

How To Have A Successful Grand Opening/Ribbon-Cutting/Open House

The Portage Chamber of Commerce is very pleased to have the opportunity to help with your business grand opening. The Chamber will provide you with the ceremonial scissors and the ribbon. We will also provide a mailing list for your invitations.

Below are tips and guidelines for planning a successful event.

Dress Rehearsal

Your grand opening is the opening phase of a successful marketing program. Your business should be up and operational for at least two weeks prior to this event. This will allow ample time to polish your business and work out any unforeseen problems. Remember, every person at this event is a potential customer or has the opportunity to influence others, make sure you are ready to showcase your expertise.

Set the Date and Time

We schedule Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies Tuesdays - Thursdays and we have found that a 5 – 7 PM time frame for these days usually works well or the first full week Friday of the month with a morning or afternoon start. The first step is to pick a day that will allow your special guests or dignitaries to attend. We recommend scheduling this about a month in advance. That should allow ample time to secure and deliver invitations and other necessary items. You should also check to make sure your event does not compete with other civic, organizational or government calendars. The Chamber office can help with this.

Invitations

If it is in your budget, we suggest sending invitations to each Chamber member. A mailing list can be provided to you at no charge. Postcard size mailers are usually sufficient. Portage has some terrific printers that can help with this project. If you have a firm commitment from a dignitary to attend your grand opening, include that on the invitation. Invitations should be distributed about two weeks prior.

Develop an 8 ½" x 11" invitation for the Chamber office. They will fax and e-mail to the membership as a reminder. A Guideline for Guest List is attached.

Alert the Press

Mail or e-mail press releases to our newspapers – The Times 219-762-4334 or The Post-Tribune 219-477-6011. Guidelines for Writing a Press Release and contact information are attached. Make sure they are aware of the date, time, special happenings, dignitaries attending, directions and your contact information. Our local papers are great partners in supporting our community businesses. While there is no guarantee, they usually make every effort to cover your opening in some way. Attend the Chamber luncheon and personally invite members to attend and talk about your business.

Decoration or Theme

Attract attention to your business. Grand opening banners, balloons or other decorations may be appropriate.

Refreshments

Decide what refreshments to serve. Each grand opening is different; just do what your budget allows. If you are having a more elaborate event, consider a caterer.

Music, Announcements, Door Prizes...

Music adds a nice touch to any event. It helps with the mood you are trying to create. Also, consider door prizes where guests can drop their business cards or register. It will allow you an opportunity for follow-up mailings.

The Chamber wishes you the best in your new business venture. Please keep us updated in your planning progress and call if you should have any questions or need further guidance 219-762-3300.

TIP: Most successful business owners understand the importance of networking and making business contacts. Smart business people are involved in their community, civic organizations and the Greater Portage Chamber of Commerce. They attend charity events, other business events and speak at seminars. The Chamber hosts a New Member Orientation Breakfast once a quarter, we will cover some of these opportunities during this event. If you would like information sooner, please call the Chamber office.

Invitation/Press Release Guidelines

Include:

- Name of your business and tagline (what you do)
- Address and Directions (if needed)
- Phone Number
- Date and Time of Event
- Specific Time of Ribbon Cutting
- Ask for RSVP
- Include any activities for the event (snacks, refreshments, door prizes...)

Guest List

Invite:

- All Chamber Members
- Dignitaries
- Current Customers
- Business Contacts
- Friends
- Family