2017:
Our Year in Review
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

The Chamber strives to accelerate and sustain business success for members. Our focus in 2017 was on strengthening the outcomes of all that we do to help.

This year we:

- Created new tools, such as a Help Desk and Power Briefing Calls, aimed squarely at informing businesses about important regulatory changes and helping them to make strategic decisions.

- Launched several new event series, including Networking Around Town, Lessons from the C-Suite and B2B Tech Solutions, which speak to our members’ evolving needs and interests.

- Raised our voice on important policy issues, such as immigration reform, and fought hard to enact meaningful relief from the city’s Commercial Rent Tax.

- Worked to bring new people into the fold so that our members have a better mix of industries, companies and entrepreneurs with which to connect.

Now more than ever we are a super-connector for businesses of all sizes; a guardian and central resource for small businesses and startups; and an influential thought leader on the future of New York City.

Our Chamber community owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to Ken Biberaj, who served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the past three years and will be stepping down at the end of 2017. His vision, tenacity and passion played a pivotal role in getting us here. Thank you!

Next year, under the leadership of incoming Board Chairman Michael Kempner, the Chamber will continue to help more of our members grow and succeed.

Sincerely,

Jessica Walker
President and CEO
A COMMUNITY OF BUSINESSES

Building community

The Chamber revamped its onboarding process for new members, namely by assigning an Ambassador to each new member to show them how to maximize their membership and take advantage of all the Chamber has to offer.

We also partnered with Townsquared to create an on-line community platform where Chamber members can connect to help one another and conduct business.

Relocating our headquarters

We moved our office into a WeWork location near the intersection of Fifth Avenue and 47th Street. WeWork is a New York City-based company that provides shared workspaces throughout the world. This was a strategic and innovative way for our Chamber to support businesses where they are.
THOUGHT LEADER AND ADVOCATE

Enacting tax relief

After several years of Chamber advocacy on the issue, the City Council passed legislation to provide relief from the onerous Commercial Rent Tax. This change will reduce the tax liability for 2,700 small businesses, including 1,800 that will no longer pay the tax at all.

Protecting the city’s business climate

The Chamber called on the City Council to adopt a formal process to study the impact of proposed legislation on jobs and businesses. Such a change would help to ensure that harmful or burdensome bills do not become law. We also surveyed stores affected by the enhanced level of security around Trump Tower and worked with officials to mitigate the disruption to their businesses.
Leading influential conversations

Led by Board Chairman Ken Biberaj, the Chamber held five Chairman’s Breakfasts which featured high-level conversations with Eric Holder, former Attorney General of the United States; Jeh Johnson, former United States Secretary of Homeland Security; Melissa DeRosa, Secretary to Governor Cuomo; Marc Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League; and an expert panel that discussed the future of New York City’s real estate market.

The Chamber also hosted a policy forum on immigration reform shortly before President Trump took office.

The Chamber’s Government Affairs Council, which allows members to engage in constructive dialogue with policymakers met with City Councilman Bill Perkins and John Flanagan, the Majority Leader of the New York State Senate.

The Chamber’s Board of Directors met privately with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, City Councilman-elect Keith Powers and mayoral candidate Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis.
Providing top-notch networking opportunities

The Chamber held 30 networking events, including industry-specific mixers for tech and finance, a fun cocktail-making class and an unforgettable evening hosted by United Airlines on the rooftop of the Dream Downtown Hotel. The Chamber also launched a new event series, *Networking Around Town*, which takes place each month at different venues throughout the borough.

Helping members generate sales & biz development

The Chamber launched two new Business Referral Groups this year, bringing the total number up to six. These intimate groups (approximately 15 to 20 people each) meet regularly to learn about one another’s business and then generate business referrals. In 2017, group members shared more than 600 referrals amongst themselves that resulted in nearly 250 closed business deals.
Sharing insider perspectives to get ahead

The Chamber created Business Matters, a weekly e-newsletter that is distributed to nearly 15,000 subscribers. It provides intel and updates on matters of importance to New York City’s business community.

The Chamber also launched Lessons from the C-Suite, an event series that allows members to hear candid “real talk” and receive life lessons from the high-level executives and icons they often read about. The inaugural event featured Mike Steib, CEO of XO Group.

The Chamber’s LGBT Network hosted a timely event that provided comprehensive financial planning advice; and our partners at TD Bank hosted an insightful presentation on the global economic outlook.

Hosting international trade delegations

The Chamber met with various trade delegations, trade offices or consulate representatives from China, UAE, Portugal, the Bahamas, Scotland, Nepal, Hong Kong, Thailand, Israel, Pakistan, Turkey and more.

We also co-hosted a full-day conference with KOTRA, which featured presentations on doing business in New York and allowed South Korean business owners to meet one-on-one with our members.
GUARDIAN OF SMALL BUSINESSES AND STARTUPS

Supporting businesses in the community

The Chamber continued its initiative, *Chamber on the Go*, in partnership with the city’s Department of Small Business Services and with funding from the New York City Council. The initiative allows Chamber staff to meet business owners and retailers in their stores to evaluate their needs and direct them toward helpful resources. In 2017, the Chamber reached more than 300 businesses throughout the borough, particularly in Harlem, Greenwich Village and on the Lower East Side.

The Chamber hosted a *Small Business Saturday* event on the Upper East Side to encourage customer support for businesses affected by the multi-year construction of the Second Avenue Subway.

The Chamber also launched new tools including the *Help Desk*, a program that allows us to field wide-ranging inquiries from members and then connect them with experts who can help (e.g., legal, IT, staffing, marketing, etc.); and *Power Briefing Calls*, which provide members with detailed information about new laws and regulations that can affect their business.
Sharing best practices for success

Led by the Chamber’s Entrepreneurship Council, the Chamber delivered programming designed to help entrepreneurs and business owners grow their businesses. Topics focused on tips to secure funding, increase sales and improve social media presence.

The Chamber also hosted events focused on: helping women- and minority-owned businesses navigate New York City; providing an overview of the benefits of owning versus renting commercial space; employing anti-fraud tips and cybersecurity practices to protect a business; email marketing tips using Constant Contact; and the Chamber’s new event series, B2B Tech Solutions, that showcases the latest tech innovations that may give small businesses a competitive advantage and/or make them more efficient.
GIVING BACK

Funding nonprofits through street fairs

Since 1993 the Chamber has managed two of the largest street fairs in New York City, both on the Upper East Side. These festivals are a “win-win” for the community for several reasons:

- It’s a day of fun for the thousands of visitors who stroll down the avenues.
- Entrepreneurial vendors have an opportunity to sell their wares.
- Our proceeds are donated to nonprofit organizations in the surrounding community. To date, the Manhattan Chamber has donated more than $3.5 million to organizations seeking to improve the health, welfare, social and cultural lives of residents within Manhattan Community Board 8.

Honoring the best in the business

In November, the Chamber held its annual “Best in the Business Awards” breakfast which brings together 300 of New York City’s most influential business and civic leaders in order to recognize companies and entrepreneurs for their “above and beyond” achievements, community contributions and milestones. Jill Kaplan, the former publisher of Crain’s New York Business served as the emcee. Honorees included:

- Outstanding Corporate Citizen: David Rockefeller (posthumously)
- Friend of Business: American Express’ Small Business Saturday movement
- Most Innovative: Casper
- Company to Watch: Oscar

In April, the Chamber joined forces with the other borough-wide Chambers (representing Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island) to present MWBE Awards to two women- and/or minority-owned businesses from each borough. Our Chamber celebrated members Colleen Molter, President of QED National; and Tamara Nall, President and CEO of The Leading Niche.
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