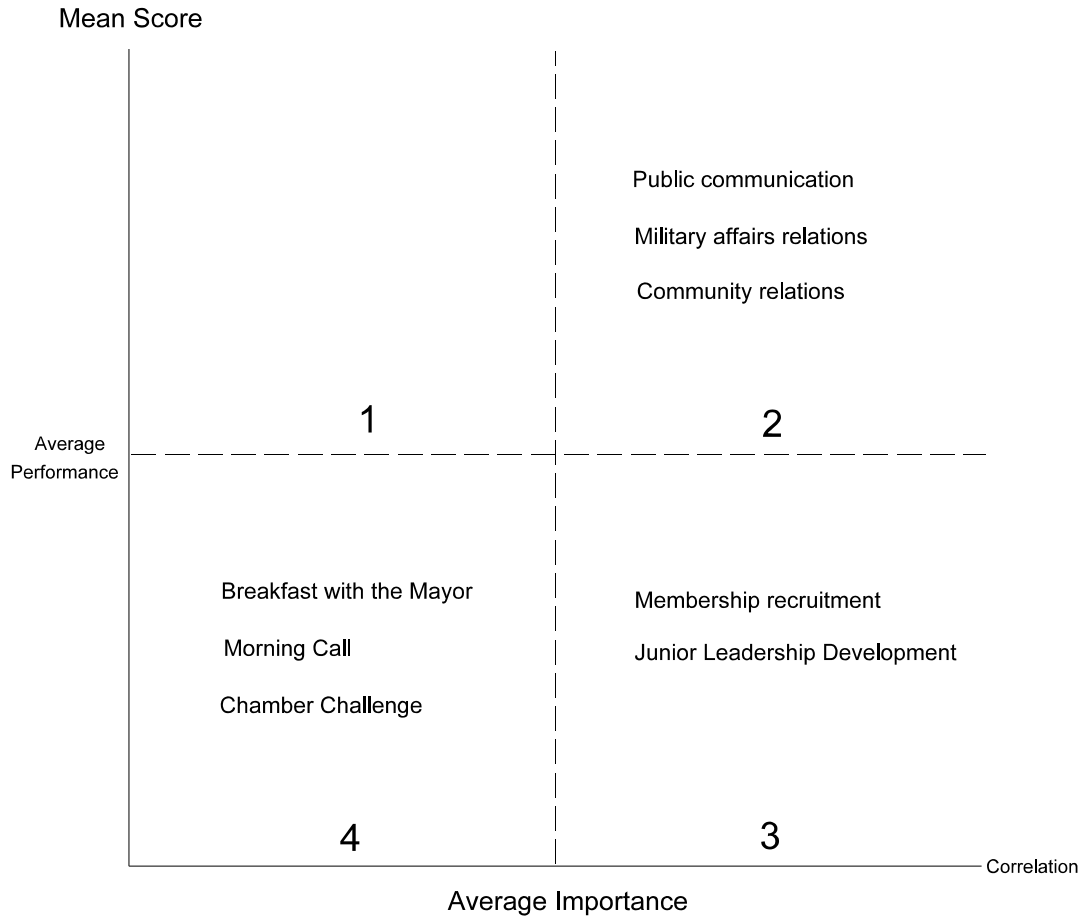
Quadrant 1 - Above average performance, below average importance

Quadrant 2 - Above average performance, above average importance

Quadrant 3 - Below average performance, above average importance

Quadrant 4 - Below average performance, below average importance

Quadrant Analysis (Internal Comparison)



Quadrant 1 - Above average performance, below average importance

Quadrant 2 - Above average performance, above average importance

Quadrant 3 - Below average performance, above average importance

Quadrant 4 - Below average performance, below average importance

APPENDIX

Methodology

Descriptive research was selected as the research design because the primary objective is to describe certain attitudes and characteristics of the Biloxi Chamber membership. This descriptive study will be utilized to clarify specific concepts, increase the reader's familiarity with inherent issues, and reveal information gaps.

Based on extensive previous experience in the area of questionnaire development and through a series of telephone conversations with representatives from the Biloxi Chamber, the data collection form was created. Subsequently, a random telephone sample was taken in April 2004. The sample size (n) = 96.

The data collection was administered by representatives from Decision Scientific via a random telephone survey. The population of respondents included all members of the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce. These representatives are trained on how to properly conduct telephone surveys, which includes techniques for explaining the purpose of the survey and what procedures to follow if any problems are encountered. The data collection team is aware of the importance and significance of conducting a random sample. The information was recorded during the telephone interview and was subsequently entered into the software program, *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*TM (SPSS), for analysis.

As discussed previously, probability sampling was utilized as the sampling method. Probability samples are distinguished by the fact that each population element has a known, nonzero chance of being included in the sample. It is not necessary that the probabilities be equal, but only that one can specify the probability with which each element of the population will be included in the sample. One can calculate the likelihood that any given population element will be included in a probability sample because the final sample elements are selected objectively by a specific process and not according to the whims of the researcher or field worker. The objective selection of elements in turn allows the objective assessment of the reliability of the sample results. A probability sample allows an assessment of the amount of sampling error likely to occur because a sample rather than a census was employed when gathering the data.

Please note that when we indicate that a difference between subgroups on a particular question is statistically significant, we mean that there is a 90% or better chance that the difference is the result of true differences in the subgroup populations and not due to sampling error. Conversely, when we indicate that a difference between subgroups is not statistically significant, we mean that there is less than a 90% probability that the difference is the result of true differences between subgroups. The decision was made to conduct all hypothesis testing at the 90% confidence level versus the more customary 95-99% confidence levels typically associated with academic research. The objective in this research is not to show proof beyond a shadow of a doubt, therefore this level of confidence is often utilized when conducting decision-based research. Simply stated, the objectives between academic research and practical, decision-based research are, in most cases, completely different.

Explanation of Measures of Central Tendency

The *mean*, *median*, and *mode* are frequently utilized to describe the location of a distribution. The *mode* can be utilized for data measured at any level, but is most appropriate for nominal data. It is usually not the preferred measure for ordinal and interval data since it ignores much of the available information. For ordinal data, the *median* is usually a good measure of central tendency, since it utilizes the ranking information. The *median* should not be utilized for nominal data, since ranking of the observations is impossible. The *mean* is the measure of central tendency that is appropriate for interval and ratio data because it utilizes the distance between observations.

Explanation of Measures of Dispersion

Two distributions can have the same values for measures of central tendency and yet be very dissimilar in other respects. Specifically, the range of data or its dispersion can be drastically different. The variance is computed by summing the squared differences from the mean of all observations and dividing by the *degrees of freedom* in the sample. The square root of the variance is termed the standard deviation. While the variance is expressed in squared units, the standard deviation is expressed in the same unit of measurement as the observations.

General Terminology:

- Nominal scale** - measurement in which numbers are simply assigned to objects or classes of objects solely for the purpose of identification.
- Ordinal scale** - measurement in which numbers are assigned to data on the basis of some order of the objects.
- Interval scale** - measurement in which the assigned numbers legitimately allow the comparison of the size of the differences among and between members.
- Ratio scale** - measurement that has a natural or absolute zero and therefore allows the comparison of absolute magnitudes of the numbers.
- Mean** - the value that is equal to the sum of a list of numbers divided by the number of numbers; average.
- Median** - the value such that half of the numbers in a list are above it and half are below it; the mid-point (the 50th percentile).
- Mode** - the value that occurs most frequently in a list of numbers.
- Parameter** - a quantity, such as the mean, that characterizes a population.

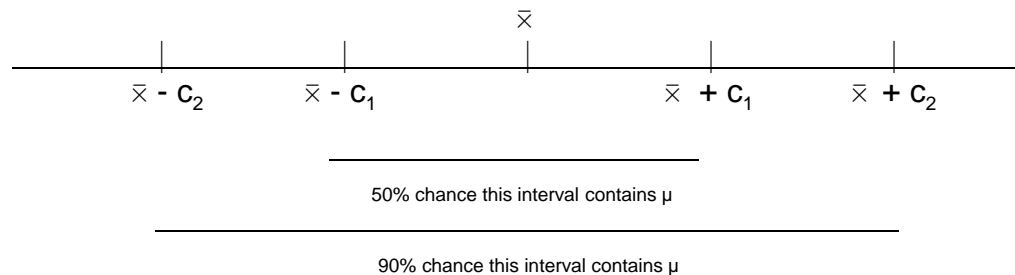
Statistic - a quantity calculated from the items in a sample, such as the average \bar{x} and is often used to estimate an unknown population parameter.

T-Value - value used to determine the probability of two sample means having the same population mean.

Confidence level - the degree of confidence or assurance that the true value of the parameter falls between the confidence intervals, e.g., 90% level.

Confidence interval - an interval, based on observations of a sample, within which we can assert with some degree of confidence that the population mean lies. For example, it is common to assert with 90 percent confidence that the population mean falls within the confidence interval. In other words, an interval at the 90% level is constructed.

In this study, at the 90% confidence level, with a sample size of 96, the proportional margin of error utilizing the finite population correction is $\pm 7.3\%$ in the worst case.



Standard error - a measure of how much the value of a test statistic may vary from sample to sample. It is the standard deviation of the sampling distribution for a statistic. For example, the standard error of the mean is the standard deviation of the sample means.

Standard deviation - a measure of dispersion that is expressed in the same units of measurement as the observations.

Degrees of freedom - the number of values in a sample that are free to vary when calculating a sample statistic.

Variance - a measure of the dispersion of values about the mean. It is computed as the sum of squared deviations from the mean divided by one less than the total number of valid observations.