

Background

The City is reaching out to local businesses to identify ways to strengthen Poway's pro-business environment and understand Poway's business challenges and opportunities. Poway will incorporate ideas and concerns identified by Poway businesses into its ongoing business retention and expansion program. Initially, Poway heard from Poway's businesses at a business summit and followed up with a business survey. Poway will also work with Poway businesses and the Chamber of Commerce in smaller focus group settings to finalize the outreach program. Finally, a California State San Marcos study will provide the City with data about Poway businesses that can be used to develop a business directory and to identify important business clusters.

Poway Business Summit Summary – January 26, 2011

On January 26, 2011, the City of Poway hosted a Business Summit at the Hampton Inn & Suites located in the Poway Business Park. Outreach for the event included personal contacts by Summit committee members, email blasts, and a series of press releases. The response from the business community was impressive, with representatives from approximately 70 Poway businesses attending the event. A diverse group of local businesses were in attendance, including industrial, commercial, retail, and manufacturing. Participants brought with them a rich variety of perspectives. Those in attendance were asked to share their thoughts and ideas about how to strengthen and improve the business environment in Poway.



Members of Poway's business community participate in the 2011 Business Summit

City staff members were on hand to help facilitate and record group discussions. The attendees were asked to select one of the following four discussion topics:

- City Services and Communications
- Business to Business Opportunities
- Marketing
- Training & Networking

After selecting their topic, participants separated into topic-specific groups for discussion. Before getting started, each group was asked to designate a time keeper and presenter. At the conclusion of the group discussions, the presenter from each group shared the top three ideas or suggestions from their group with all those in attendance.

The top three ideas and suggestions reported out by all the groups were:

1. A need for better and more consistent communication between the City and businesses (streamline permit processing, etc.)
2. An online directory of local businesses could help with marketing efforts and facilitate business-to-business opportunities
3. It was suggested that the City review its sign ordinance because it is perceived as too restrictive.

The following table summarizes the full list of priorities discussed by table topic.

City Services and Communications
Questions:
1. What City services have you used?
2. What was your experience?
3. How can the City better serve businesses?
Responses:
➤ Streamline permitting process and designate a City staff liaison to help direct applicants through the City’s development process
➤ Sometimes there are inconsistencies between direction provided by Development Services staff and City inspectors that causes conflicts or slows down the process when constructing or improving facilities
➤ Conflicts exist between City codes/requirements and those of other agencies such as the County Health Department
➤ Emphasize a business friendly approach from the top down
➤ Broaden business uses in the Business Park and for private property
➤ Selectively waive fees for small businesses for one year
Business to Business Opportunities
Questions:
1. How do you currently market to other businesses?
2. What opportunities exist?
3. What tools do you need to be successful?
Responses:
➤ Poway should play a stronger role in retaining local small businesses through their economic development program
➤ An online social networking group might help businesses stay connected to each other

➤ Businesses want to learn more about how to work and partner with the businesses located in Poway's business park
➤ Identified the need for an online directory of local businesses as a priority
➤ Local businesses should take responsibility to market their businesses successfully
➤ Encourage residents to shop locally
➤ Need for more connectivity and communications with City and Chamber to facilitate business to business opportunities
Marketing
Questions:
1. What successful marketing tools have you used?
2. What challenges exist to secure a greater market share?
3. How can the City and Chamber help?
Responses:
➤ Consistent communication between the City and businesses is important
➤ Local loyalty program to encourage local shopping is needed
➤ Online directory of local businesses is needed
➤ A need to diversify advertising
➤ Increase attendance at Chamber events
➤ Concerns about City's sign restrictions
Training & Networking
Questions:
1. What networking opportunities do you recommend?
2. What are your company's training needs?
3. What hiring challenges have you experienced?
Responses:
➤ It is important to understand how to attract businesses to events and training opportunities
➤ A local SCORE group could help provide key advice and training to local businesses
➤ Identify specialized training needs of Poway businesses

Summary of Survey Responses

Following the Summit, a business survey was sent out to Summit attendees and other Poway businesses through the City's website and the Chamber of Commerce. The survey asked questions about their Summit experience, if they attended, and about current business challenges and opportunities. A sampling of the survey questions and their answers follow this summary.

A total of 33 businesses representatives responded to the survey, 84% of which were small businesses with 10 employees or less.

On a scale from 1 to 5, five being the best, 75% of Summit attendees ranked their experience between 4 and 5. Respondents expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet with other businesses, share marketing ideas with one another, the City's interest in identifying business needs, and the opportunity to share their concerns with City staff.

On a scale of 1 to 5, five being the highest, the average respondent's experience doing business in Poway was ranked a 4. When asked about major business challenges, overriding themes included: 1) Current business/economic climate; 2) Challenges with marketing and getting the word out about their business; 3) Marketing their business to Business Park businesses; and 4) employee recruitment. Currently, the survey respondents are using networking, websites, social media and public relations most in their marketing efforts.

Finally, over 78% of the survey respondents were interested in supporting local events. When asked how, they favored providing services or volunteers over providing funds or goods and services.

Next Steps

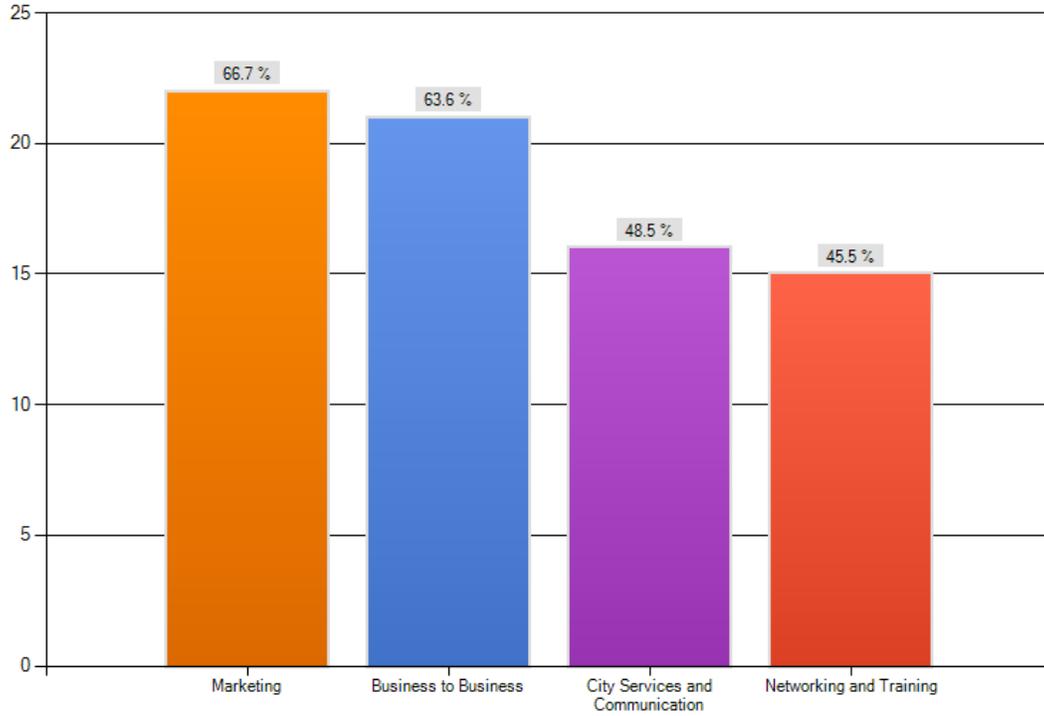
Following the Summit, the City will partner with the Poway Chamber of Commerce to complete a series of focus group meetings with Poway businesses. The City will also work with Cal State San Marcos to complete a database of Poway businesses and a business cluster study that will identify significant groupings of like businesses in Poway. The following is a list of follow up activities and the approximate dates they will be complete.

- Manufacturer and Distributor Business Focus Group March 10, 2011
- Retailer and Property Owner Focus Group April 21, 2011
- CEO Focus Group May 19, 2011
- Cal State San Marcos Study Complete May 19, 2011

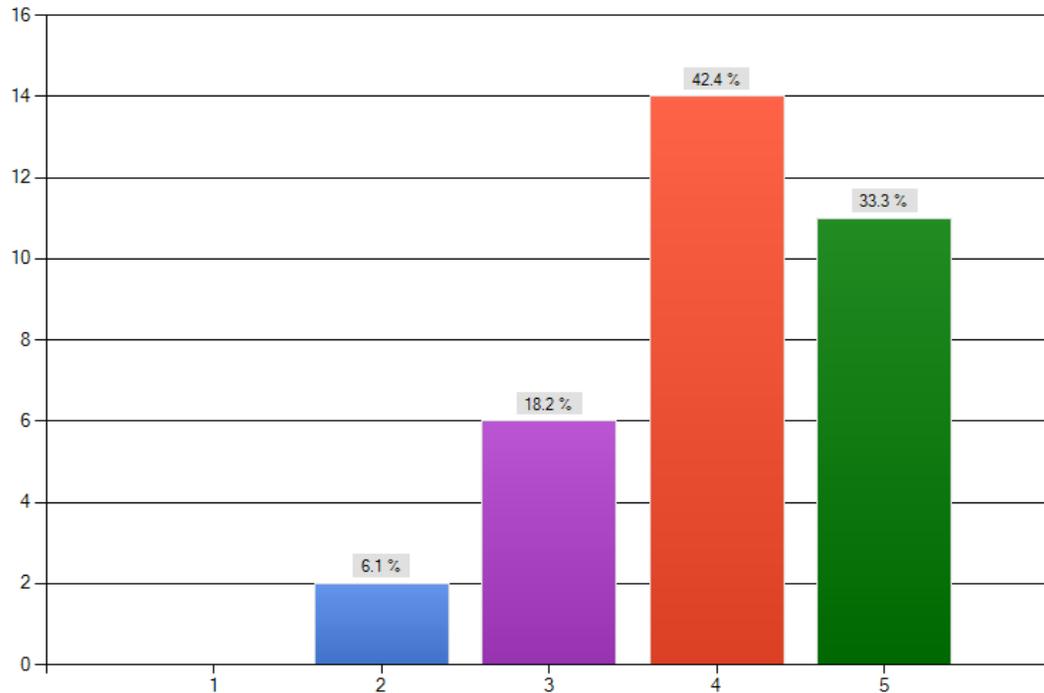
In addition to the Focus Groups and the Cal State San Marcos Study, survey respondents will be contacted this summer regarding future opportunities to participate with the City and the Chamber of Commerce.

Poway Business Summit Survey Responses

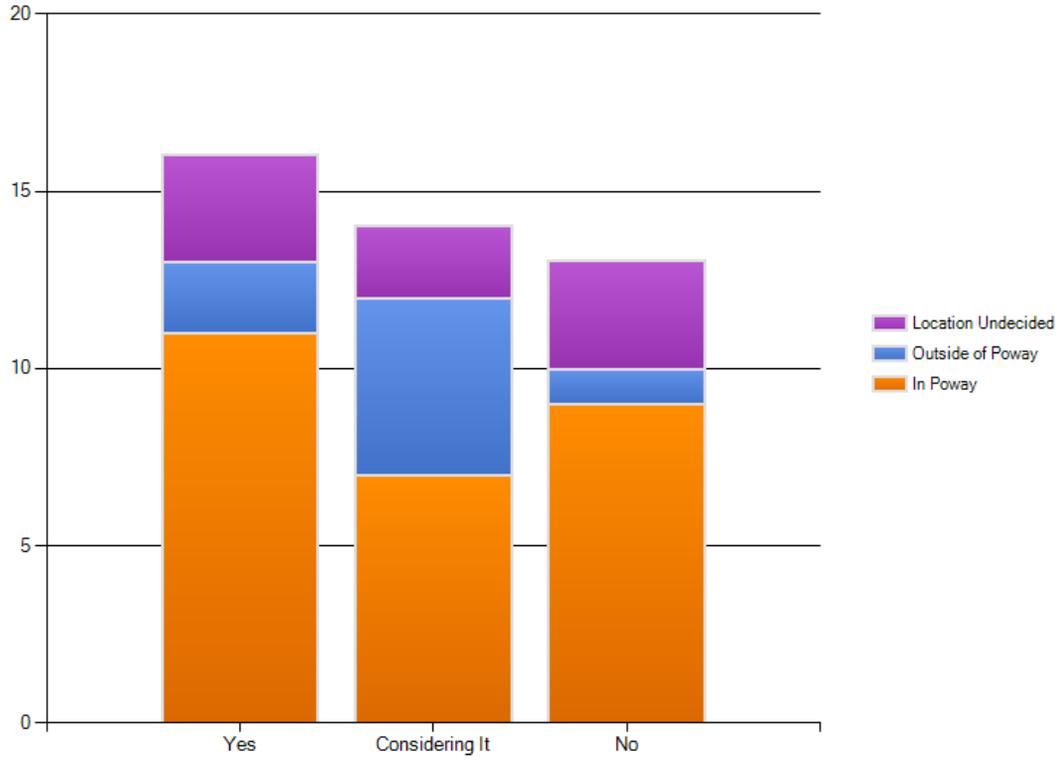
Which of the following categories interest you for future business outreach opportunities?



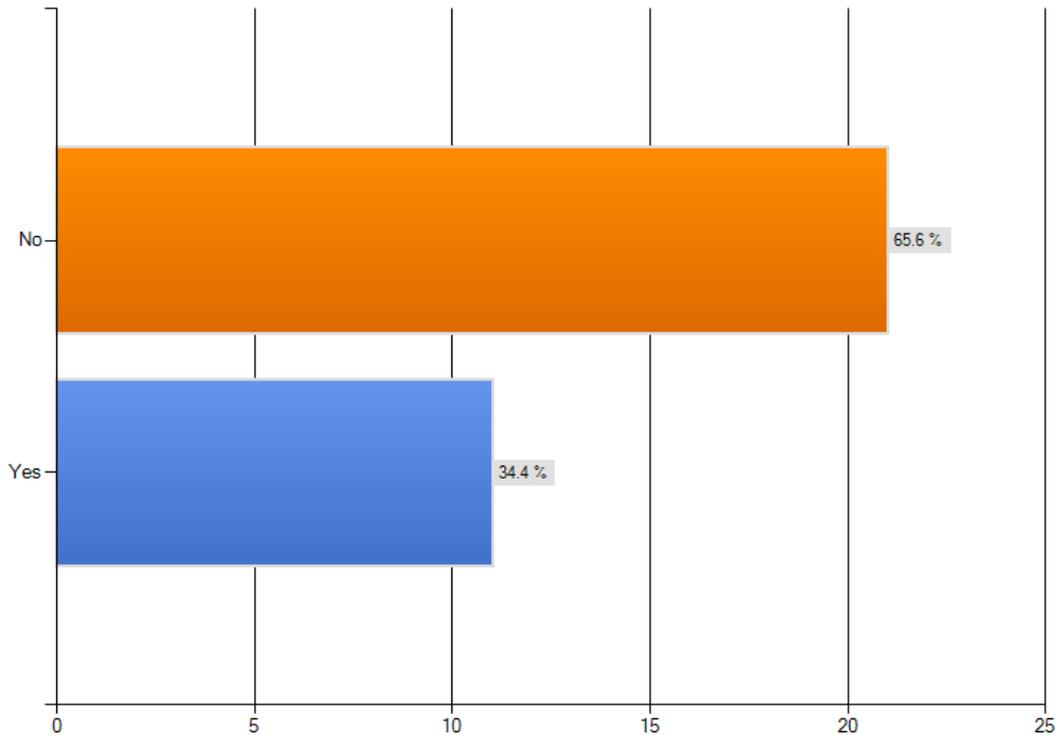
On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the most satisfied, how satisfied are you doing business in Poway?



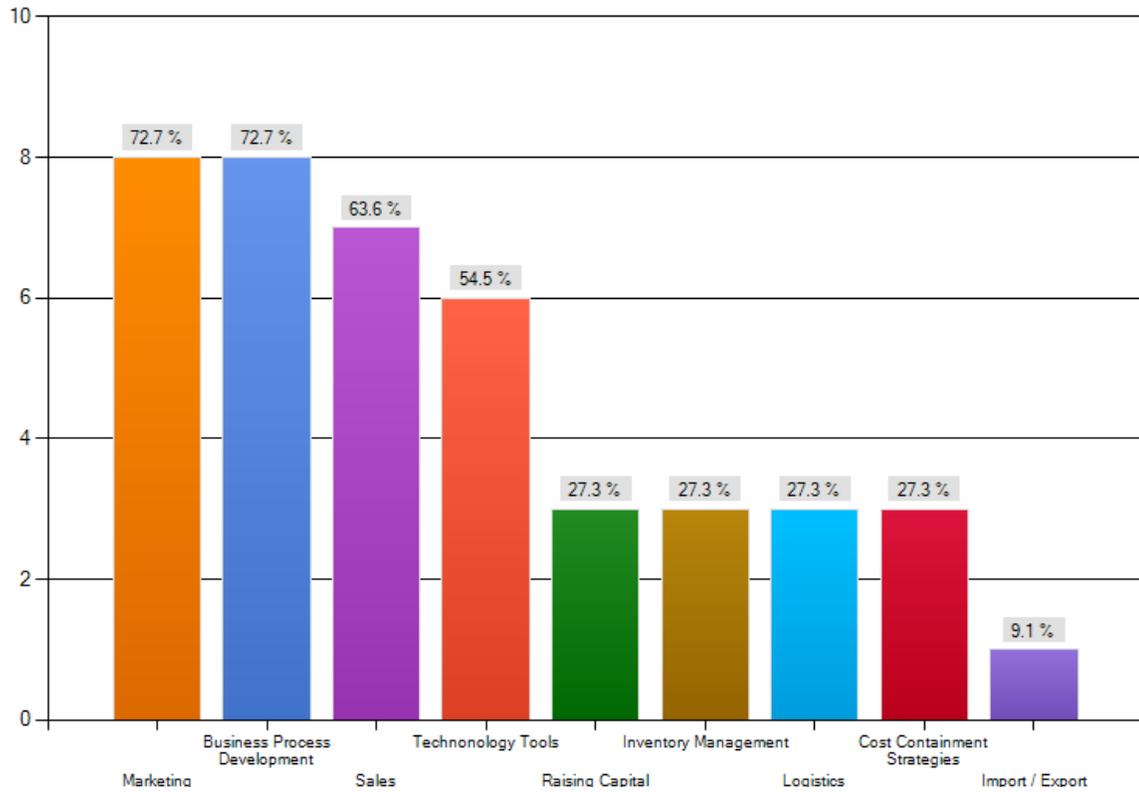
Do you plan to expand your business in the near future?



Are you currently hiring within the next three months?



Which training topics would you be interested in attending?



What marketing tools are you currently using?

