

From the Desk of Matthew Mahood



An Historic Advantage: Members Want Chamber to Help Create a Strong Economy

Eighty years ago, members of the region's business community—led by the chamber of commerce—helped create Moffett Field for the Santa Clara Valley. The chamber raised \$476,000 to buy a thousand acres of land in 1931 for the U.S. Navy to establish a dirigible base. That former naval air station, as we all know, became a key airbase during World War II and the Cold War and is now owned and operated by the NASA Ames Research Center.

When business leaders come together and act for the common good—great things can be done that benefit residents, businesses and the community for decades. The key ingredient, of course, is business. Ronald Reagan once said that a community is only as good as business people make it—and organizations like the chamber are where the action takes place.

It's pretty well established that a chamber of commerce's role is to create a strong local economy, promote the community, represent the interest of business to government, provide networking opportunities and initiate political action. That is quite a large plate for any organization to carry, but it happens to be a role that few other groups in any region can fill.

Nevertheless, our members have

spoken through their responses to the survey conducted for us by the Western Association of Chamber Executives. As we gear up to celebrate another anniversary—the San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber's 125th anniversary—our members have weighed in and provided fundamental insight on what they want and value from their chamber of commerce—and that is: They want their chamber to help create a strong local economy and they value the business exposure and connections that accrue from their membership.

I see this as affirmation for the direction the 70-member chamber board will take as they solidify our 2012 Business Plan in the upcoming weeks. Much of the work will be accomplished during the Nov. 4 Board Retreat and will be implemented almost immediately.

Next year, the chamber will pivot and change its focus—not to something new—but to something members want and what we have done so well in the past: To work at creating jobs, to grow organically our local businesses and attract new commerce to the valley. We have 125 years of robust history on our side as being the right group to do the work—and the time now is right for the chamber to lead the way.