

A GUIDE TO HOSTING A PLANT TOUR FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Why host a plant tour? Essentially the plant tour gives your elected officials an opportunity to gain greater insights into your business and to hear about industry issues firsthand. The plant tour is a terrific opportunity to educate our elected officials and to give them a chance to see how their laws work in real life! Plant tours can offer a real “win-win” opportunity for both the legislator and the company providing the tour. This pamphlet is designed to help you prepare for and conduct a successful plant tour.

Thank you in advance for getting involved and for recognizing the importance of maintaining and building a solid relationship with your elected officials!

Arranging the Tour

CDA is happy to assist our members in hosting a plant tour and providing the necessary information materials. It is important to be as flexible as possible when scheduling these visits and, if possible, to have a few options for dates. Usually the plant tour will be arranged by the office scheduler and because of the hectic schedule of many lawmakers, sometimes there are last-minute changes that may occur so a host should be prepared for such alterations.

When deciding who from your company should meet with the legislator, do not be concerned with party affiliation. Members of Congress, and other legislators, are elected to represent everyone in their district or state. In addition, do not just invite those lawmakers who may share your political ideology. It is important to develop a good relationship with your public officials who may influence the future of your company and your industry. It is good to have strong contacts in both parties.

Media Coverage

A plant tour with an elected official is essentially a public event. Lawmakers enjoy good press coverage and this can benefit your company as well. It is a good idea to contact your local media – both large and small – to let them know of your intention to host this event. If you choose not to alert the media, you may want to record the visit for your own personal archives by either video-taping the event or having a photographer capture the event through photos.

Checklist for Organizing the Plant Tour

- ✓ You will probably want the most senior executive available to greet the legislator and accompany him or her through the plant. Although you will want to have a plan of the plant tour, legislators will also likely want to wander from the tour to greet employees so you should be prepared for this.

- ✓ While an understanding of the most pressing legislative issues facing your industry is important, it may be better to avoid lobbying the legislator about specific issues and, instead, focus on educating the lawmakers about your company and the general issues facing your industry.
- ✓ If you have a public relations officer it is a good idea to include that person in coordinating with the local media and offering press releases and photo opportunities. It is also helpful to include an employee that oversees personnel and may be able to recommend some employees that could meet with the legislator.
- ✓ You will want to review the background on your guest – both biographical information and political information, such as what committees the members serves on, so that you can identify some areas of common ground. It is helpful to have a packet of information that you can share with the legislator giving some background on your company as well.
- ✓ Be sure your lawmaker knows clearly what entrance to use and have people there to greet him or her to hand out name badges and hard hats and goggles if necessary. It might be a good idea to run over the route plan and tour itinerary the day before the event to make sure it runs smoothly. Lawmakers are typically pressed for time so this can help ensure the event runs on schedule. A typical tour can last 1 to 2 hours.
- ✓ The tour route itself should be easy to maneuver. Obviously, it is important to observe all safety precautions and to ensure that there are no OSHA or INS violations.
- ✓ Public officials have strict laws regarding gifts so if you are thinking of offering some type of gift please be sure to check with the lawmakers office beforehand to ensure that it is in compliance with federal law.
- ✓ You may want to allow the legislator some time to address your entire workforce if possible. This gives the lawmaker a chance to do some politicking and also offers your employees a chance to ask questions and meet the legislator in an informal setting. Don't worry about the political affiliation of your employees, lawmakers are use to addressing a diverse audience. However, this should be a welcoming group and a friendly line of questioning is expected.
- ✓ Highlight your new technology and show your guest how your machinery works. It is also a good idea to allow the legislator to do something “interactive” – such as run a machine or examine your product – these moments offer good “photo opportunities” for both you and the legislator and should not be missed!

- ✓ Highlight your efforts to promote employee benefits – such as child care facilities – or, if you do not have such benefits, use the opportunity to discuss how you are trying to improve and how legislation might help you improve.
- ✓ You may want to provide some information on the impact your company has had on your legislator's district – include any success stories regarding the lives of your employees or the history of your company. You may wish to talk about the many jobs (discuss the number of people you employ) your business has created. You may point to the worker health, safety and training programs you have established. You can highlight the products and services your business provides and how your company impacts the community through taxes paid and any community charities you may be involved in.

Following Up After the Tour

The purpose of the plant tour is to promote a greater understanding on the part of our elected officials as to the importance of our industry and, in particular, your business. It is important to follow-up after the tour to make sure that your lawmaker remembers your company.

For this reason, you will want to write a thank-you note which should include some reminders of the key points you made in your tour. You may want to extend an invitation to the lawmaker to visit again anytime or invite him or her to any business events such as employee picnic or other companywide celebration at that time.

You may also want to include photos from the event – legislators enjoy receiving these pictures which often are used in their own newsletters highlighting their connections with their constituents. If you received any press coverage on the event you should include clippings or videos of such press as well.

If any of the legislator's staff were included in the tour it is a good idea to send thank you notes to them as well. These people are key contacts for you and your company and frequently advise the lawmakers on issues of importance to our industry.

You may also want to thank all your employees who were involved in the planning and executing of the plant tour and ask for an evaluation and feedback for future plant tours.

Above all, enjoy the event and know that through your efforts you have helped to promote the best interests of, not only your company, but our industry as well! Thank you!