

Executive Summary

Research was conducted on behalf of the Port Credit Business Improvement Association (PCBIA) to gauge members satisfaction, interest, knowledge and opinions of the PCBIA and their initiatives in the community.

Comprised of over 400 members, the PCBIA is an integral part of the Port Credit community, and responsible for putting on the 13 large scale festivals that happen every year.

An online survey was designed and distributed to 306 members on the PCBIA e-mail contact list as a tool to provide valuable feedback for the BIA on what they are excelling at and suggestions for where they can improve.

Telephone interviews were also conducted with 6 out of the 10 Board of Directors to further support conclusions found within the members responses. Of the 306 surveys sent out there were 63 respondents, which is a 20.5% response rate.

The survey was successful in retrieving information from a diverse group, with member ranging in longevity of membership, type of business owned and where the business is located within Port Credit.

There was an overall satisfaction with the PCBIA's communication efforts, and over 95.2% prefer email as the main source of communication with the PCBIA.

Suggestions for improvement regarding communication include making efforts to communicate more details over e-mail (especially notes from the meetings) and asking for member feedback more regularly at meetings by providing anonymous suggestion boxes where members can input their issues, so they can be resolved in a timely manner.

Survey respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the PCBIA and their promotion of Port Credit, with an average of 6.7 on a scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 10 (very satisfied).

Overall suggestions from the research indicate that the PCBIA is a strong organization, however they need to inform a greater number of their members about who they are and their direct role within the community.

A last suggestion would also be to continue to gauge member satisfaction on an annual basis so as to generate more awareness, involvement and support in the various initiatives they take on each year.

Introduction

Located in the south of Mississauga at the mouth of the Credit River, Port Credit has been an attraction for tourists and travelers as far back as 1915 (Wikipedia, 2011). Recently celebrating its 175th anniversary, Port Credit's population has grown to 11,500 (TOPCA, 2011). Recognized for its charm, excitement, festivals, events, great food, shopping, entertainment and beautiful waterfront, its been named the most happening place in the '905' by the National Post (PCBIA, 2011). The boundaries of Port Credit extend from Seneca Ave to Shawnmarr Rd, south from Canadian National Railway to Lake Ontario. Dividing the defined East and West village is Hurontario Street.

A vital role in the success of Port Credit is the Business Improvement Association, which operates as the organization designed to promote and improve functions within this geographical area.(Home Ontario Business Improvement Association, 2011)

The office of The Port Credit Business Improvement Association is located inside the village's signature lighthouse. Constructed in 1991, the lighthouse was created as reminder of Port Credit's marine heritage after the original lighthouse was destroyed in a fire in 1936 (Heritage Mississauga Port Credit, 2009).



The PCBIA consists of over 400 members and is managed by a board of directors and committees. Its board of directors and staff bring with them a diverse range of skills, many of them business owners, offering accounting, funeral, veterinary services and clothing, food and music sales. The board of directors and staff meet the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the lighthouse and welcome all members to attend. (PCBIA, 2011)

Port Credit BIA's General Manager and key spokesperson, Ellen Timms, was a retailer in Port Credit for 12 years before taking on her role with the PCBIA in 2011 (PCBIA Board Of Directors). She is also the director for the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association, or OBIAA (Home Ontario Business Improvement Association, 2011). She hosts a business development breakfast the third Thursday of each Month at the Crooked Cue restaurant, where each month a local business owner is chosen to share their knowledge. (PCBIA, 2011).

The Port Credit BIA's mandate is to promote Port Credit as a business and shopping area, to keep it beautiful and safe and to continue to make it a wonderful place to work, live and play (PCBIA, 2011), (Living, 2008). They are involved with organizing/supporting 13 festivals and events between May to September, including the Mississauga Waterfront Festival, Buskerfest, The In Water Boat Show, Port Credit Art Show, Paint The Town Red Parade, The Salmon Run Exhibition, The Farmers Market and the Southside Shuffle Jazz & Blues Festival(PCBIA, 2011). The Mississauga Waterfront festival is recognized as one of the top 100 festivals in Ontario(MWF).

The Port Credit BIA's current strategic plan was developed on January 25th 2011, and focuses on five key areas: Communication/Education, Branding, Boundary Expansion, Infrastructure and Advocacy. A professional marketing team was hired to create a new brand and Logo for Port Credit to target a greater market and reflect the village's diverse culture, businesses and heritage (Port Credit Village Times). The new logo was first revealed on the BIA's Facebook page in the fall of 2011, followed up by an article explaining the reason for change in the Port Credit Village Times (Publishing, 2011)

At the last annual general meeting on March 23rd over 30 businesses attended. The meeting was held at the village's Waterside Inn, where a budget of \$523,143 was allocated for the upcoming year. The budget is aimed towards branding, marketing, event sponsorship, website maintenance and streetscape improvements (Gregory, 2011).



Within the last year the Port Credit BIA has dealt with a number of new initiatives. As part of Mississauga's Culture Pilot Project, a motion was passed on March 30, 2011 for The Port Credit BIA to permit furniture on sidewalks (benches), BBQ's, retail displays between May 20, 2011- September 30, 2011. Additional parking was also created for The Farmers Market as well as the addition of new bike racks. (Viva Port Credit/Notice Of Motion, 2011)

There has also been great concern in the community in recent months over the possibility of a Walmart or Target opening in the Port Credit/Lakview area. Approximately 200 ratepayers and residents recently showed up for a meeting at Port Credit Secondary School expressing their concerns over the matter (Beggs, Target, Walmart eye Port Credit, 2011).

Jim Tovey, Councilor Ward 1 Mississauga and PCBIA board of directors member comments "I strongly oppose large format retail stores anywhere within the Lakeshore corridor. My belief is that Port Credit should retain its distinct village character and

Lakeview should be allowed to develop its own unique village character according to the vision of the community as outlined in Inspiration Lakeview" (Topca News).

Along with these recent initiatives, the Port Credit BIA has also had to deal with complaints and concerns over the cancellation of events like Moonlight Madness. In response to the change, over 20 stores on the east side organized the first East Village Sidewalk Sale. The PCBIA still showed support and donated posters and balloons for the event. Ellen Timms said, "after more than 25 years, Moonlight Madness had simply 'run its course' and needed to be replaced by an event with more of a modern slant" (Beggs, Mind your businesses east of Hurontario St., 2008).

Each business automatically becomes a PCBIA member through their annual tax levy and the PCBIA needs to know how many members are aware of this.

They would also like to know if members know about the PCBIA meetings, and the improvements they would like the PCBIA to make in the community.

Port Credit has changed significantly in the past 10-15 years with either entirely new or reconstructed commercial spaces. (Mississauga, 2001) As the community continues to develop, new businesses are constantly being added to the list of members of the PCBIA. These 400 plus members need to be informed of the BIA's role, plans, challenges, actions and results and have the opportunity to be heard and become involved.



The PCBIA would also like to hear how the members feel about the recent large format retail store proposals in the area and if this is an issue the members feel they should lobby against.

Effective communication can be particularly challenging due to the constantly evolving technology used to reach a group comprised of so many different generations, interests and businesses. The PCBIA's strategic plan has intentions to facilitate social media and technology seminars, but first they need to determine whether members are, or are willing to, engage with the PCBIA on social media platforms before they proceed.

The following is a research report conducted by method of an online survey for members of the PCBIA, and telephone interviews with the PCBIA board of directors. Designed to evaluate the PCBIA's member's satisfaction, interest, knowledge and opinions, this survey will provide the valuable feedback for the PCBIA to make any necessary changes or continue with their current procedures.

Research Design

The survey was designed to find out what the Port Credit BIA wants to know from the members to find out whether the members are interested in PCBIA communication, whether the members read the emails, do the members have email id , are they willing to get involved in town hall meetings, committee level, networking events and attend Annual General Meeting.

They want to know what the PCBIA should be doing on their behalf for parking, advertising and main street events. Whether the members like the PCBIA and is PCBIA are doing a good job.

The survey was designed to know about who the ideal customers of PCBIA and the effectiveness of customer service provided by the PCBIA .

The PCBIA wants to know if the members understand the mandates and challenges of PCBIA and whether they support a capital funds project to improve streetscape.

The survey questions are divided into three sections-

1. General Information
2. Communication
3. Overall satisfaction

The survey focuses on generating member information regarding the length of membership with the PCBIA, the type of business which the member is involved in and the location of the business.

The communication section of the survey is used to generate information about the communication between PCBIA and its members and the effectiveness of PCBIA's communication efforts. It also enquires whether the members are subscribed to PCBIA's official Facebook page, the reason for not subscribing to it and if they feel whether Facebook is an effective way to receive updates on the PCBIA's actions. Questions are also asked to the members about the BIA monthly meeting.

The final section of the survey was framed to know about the members overall satisfaction with PCBIA in terms of the members understanding of the PCBIA's role in the community, the elements PCBIA is responsible for like beautification, promoting the village and zoning, the areas where PCBIA is succeeding and the areas where it could improve its efforts like parking, communication, budget allocation, development of Port Credit, beautification, safety and promotion of Port Credit.

Data Collection

Data was collected from two main stakeholder groups, the PCBIA members and the PCBIA board members.

The PCBIA members' data was collected through an online survey. An e-mail invitation explaining the survey and its validity was sent out to all members of the PCBIA beforehand. PCBIA members were informed that they only had a week to fill out this survey, although in reality, 10 days were allocated for its completion.

There was a total of 310 surveys sent out to PCBIA members, with 5 members opting out and 4 e-mails bouncing back. There were 63 surveys completed, which means the response rate was 20.5%. The initial e-mail that was sent out prompted the first 20 members to very quickly fill out the survey, and then there was a lull for a few days.

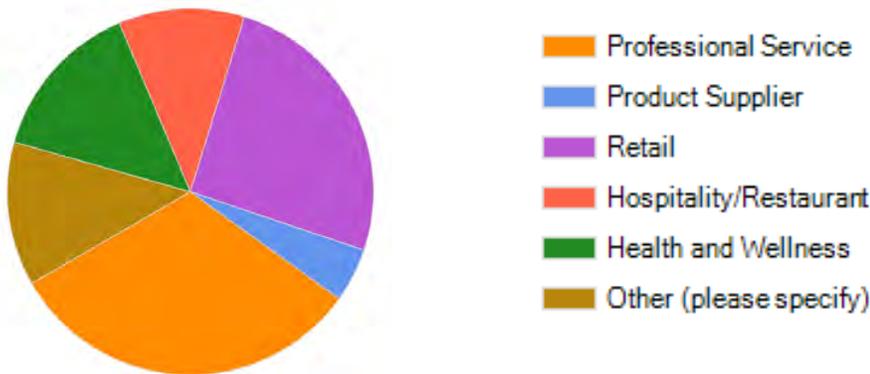
Our client sent out a follow up e-mail urging people to complete the survey, as well as reassuring them that the group conducting the survey was a third-party group. After this prompt, many more surveys were filled out. A 20.5% response rate for an online survey is on the lower end of the spectrum, which could indicate a lack of e-mail usage as a form of communication for the majority of PCBIA members, or a general lack of interest.

It was determined that the PCBIA board members would be interviewed over the telephone, in order to ensure a more in depth survey. Of the ten PCBIA board members, 6 interviews were conducted, which means a response rate of 60%. Questions were designed to be unbiased and interviewers were instructed to not make leading statements. The telephone survey produced a very detailed interview, where board members were able to elaborate on their opinions, and valuable data was collected through this method.

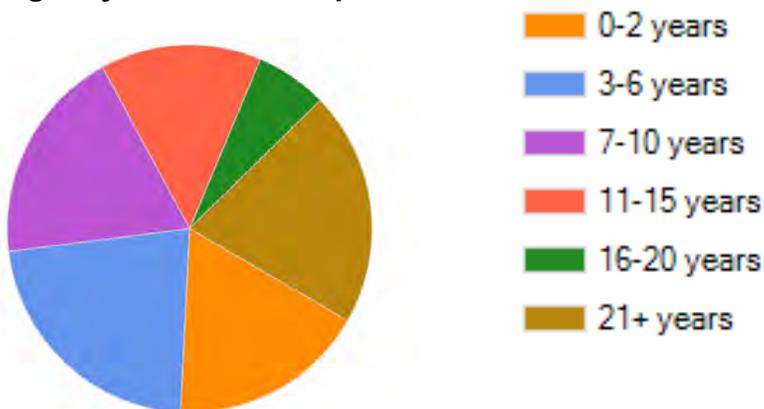
Research Results

The goal was to collect data on Port Credit BIA member satisfaction. Board Member interviews were also conducted as a secondary measure to further support conclusions within the survey collection. Of the 310 surveys distributed via email, four surveys bounced back. A total of 63 surveys were used for data analysis, which means the response rate for the data collection was 20.5%. A diverse range of Port Credit BIA members took part in the survey with their membership ranging from 0-2 years to 21+ years. Members who completed the survey were from a diverse range of business backgrounds ranging from Professional Service (31.7%), Retail (25.4%), Health and Wellness (14.3%), Hospitality/Restaurant (11.1%), product suppliers (4.8%) and other (12.7%). Of the 63 respondents the majority (74.6%) were aware of their automatic membership in the BIA and the majority operate a business West of Hurontario (68.3%).

Description of Members Business

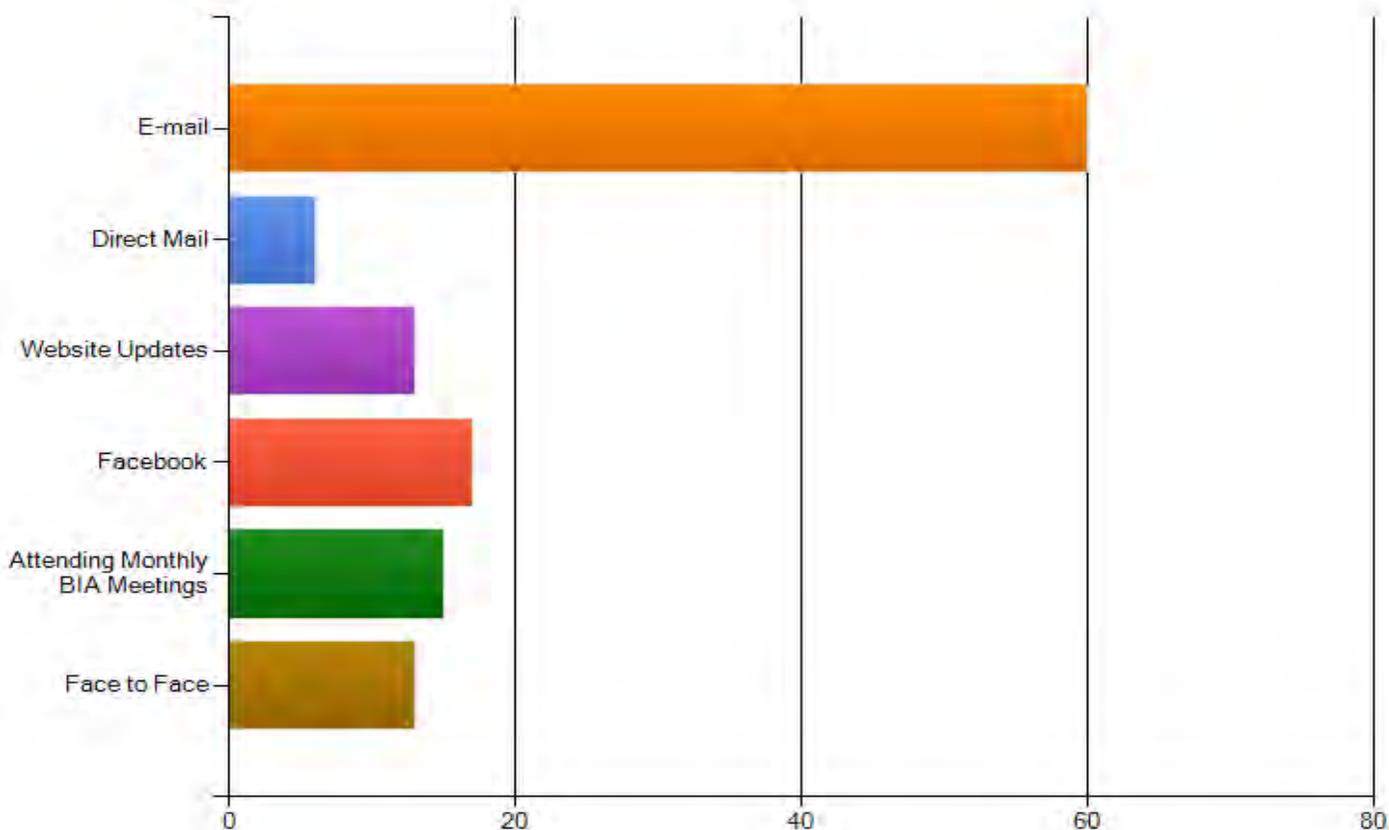


Longevity of Membership



One goal of the research was to determine how effective the Port Credit BIA's communication efforts with members is. Overall the BIA was said to have fairly effective methods with the average response lying somewhere around 8 (23.8%) on a scale of 1 (ineffective) to 10 (very effective). The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that e-mail (95.2%) is the most effective method of communication. After e-mail, Facebook (27%) and attending monthly meetings (23.8%) are the most utilized sources of communication between the Port Credit BIA and its members.

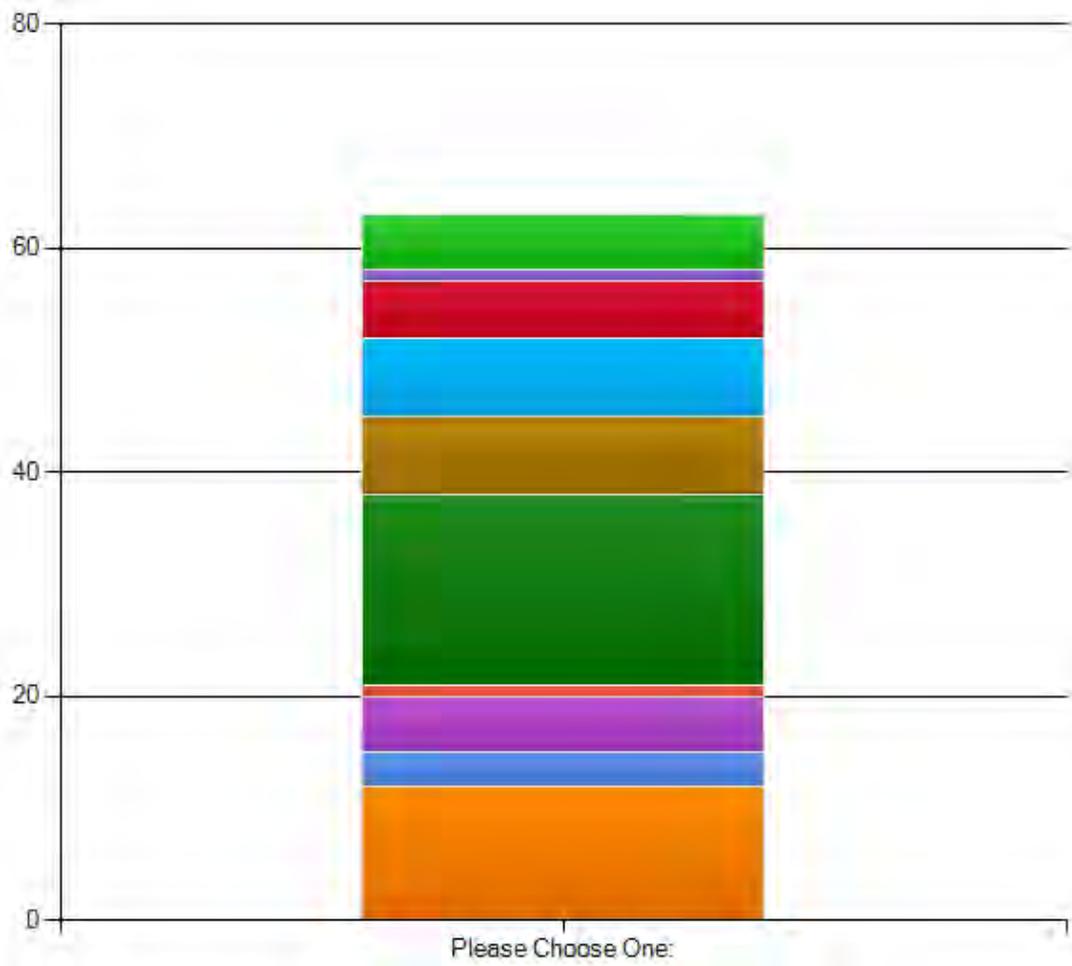
Preferred Communication Mediums for BIA Members



With the introduction of social media in many businesses and organizations, the Port Credit BIA has also utilized these tools in the last few years. One question that was addressed to the Board of Directors was how effective they felt the current Facebook initiative was, and if they had any further suggestions to the social media efforts of the Port Credit BIA. Of the 7 interviewed, 6 believed that the current efforts were very effective and it created an earth friendly, current platform for people to connect with the BIA. Of the 63 respondents who completed the survey 69.8% are not currently subscribed to the PCBIA Facebook page. Reasons for the lack of participation include members not using Facebook (30.2%) in general, or other reasons (25.4%). Majority of comments for the other category revolved around the common notion that members did not know there was a Facebook page they could link to.

Aside from Facebook and e-mail, another major communication tool for the Port Credit BIA is the use of monthly networking meetings. Of the 7 Board Members interviewed, there was a split between attendance at meetings, however the consensus is that these meetings are a useful communication tool for certain topics and discussions. Members of the Port Credit BIA are aware that there are monthly networking meetings (87.3% responded yes), however when asked if they attend the general meeting in March 68.3% responded no. When asked to rate the overall effectiveness of the meetings the mean response was 5.7 which on the scale lands right near somewhat helpful. While not everyone may attend the meetings, one major conclusion from the survey was that the majority (79.4%) would like to see minutes from the meetings.

**Effectiveness of Port Credit BIA Meetings
Scale of 1 (not helpful) to 10 (very helpful)**



Another major section of the survey dealt with the events and community developments within the Port Credit BIA and the member's perceptions of the BIA's role. One relevant issue the Port Credit BIA is dealing with currently is the development of large format retail chains in Port Credit. While 19% were indifferent, the majority (58.7%) were against such developments. Support for the BIA in their lobbying efforts against these chains was split with 55.6% for helping and 44.4% against any support.

In relation to events, 71.4% of respondents feel that there is a positive economic impact from the events that the Port Credit BIA puts on. In relation to the events impact directly on the BIA members businesses, the average response was a 7.2 on a scale of 1 (hurt my business) to 10 (help my business).

Events are a major category of the Port Credit BIA's initiatives, however the survey was also created to ensure that members were clear on what the BIA is actually responsible for within the community outside of strictly events. While 60.3% of respondents answered yes, they do have a clear understanding, 27% were unclear and 12.7% unsure altogether. The majority of members believed that the PCBIA is responsible for beautification (61.9%), promoting the village (65.1%), events (58.7%) and 46% believed that the PCBIA is responsible for all of the events listed.

Members Understanding of PCBIA's Role



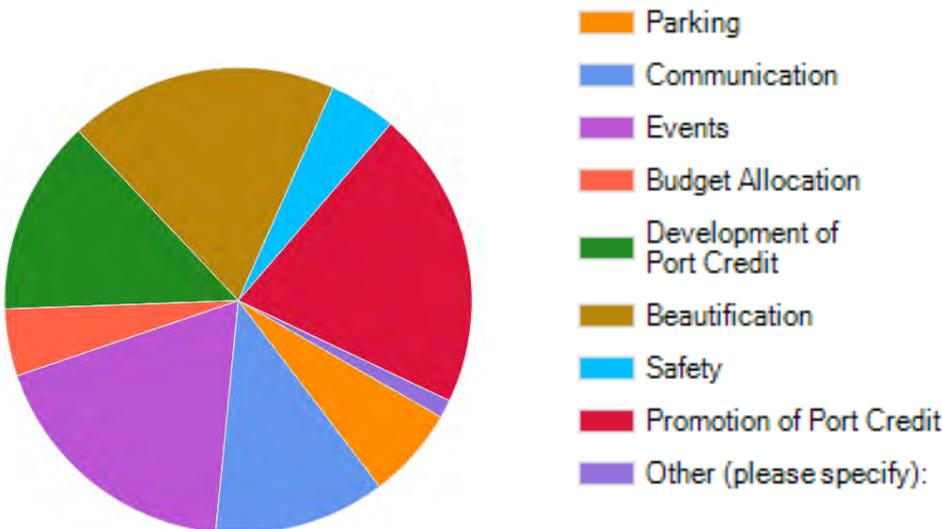
The last section of the survey dealt with member satisfaction and the PCBIA in general. Member satisfaction was rated on a scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 10 (very satisfied) with the average response being 6.7, landing in the upper scale of satisfaction and the most frequent response was an 8 with 17.5%. Board members interview responses match the feelings of the members in that out of the seven interviewed, all said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their position on the board. Not only were board members satisfied but they felt that their local initiatives (networking and lobbying within the community) have been effective tools in communicating the BIA and their objectives within the community. Three of the seven board members suggested that more face-to-face contact can still be done in order to further

When asked what areas in specific the BIA is succeeding at, members felt very strongly about the BIA in their efforts to promote Port Credit (77.8%). Other main areas members feel the BIA is succeeding at include events (68.3%), development (50.8%) and beautification (69.8%). Areas that members believe the BIA could improve include parking (47.6%), communication (22.2%) and promotion of Port Credit (25.4%). These numbers are not nearly as strong as the success levels, which indicates that satisfaction is related in some way to the areas that people believe the BIA is succeeding.

Areas the PCBIA Could Improve



Areas In Which the PCBIA is Succeeding



In the board member interviews, five of the members believed that board members should in fact have a number of terms they are limited to. The average response fell somewhere around 2-3 terms. With member satisfaction being high, it is not unusual that most of members put forth the amount of time they expected which ranges from 2-4 hours per week. Should members need additional help with events, of the 63 participants surveyed, 55.6% did indicate they would be willing to help and volunteer. It is important to focus on these people in the future as they can assist the PCBIA in completing even more of their objectives.

Overall, the survey was successful and while the results are only indicative of 20% of the BIA member population, it is important to view the results and investigate further into certain topics especially those that appear significant like communication (with Facebook in particular), monthly meetings, and areas of improvement for the BIA. Additional comments in relation to the BIA and their initiatives from members range from having no suggestions to events like a Fishing Derby, communication with the membership or simply a message to let them know they are doing a good job.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The Port Credit BIA member satisfaction survey generated informative results demonstrating the effectiveness and relevancy of the survey questions. The survey response rate was somewhat low indicating either a lack of participation or knowledge of the survey by PCBIA members, or an issue with the electronic distribution method. As such, while survey results are informative, it must be noted that they only reflect the opinions of 20.5% of PCBIA members. In the future, a longer survey response time should be allotted and further email notifications outlining the existence, function, and importance of the survey should be communicated to increase the survey response rate.

The survey was successful in retrieving information from a diverse range of members including longevity of membership with the PCBIA and types of businesses. However, the majority of survey respondents were those operating a business in west of Hurontario and survey responses thus greater reflect the opinions of the West of Hurontario division. This indicates a need to specifically target east of Hurontario in future surveys to conclusively determine total member satisfaction with the PCBIA.

There was a high response rate of board member interviews that generated useful information and provided a basis to compare conclusions retrieved from the member satisfaction survey and to support the recommendations outlined in this report.

While the majority of respondents are aware of their automatic membership in the PCBIA, a quarter of respondents are not. This suggests that greater communication measures can be taken to inform members of their automatic membership, especially to businesses located in the East of Hurontario division.

Suggestions include:

- Informing all PCBIA members of their automatic membership via email – the preferred method of communication.
- Tracking new and opening businesses to ensure their awareness of their automatic membership via email as well as by face-to-face communication.

Communication

Survey respondents indicated an overall satisfaction with the PCBIA's communication efforts with members. Nearly 50% of respondents feel informed about the PCBIA's actions both before and after they occur with minimal respondents indicating that they never feel informed about PCBIA actions. However, the PCBIA could improve communication efforts by ensuring members are aware of PCBIA initiatives both before **and** after they occur with greater attention to informing members of the outcomes of initiatives.

In terms of methods of communication, e-mail was selected as the most preferred followed by Facebook, attending monthly PCBIA meetings, face-to-face communication, and website updates with communication by direct mail selected the least frequently. Survey results thus indicate that the PCBIA should continue their communication efforts and improve their correspondence by utilizing email wherever possible and avoiding direct mail communication to garner further member satisfaction, awareness, and involvement.

Facebook

Concerning PCBIA social media, specifically Facebook, there is a disconnect between board members' perceptions and actual member involvement. Board members indicated a strong belief that Facebook was a very effective method of communication that provided an earth friendly and current platform for people to connect with the PCBIA. Survey results, however, indicated that a significantly high majority of PCBIA members are not subscribed to the PCBIA on Facebook, mainly because they do not use Facebook or were unaware of the existence of a PCBIA Facebook page. Results also specified that lack of participation with the PCBIA on Facebook was not significantly a result of lack of information or updates, indicating the effective management and usage of the Facebook page by the PCBIA.

Suggestions for improving communication efforts via Facebook include:

- Continuing with the management of the PCBIA's Facebook page through updates, information, and events postings.
- Offering a workshop to instruct PCBIA members on the basics of using and communicating through Facebook to encourage participation and enhance communication.
- Actively searching and adding PCBIA members and their businesses to the PCBIA Facebook page to enhance members' prescription.
- Communicating the existence and usefulness of the PCBIA's Facebook page through networking and emails blasts.
- Providing links to the PCBIA Facebook page on all distributed communications such as emails, letters, etc.
- Ensuring other methods of communication continue to be available – such as e-mails, until Facebook prescription and participation increases.

Monthly Networking Meetings

The monthly networking meetings are another major form of communication utilized by the PCBIA. Again, there was a disconnect between board members perception of the effectiveness of the meetings and PCBIA members actual satisfaction. Board members indicated that they believe the meetings to be a useful tool for communication for certain topics of discussion, however, there is a divide among board members actual attendance. Conversely, while the majority of PCBIA members are aware of the existence of the monthly networking meetings, the majority of respondents indicated that they do not attend these meetings mainly due to lack of time or conflict with schedule. Members also indicated that the second most common reason for not attending these meetings was that they are not informed in a timely fashion of the meetings. On average, members rated the overall effectiveness of the monthly meetings somewhat helpful and those who attend, feel they have the opportunity to speak and have their issues addressed.

While the majority of respondents do not attend the monthly meetings, a significantly high portion of respondents would be interested in seeing minutes from the meetings to stay informed when they cannot attend.

Suggestions to improve communication through monthly meetings include:

- Making efforts to communicate – via email, information about the existence, location, time, and other details of the monthly meetings to communicate that member participation is encouraged and appreciated.
- Communicating details of meetings in a timely fashion to ensure maximum attendance and participation for members who indicated they are not informed in sufficient time.
- Encouraging board members to attend monthly meetings whenever possible.
- Providing minutes from the meetings for members who cannot attend due to time and schedule conflicts to stay informed and involved. Communicate the existence and retrieval information of these minutes to members through email.
- Asking for member feedback at meetings by providing anonymous suggestions boxes where members can input issues or discussion topics they wish to be addressed or indicate how the meetings could be more helpful and informative for them.

Community Development

Survey data indicated that the PCBIA should lobby against the development of large chains in Port Credit and would have the support of just over half of respondents in their efforts.

Suggestions for encouraging greater support in lobbying efforts Include:

- Communicating the economic and social impact of the development of large chains in Port Credit on current businesses.
- Outlining and communicating how business owners could support the PCBIA in their lobbying efforts by providing options for assistance in both small and big ways.

Events

Survey data also suggested that the events put on by the PCBIA create a positive economic impact on the Port Credit area with a somewhat to positive direct impact on respondents' businesses.

Suggestions to improve events' direct impact on respondents' businesses include:

- Targeting events to suit a wide array of business types. Examples include trade shows, culinary tours, fashion shows, hair shows, product sampling events, game days sponsored by relevant businesses, sector wide discount days, etc.
- Asking for member participation on how the PCBIA could better tailor events to member businesses and combining suggestions to apply events to the broadest possible types of businesses.

Member Satisfaction and Awareness

Survey respondents indicated that the PCBIA is successful in promoting Port Credit and the events, community development, and beautification arenas but could improve their efforts in terms of parking, communication, and further promotion of Port Credit. Over half of respondents indicated they would be willing to help and volunteer with the PCBIA on a committee level.

Overall, members indicated a medium-high satisfaction rate with the PCBIA, matching the responses of board members who indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their position on the board and that they put forth their expected amount of time in PCBIA initiatives per week. However, 2-3 terms was the suggested amount of time that board members should occupy a position on the board.

While board members also feel that their networking and lobbying efforts have been effective tools in communicating the PCBIA's initiatives and role within the community to members, it was also suggested that face-to-face communication could be improved.

These perceptions are backed by survey results that indicate that while most respondents have a clear understanding of the PCBIA's role within the community, there are a significant number of members who are either unclear or unsure altogether. This suggests that while board members efforts to communicate the PCBIA's role and initiatives have been effective, member understanding and awareness could be improved.

Suggestions include:

- Efforts toward improving member understanding and awareness of the PCBIA's role and initiatives through face-to-face communication such as networking, lobbying, and board member attendance at networking meetings.
- Improving communication efforts by using e-mail, face-to-face communication, increasing participation on the PCBIA's Facebook page, and communicating details of, and making changes to, the monthly networking meetings to greater include members and enhance their participation.
- Continuing efforts in member identified arenas of success including promoting Port Credit, community development, events, and beautification with greater emphasis towards improving parking, communication efforts, and further promotion of Port Credit.
- Using member identified willingness to volunteer on a committee level to garner greater resources. Greater member involvement could be used to further enhance member awareness of PCBIA's initiatives, assist with networking and lobbying efforts, support lobbying against the development of large chains, contribute to event planning and promotion to better target events to all business types, etc.
- Drafting and distributing information packages outlining the PCBIA's role and initiatives by email and also making the information available on the PCBIA website and Facebook page.

In conclusion, while only reflecting the opinions of 20.5% of PCBIA members, the survey generated useful and informative results that can be utilized as a basis for improving PCBIA initiatives and further enhancing member satisfaction. While results indicated an overall satisfaction by members and successful efforts on the part of the PCBIA and board members, particular attention should be paid to:

1. Improving communication efforts via email and Facebook with a focus on informing members of the outcomes of PCBIA initiatives.
2. Informing members and encouraging their participation and input in monthly meetings.
3. Networking and lobbying to inform members of the PCBIA's role and initiatives.
4. Targeting events to directly impact local businesses.
5. Using member willingness to volunteer to help realize these efforts.

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