

## South Carolina Chamber of Commerce

*WebLink's Industry Background Impresses Chamber, Increases Members' ROI*

### Background

The South Carolina Chamber of Commerce has served as the unified voice of business for South Carolina for almost 70 years. The goal of the Chamber is to improve and strengthen the business community within the state and increase the state's per capita income through advocacy efforts, programming and research.

- Dues-paying membership of 1,800 companies
- An additional 7,000 small business electronic memberships through the state's local chambers
- While acquiring new membership is a top priority for chambers, maintaining a high level of value for members is even more crucial
- Membership was increasing at an astounding rate
- Staff was finding it difficult to keep up with the needs of these members

Although chambers are a type of membership association, the structure and organization is very different from other associations. Chamber memberships exist on an organization/company level and people are associated through their employer's membership. The Chamber's current software was not able to adapt easily to those needs, which made correspondence, updating and reporting very difficult. It needed to find a membership management software that would enable it to reach out effectively to its membership and maintain a high sense of value.

### Objectives

The Chamber staff set-out with very specific objectives for new membership management software:

- Leverage a web-based software that would integrate with other online tools
- Utilize a software company that understood the difference between chambers and general associations and was able to cater to those differences
- Increase communication with membership and prospects
- Increase perceived value in chamber membership
- Increase the productivity of staff with a minimal learning curve



## Action

Randy Bradley, Vice President work place relations and administrative services for the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, led the Chamber's project team in the selection effort.

During its process, the South Carolina Chamber became aware that the Florida Chamber had conducted an extensive RFP process in the months before, interviewing several membership management software providers. The Florida Chamber had selected WebLink International as its software provider based on its commitment to customer service, knowledgeable staff (of which many are former Chamber of Commerce professionals) and integrated software capabilities.

"WebLink did a very impressive thing in the sales process," said Bradley. "They put us with respective experts in each of our needs areas. We went through the events options with an events guru and accounting with a CPA. The sales person wasn't our only contact, so you never heard, 'I don't know, I'll have to get back with you,' because we were in constant contact with experts."

The South Carolina Chamber made the decision to select WebLink as its provider based on the impressive customer service shown during the RFP process, its smart client technology and its logical design, which matches perfectly with the needs of Chambers because it is built, implemented and taught by former Chamber professionals.

"I can't say enough about WebLink's utilization of Chamber professionals to design software and train," said Bradley. "Other companies hire tech people that don't know the business. Most of the battle is getting them to comprehend what were dealing with; we never had to worry about that with WebLink."

## Results

The South Carolina Chamber has had WebLink's software in place since June of 2008, and the staff started to see results immediately, especially as it pertains to internal efficiency.

- Database-driven content system is allowing all of the Chamber's online information to work together to run updates, create reports and communicate with membership automatically rather than manually
- The Chamber is also pleased with the financial management tools, including credit card processing which can interface with any merchant with whom chambers chose to work
- The events and sales management team has been extremely pleased with the web capabilities, which will make partnership and membership retention increase exponentially

"Our goal now, as we move forward with the web piece, is to really use all of our WebLink capabilities," Bradley said. "We've mastered everything internally, now we're really going to focus on increasing ROI for our members. They'll be able to change their information online, see their profile, register for events, check pricing and look at financial accounts. This all came about with WebLink's integration, and we could not be more pleased."

## About WebLink

WebLink provides comprehensive online software and service solutions to support the needs of member-based organizations. WebLink delivers a powerful software suite that integrates the operations, marketing, finance, website and member management functions of business associations. The software solution allows clients to automate and streamline operations, reduce costs, optimize data for business intelligence, communicate and collaborate effectively, generate non-dues revenue and add significant value to the members they serve. To learn more about WebLink, visit [www.weblinkinternational.com](http://www.weblinkinternational.com).