

Community Activities

Business and Industry Appreciation Event

Importance of Business Appreciation

Recognizing the businesses and industries in your community is vital to establishing a strong working relationship with them. Hosting an appreciation event such as a breakfast, luncheon or dinner program allows SkillsUSA members to interact in a positive and professional way. SkillsUSA members will be able to connect with current and future employers outside the business setting, giving them the opportunity to network, converse and use business etiquette skills. If held at the school, it may also present the opportunity for guests to tour the classrooms, labs and shops that make up your total Skilled and Technical Science program.

Showing appreciation for business and industry is a win-win situation.

- You and your members win by interacting positively with business and industry professionals in your community who can become strong program and chapter advocates. This can translate into:
 - Funding support
 - Advocacy for maintaining or expanding programs available to students and members
 - Participation in and leadership of school advisory committees
 - Job shadowing and internship opportunities
 - Employment for students
 - Competitive event “coaches,” judges and sponsors
- Business and industry wins by forming a stronger connection with the school and the current and future workforce. This can translate into:
 - A better understanding of the skills and knowledge that program graduates and SkillsUSA members gain through participation.
 - An opportunity to share insights and expertise to help guide curriculum content.
 - A ready pool of well-trained, skilled and highly motivated employees.

Value to Your Program

An appreciation event can be as simple as inviting business and industry professionals to the school for a program held in the school’s auditorium, cafeteria area or one of the classrooms. The more formal you make the setting, the better the impression you will make on your guests. If your budget is limited, hosting a program that does not involve a meal and is conducted at the school may be your best option.

That said, having a more formal program with a meal or banquet provides a prime opportunity to engage members in the formal planning of a major event. It also allows them to sharpen their communication and networking skills in a formal business setting. Surveys of businesspeople usually indicate they prefer to attend early morning events (breakfast programs) that minimize their time away from the business.

No matter which type of appreciation event you decide to host, the agenda or program usually includes the following:

- Brief presentation about SkillsUSA’s mission and goals
- Overview of local, state and national activities
- Recognition of chapter members’ competitive event awards and achievements
- Special chapter awards for businesses or specific professionals who have been advocates for SkillsUSA, served as activity sponsors, or who have contributed time, equipment or other resources.

Why it Works

Showing appreciation is a simple idea, but powerful! This is your chance to demonstrate the gratitude and respect your SkillsUSA chapter has for the business and industry within your local and area economy. The taxes they pay keep your school, programs and SkillsUSA chapter alive!

Steps to Success

I. Planning

1. Start planning EARLY (at least three to four months before the event).
2. Form a core planning committee.
3. Brainstorm what type of event would best.
 - Evaluate the timeframe your invitees can be away from school or that will allow your event to take place before school starts.
 - Establish the target amount you can spend to host the event
 - Simple continental breakfast
 - Buffet style breakfast
 - Served “set menu” breakfast
 - Determine the amount of time needed to raise the funds, plan and host the event.
4. Establish responsibilities and subcommittees linked to the core committee members’ interests and strengths (fundraising, organizing, planning, speaking, writing).
 - Each core planning committee member should chair committees with clear responsibilities such as:
 - Event Location/Logistics
 - Food Beverage
 - Invitations/RSVPs/Decorations
 - Entertainment/Breakfast Program

II. Follow-Through

1. Set deadlines for accomplishing tasks.
 - Use planning calendars and make sure everyone clearly understands the deadlines.
 - Be realistic; you and your members are busy, so establish clear and achievable deadlines for the work to be accomplished.

2. Check on progress constantly. Have specific “checkpoints” when each core committee member reports on their progress. This prevents nasty surprises that can happen if one or more committees aren’t on task.
3. Don’t be afraid to shift responsibilities if the follow-through isn’t happening

III. Subcommittee Activities and Responsibilities

Event Location/Logistics

- ✓ Choose the best event location based on the budget and amount of space needed based on number attending, type of program (formal or informal, sit-down breakfast or quick “pick up and go” continental breakfast).
- ✓ Select the preferred date, start and end time of the breakfast after carefully considering any possible conflicts with other events and activities.
- ✓ Determine the menu based on the budget and type of event.
- ✓ Determine the set-up style (head table, banquet rows/rounds/crescents, entertainment area, awards area).
- ✓ Plan the seating chart so that SkillsUSA members are seated at each table, not clustered together and separate from teachers.
- ✓ Decide how participants will know where to be seated (options include being escorted by members to their table, numbered tables, name badges or place cards).
- ✓ Plan for and rent (or bring) audio/visual or other equipment needed such as projector, screen, sound system and podium.
- ✓ Don’t pack tables and chairs too closely together. You want your guests to be comfortable.
 - Provide for a head table and podium, on a small riser if possible for maximum visibility.
 - A/V equipment will require power outlets and cords, so plan your setup accordingly.

Food/Beverage

- ✓ Determine the minimum and maximum of teachers, members and other guest likely to attend.
- ✓ Choose menu (food and beverages) based on the cost per person that will fit within your budget. Be sure to include service charges and tips.
- ✓ Plan for special dietary requirements (vegetarian, gluten-free).
- ✓ Find out when deposits (if any) are due, date when your final guaranteed count must be in, penalties if a required minimum (if any) is not met.
- ✓ Confirm when final payment must be received and what form of payment will be accepted (school purchase order, check or credit card).
- ✓ Call in the final count once the RSVP deadline arrives.

Invitations/RSVPs

- ✓ Decide on the type of invitation (postcard-style, invitation card with envelope, other)

- ✓ Incorporate the SkillsUSA logo and possibly the mission into the design.
- ✓ Plan for the basic information to be included (event description, date, time, location, directions (if appropriate), program activities or agenda, RSVP date, contact person with phone and/or e-mail.
- ✓ Decide on the layout of the invitation.
- ✓ Set the deadline for producing the invitation.
- ✓ Create a database of invitees, including name, title, date of RSVP and other pertinent information.
- ✓ Invite school administrators and counselors. They can become your best salespeople if they are impressed by your members and can see the connections you have to business and industry.
- ✓ Decide how they will be delivered (in person by a SkillsUSA member is best, school mail system is an acceptable choice).
- ✓ Determine how reminders of the event will be made including the RSVP date (school announcements, newsletter e-mail).
- ✓ Provide final RSVP counts, names and other information to those ordering food and other event related items such as programs and appreciation tokens by a pre-determined date.
- ✓ Use database to create seating charts, place cards and other materials.

Entertainment/Breakfast Program

- ✓ Decide if background music (recorded or live) will be used. Recorded is usually easier. Live gives you a chance to feature members' talents or school music programs.
 - Questions to answer about recorded music include equipment needed, how to tie into the sound system (if any), where equipment is located, how to access it, when sound checks can be made and where volume controls are located.
 - Questions to answer about live entertainers include who, how many, arrival time for rehearsal (if any), exact time for performance, microphone or sound system needs, timeframe, introduction and program information.
- ✓ Determine speakers for the breakfast
 - Who will speak?
 - Time limit for each—keep it short, two to three minutes each max
 - When they will speak during the program
- ✓ Sample Appreciation Breakfast Agenda
 - Welcome
 - Breakfast instructions
 - Meal
 - Greetings by SkillsUSA Chapter Present and/or Advisor
 - Chapter Officer/Member – Why SkillsUSA is important, and how it benefits the school and community
 - Chapter Events Overview – Tell them what you do, when, how they can help
 - Testimonial by alumni member
 - Testimonial by business/industry leader
 - Awards/gifts of appreciation
 - Closing Comments

IV. Show Your Pride

Use the SkillsUSA logo effectively. Have it appear on every invitation, place card and program. Have banners and posters that prominently display the logo. Make sure that SkillsUSA members are professionally dressed. If official SkillsUSA uniform attire can be worn, that's a great way to show pride and professionalism. Or, it can be as simple as everyone wearing a SkillsUSA T-shirt if it's a less formal event. Engage every chapter member. Prepare them on how to interact with teachers, encouraging them to share how SkillsUSA has positively impacted them.

Resources available on the SkillsUSA Website:

- Media Guide - <http://capwiz.com/skillsusa/dbq/media>
- Presentation for Business and Industry Partners (PowerPoint) - <http://skillsusa.org/supporters/bandi.shtml>
- SkillsUSA Brochures (templates and for purchase) - <http://skillsusa.org/educators/brochures.shtml>
- *SkillsUSA Educational Resources Catalog* (materials, DVDs, posters, and more): <http://www.skillsusa.org/shop/>
- SkillsUSA apparel, gifts and accessories: <http://www.skillsusastore.org/skillsusa/welcome.asp>
- SkillsUSA Fact Sheet - <http://skillsusa.org/about/factsheet.shtml>