Best Practices for Marketing a Business Retention and Expansion Program

What should you do BEFORE enacting a BR&E program?

- Communication related to contacting businesses involved in the BR&E program:
  - Prepare an email or letter (***refer to accompanying document on page 4 for example***) summarizing the program and expressing your interest in visiting the business (or sending the business a survey). This letter should explain the BR&E program's purpose, mission, objectives, and the use of data collection. The letter should come from someone who is a champion of your BR&E program, but also someone the business is familiar with and who they trust.
  - A confidentiality policy should be created and enclosed in the letter. You want to establish trust with the businesses who participate in the program.
  - For some businesses you think might be hesitant to participate or that you want to make 100% sure will participate, you may want to personally reach out to them by phone or in person. Then follow up with them through an email or letter.

How do you create a communication plan?

- Once an initial BR&E team has been organized, put into place, and businesses have been contacted about participating in the BR&E program, a communication plan must be developed. The message of the program should be planned, consistent, and clear. The message should include:
  - Explanation about what the program is, its purpose, and goals of the program.
  - Introduce the BR&E team and announce the organization(s) leading the effort.
  - Share year one performance objectives (examples: how many businesses engaged, what information is being gathered, information about a recognition program).
  - Share with your constituents how the information will be shared. Ideas for sharing may include:
    - Written report/summary
    - BR&E program luncheon or event with a presentation
    - Through your website or social media

- Develop a communication strategy when launching the program. Your strategy should include the following:
  - Distribute a press release to appropriate media announcing the program and explaining its objectives. ***Refer to accompanying document on page 5 for example.***
  - Create talking points about the program for speeches or to offset questions from media and interested parties. Share these talking points as deemed necessary (with your BR&E team, elected officials, Chamber staff, economic development staff, etc.). ***Refer to accompanying document on page 6 for example.***
  - Distribute press release content through email contacts and newsletter, if applicable.
  - Promote via social media through a coordinated release of information via team members, partner organizations and businesses, and the Chamber/city's profiles. The message should be consistent, but a personal touch is appropriate depending on the personality of these different organizations and their relationship to the program. ***Refer to accompanying document on page 7 for example.***
  - Promote via your Chamber, economic development, and city websites.
- Other information that should be highlighted through appropriate channels:
  - Highlight local businesses who are involved in the program
  - New jobs added
  - Information related to new resources for local businesses
  - Any information related to annual events such as appreciation dinners

Year one of the program is complete – what's next?
- Once the BR&E program is off the ground, consider the following:
  - A recognition program will allow your team to build upon the relationships made, maintain contact with businesses throughout the year, and create opportunities for businesses to market their products and services.
  - Recognize success by:
    - Regular communication of the BR&E's programs work
    - Highlight successes of local businesses

- - Annual business appreciation dinner
  - Local business of the month awards
  - Local business showcases
  - Executive roundtables
- The same communication strategy should be an ongoing effort for the BR&E team. When the program produces results, the same communication strategy you have outlined for unveiling the program should be used to share that information.

Always assess your program and communicate that assessment to your stakeholders!

EXAMPLE LETTER/EMAIL

NAME
TITLE, BUSINESS
ADDRESS
CITY, ZIP

Dear [BUSINESS LEADER],

The economic well-being of [CITY] is based upon our community's existing businesses. In recognition of this, positive action is being taken to identify and meet the needs of local businesses. As such, the [ORGANIZATION] is sponsoring a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program.

As Team Leader of our community BR&E efforts, I wanted to extend to you an invitation for your business to be involved in the program. As a participating business, one of our Team Members will schedule an appointment to conduct an on-site visit to your establishment that will include a BR&E survey. The collected survey information will indicate to us the future needs of local businesses and how businesses view our community as a place to do business. In turn, this survey will be used to plan future economic development activities in [CITY].

Our BR&E Team will review the completed surveys for any early warning signs or requests for information. Any identified early warning signs are areas where BR&E Team Members may assist local businesses with a concern(s).

If you are interested in participating in our community BR&E program please note that your input will be a valued addition to the project and your responses to the survey questions will be kept confidential. All BR&E Team Members sign a Confidentiality Agreement and are committed to this principle.

I have enclosed the BR&E survey and Confidentiality Agreement for you to review. I will be contacting you soon to discuss the BR&E program and to schedule your on-site visit.

I look forward to speaking with you about this new, exciting effort to support existing businesses in our community! Please feel free to contact me at any time at [EMAIL] or [PHONE NUMBER].

Sincerely,
[NAME], [TITLE]

[SIGNATURE]

EXAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

<div align="right">

[LOGO]
For additional information, contact:
[NAME]
[ORGANIZATION]
[PHONE NUMBER]
[EMAIL]

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[CITY] Kicks-Off New BR&E Program

[ORGANIZATIONS] work together to create business retention and expansion strategy

[CITY], Ark., (Month, day, year**)** — The [ORGANIZATION] has created a formal business retention and expansion (BR&E) program that aims to sustain and grow the city's economic base. [LEADER OF THE BR&E PROGRAM] made the announcement during an unveiling ceremony at [LOCATION] on [DATE] at [TIME].

[CITY]'s BR&E program will provide community leaders with advanced warnings about problems that may lead to business or plant closures; these signs will enable proactive intervention and creative solutions to retain employers in [CITY]. The program will also encourage community leaders to identify new opportunities for businesses in the community and support them in expanding and creating new jobs.

[BR&E TEAM MEMBER/LEADER] stated, "[QUOTE]."

[BUSINESS LEADER] shared they were participating in the program because, "[QUOTE]."

[MORE INFORMATION]

To review and learn more about [CITY]'s BR&E program, please visit [WEBSITE].

ABOUT [ORGANIZATION]

[BOILERPLATE]

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EXAMPLE TALKING POINTS

[ORGANIZATION NAME]
BR&E Program

- [ORGANIZATION] collaborated [ORGANIZATION/CITY] to create a formal business retention and expansion (BR&E) program

- Goal of program: to sustain and grow [CITY]'s economic base

- [LEADER OF THE BR&E PROGRAM] heads the effort and is the BR&E team leader

- The program will provide community leaders with advanced warnings about problems that may lead to business or plant closures

- Identifying potential warning signs will enable proactive intervention and creative solutions to retain employers in [CITY]

- The program will encourage community leaders to identify new opportunities for businesses in the community and support them in expanding and creating new jobs

- [CITY]'s businesses interested in joining the BR&E program are encouraged to contact [LEADER OF THE BR&E PROGRAM]

- To review and learn more about [CITY'S] BR&E program, please visit [WEBSITE]

EXAMPLES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

[ORGANIZATION NAME]
BR&E Program

- Days leading up to the BR&E announcement:
    - "The [ORGANIZATION NAME] has some exciting news to share with local businesses and [COMMUNITY] citizens. Mark your calendars folks, the announcement will be made [DATE] at [LOCATION]!"
    - "Curious about our BIG announcement? Our lips are sealed until [DATE]. Come to [LOCATION] to find out what all the fuss is about."
    - "You must be dying to know what we have up our sleeve so we have a few hints for you: sustain and grow, new opportunities, local businesses."
    - "[DATE] is getting closer and closer. Can you guess what we'll be sharing with you? Comment your guesses and if you're right we'll give you a shout out when we make the announcement at [LOCATION]."
- Day of BR&E announcement:
    - "Today's the day! We know you've been anxiously awaiting for us to share the good news. Meet us at [LOCATION] to witness a big step for the [ORGANIZATION NAME] and a giant leap for the city of [COMMUNITY]."
- After BR&E announcement:
    - "Thanks so much to everyone that came out to [LOCATION] today to learn about our new BR&E program! If you weren't able to make the announcement, learn more about BR&E and our BR&E program here: [LINK TO WEBSITE, VIDEO ANNOUCEMENT, OR PRESS RELEASE]."

Other social media post suggestions:
- Introduce members of the BR&E team, include: name, title, organization/business, headshot, and quote from individual
- Announce businesses that are a part of the BR&E program as they sign up, include: logo and quote from spokesperson for the business

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- Choose a business to feature weekly; highlight something positive about the business or include a special/sale they're advertising. Include a picture of the business or picture of sales promotion.
- Create videos of BR&E team members promoting the BR&E program or of businesses sharing exciting announcements or why they participate in the program
- Every six months give a short progress report of the program