

GET YOUR STORY STRAIGHT

THE STORY YOU THINK YOU'RE TELLING VS
THE ONE YOUR MEMBERS (AND PROSPECTS) ACTUALLY HEAR

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ACCE Convention
circa 2012

ABOUT ME

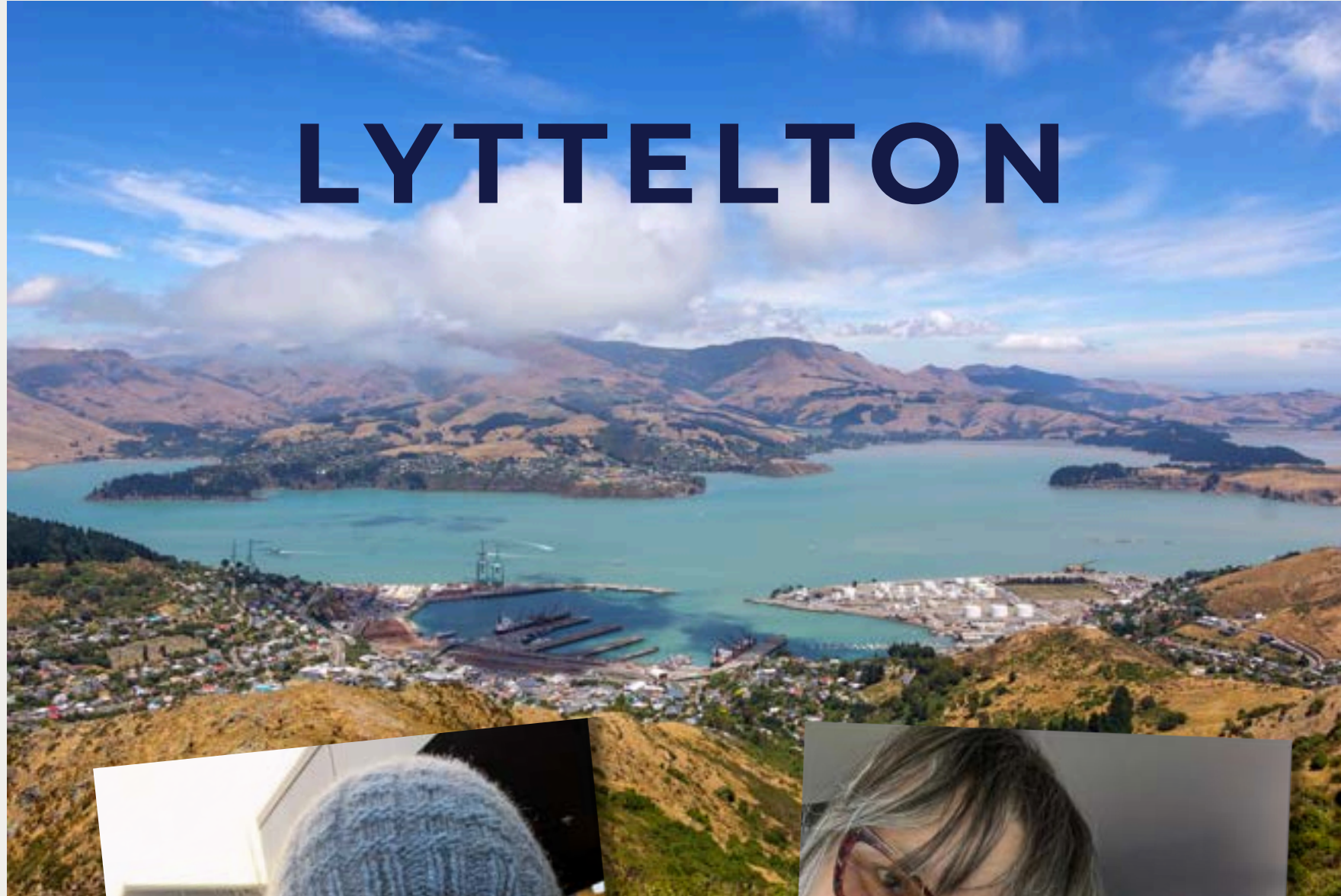
Michelle West
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- Working at or with chambers since 2006
- Helped 100+ chambers with marketing/communications projects large and small



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LYTTTELTON



ABOUT ME

Michelle West
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- Relocated to New Zealand in 2022
- Work remotely with chambers in the U.S.
- Connect with me on LinkedIn!



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GET YOUR STORY
STRAIGHT

**The story you
think you're
telling**

VS

**The one your
members (and
prospects)
actually hear**

A group of diverse people are seated in a circle in a modern, brightly lit office or meeting space. They appear to be in a collaborative discussion. The background is filled with large windows and modern office furniture, creating a professional and open atmosphere.

MY **A-HA** MOMENT

WHEN A LONG-TIME MEMBER UNEXPECTEDLY
RESIGNED FROM THE CHAMBER



Ursula

Occupation:
Business Owner

**Membership
Status:** Resigned

**Length of
membership:**
9 years

“

Reason for Resigning

I have no problem with the Chamber. I'd get emails about all of the events, and they looked great. But one day I realized I never had time to go, so I figured I wasn't getting a return on my investment.

”

Ursula

Occupation:

Business Owner

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EVENT NOISE

- If the majority of your content and communication highlights events, your members will reasonably assume that events are what you are all about.
- When your messaging is dominated by event promotion, you're unintentionally ***telling a story of activity, not impact.***



EVENT NOISE

What is most dominant in your messaging is what they are going to ***hear, remember, and form their perceptions on.***



**SO...WHAT'S A
CHAMBER TO DO?**



SO...WHAT'S A CHAMBER TO DO?

BALANCE

- Balance your messaging
- Tell your WHOLE story
- Change the way you talk (and post) about events



BALANCE YOUR MESSAGING

Your Storytelling Quality Levers:

clarity

volume

relevance

frequency

MESSAGE VOLUME AUDIT

Look back at August - October.

CATEGORY	NEWSLETTER	SOCIAL MEDIA	BLOG	TOTAL	NOTES
Event Promotion					
Advocacy					
Business Support/Services					
Workforce Development					
Economic Development					



Adapt these for your chamber.



SO...WHAT'S A CHAMBER TO DO?

BALANCE

- Balance your messaging
- **Tell your WHOLE story**
- Change the way you talk (and post) about events

**TELL YOUR
WHOLE STORY**



TELL YOUR WHOLE STORY



Develop an umbrella theme that is *clear, concise and relevant* to your audience.



Create and abide by content pillars.

DEVELOP AN UMBRELLA THEME

It communicates an easy to understand message that is highly relevant to virtually every prospect or member.

It delivers a message of impact versus activity.

Everything you do can fall under it.



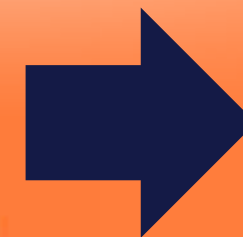
DEVELOP AN UMBRELLA THEME

It communicates an **easy to understand** message that is **highly relevant to virtually every prospect or member.**

It delivers a message of **impact versus activity.**

Virtually **everything you do** can fall under it.

**We make it easier
to do business
in [your city here].**



**Download the guide at
www.chamberspeak.com**

A row of white classical columns in a perspective view, receding into the distance. The columns are fluted and have decorative bases. The text "CREATE CONTENT PILLARS" is overlaid in the center in a bold, dark blue font.

CREATE CONTENT PILLARS

CREATE CONTENT PILLARS

Advocacy & Policy Updates

Networking & Connection

Member Spotlights & Success Stories

Economic Development & Community Growth

Small Business Resources

CREATE CONTENT PILLARS

Chamber Membership: 1000

Team Size: 4

Core Competencies:

Connection & Advocacy

CREATE CONTENT PILLARS

ADVOCACY

- Help members understand what it is and how it impacts them
- Share actions and achievements
- Invite participation
- Not take for granted that they know or don't care

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP & VISION

- Share what we know when we are able
- Share other organisations' news when it ties into our mission
- Promote and support future community leaders
- Position the Chamber as the community leader that it is

VALUE-DRIVEN RESOURCES

- Help members understand and access chamber programs and services without being salesy
- Keep members "in-the-know" about community resources available to support them
- Share stories of members who value our programs and services

CONNECTION & COMMUNITY

- Showcase the welcoming, supportive network that is the Chamber
- Celebrate our volunteers and our team
- Highlight members and their milestones
- Make our members feel like they are part of a very special community

YOUR FILTERS

- Is it relevant to at least one of my audiences?
- Is it relevant to the work of the chamber?
- Does it align with one of my content pillars?



SO...WHAT'S A CHAMBER TO DO?

BALANCE

- Balance your messaging
- Tell your WHOLE story
- **Change the way you talk (and post) about events**

The background is a light gray, textured surface. It is populated with numerous faint, hand-drawn speech bubbles of various shapes and sizes, scattered across the upper and side portions of the frame. The text is centered horizontally and vertically in the lower half of the image.

**TALK ABOUT EVENTS
DIFFERENTLY**



From Activity To Impact

Activity answers: What we did.

Impact answers: Why it mattered, and what changed because of it.

MAKE THE SHIFT

Ask: So, what?

The Not-So-Secret Formula

Activity → Meaning → Outcome

Activity: What happened

Meaning: Why it exists

Outcome: What it leads to over time

MAKE THE SHIFT

Activity → **Meaning** → **Outcome**

ACTIVITY

(What's happening)
Business After Hours

MEANING

(Why it exists)
To bring our members
into the same room

OUTCOME

(What it leads to over time)
So relationships can turn
into referrals, partnerships
and growth



This is where you ask, so what?

MAKE THE SHIFT

Activity → **Meaning** → **Outcome**

BEFORE:

Mark your calendar and join us for Business After Hours on January 29 from 5:30–7:00 PM. This is your chance to grow your network and connect with our business community.

AFTER:

Strong local businesses don't grow in isolation. Business After Hours creates the relationships that lead to referrals, partnerships, and long-term growth. Join us January 29 | 5:30–7:00 PM and be part of the network that supports business beyond the event.



From Activity To Impact

Activity answers: What we did.

Impact answers: Why it mattered, and what changed because of it.

SMALL TWEAKS BIG IMPACT

Lean Into Images

Replace text based event graphics with member images in your event promotions

Strive for images of people looking at the camera

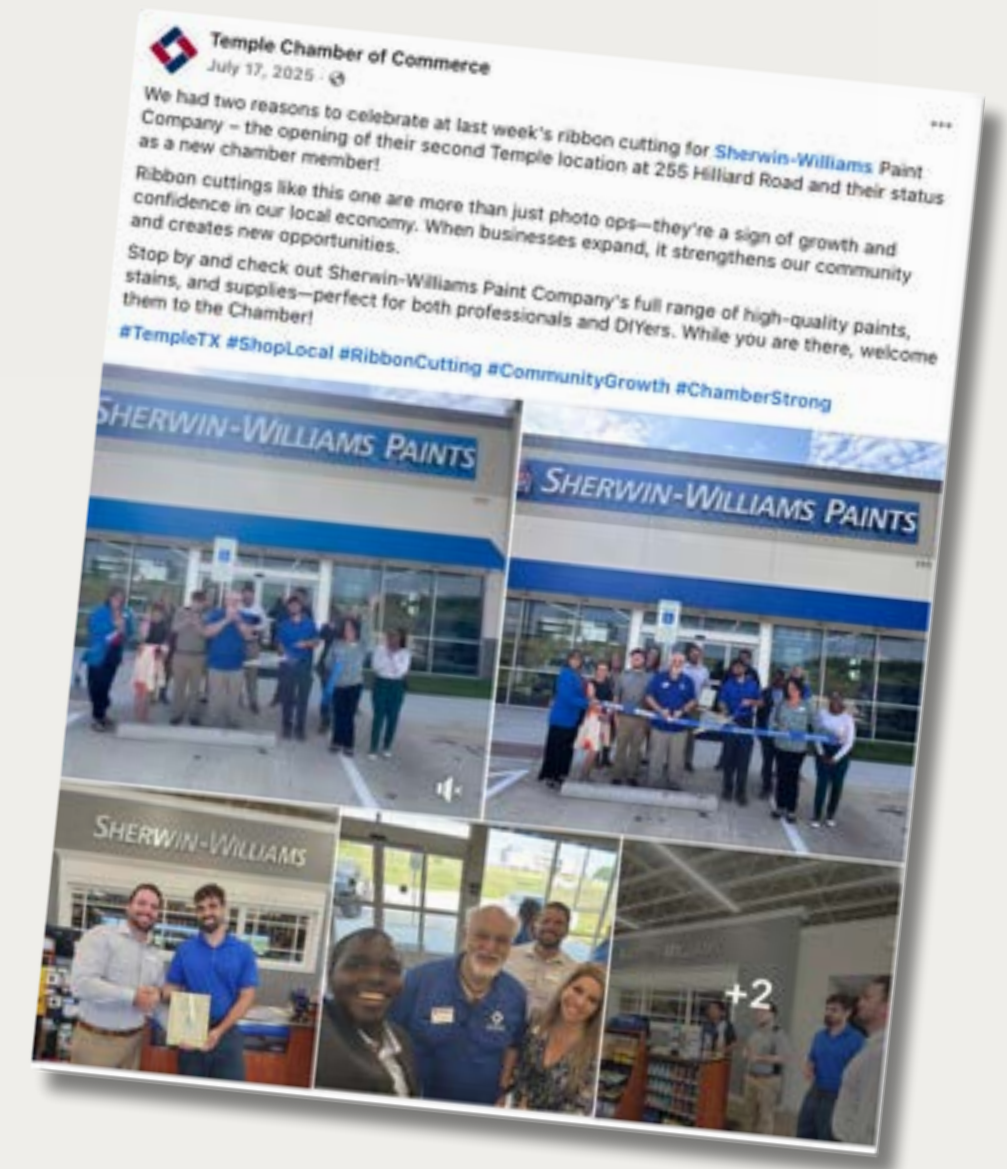
Ask the question: What does this image say about the event?



SMALL TWEAKS BIG IMPACT

Sneak Messages Into Unlikely Places

Use opportunities like ribbon cuttings to tell your story.



SMALL TWEAKS BIG IMPACT

Control The Headlines

Prioritize the other work you do in your member newsletters.

Lead with it instead of event promotion.



SMALL TWEAKS BIG IMPACT

Leverage LinkedIn

It's where your audience is!

Most potential for growth and engagement.

Prioritize non-event content: advocacy, member success stories, workforce initiatives, leadership program, and more.



**BRING ON THE
QUESTIONS!**