



DISTRIBUTOR CENTER CHALLENGE

Distribution Center Tours: Planning from A–Z

BEFORE THE INVITATION

1. Determine your agenda. Is your goal to address specific legislation or develop the relationship with your legislator?
2. Have a defined tour schedule that allows enough time to tour the facilities and enjoy informal discussion.
3. In appropriate situations, select a key employee representative to accompany you on the tour and assist in the planning and implementation.
4. Map out the tour. Choose the particular areas that illustrate the points you want to make. Select tour guides from among the more articulate and politically active employees. Include quiet areas to talk along the way.
5. Arrange to have a photographer cover the tour.
6. Consider planning the distribution center tour in the evening when the most activity is taking place. A tour start time of 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. may be the most appropriate.
7. Ensure that key machinery and equipment are operational. Action is essential for an interesting tour.

THE INVITATION

1. Reach out to the legislator by calling the district office to determine how they prefer to receive official invitations. They may prefer that you contact their district office instead of their office in Washington, D.C. Current mail delays on Capitol Hill heavily impact the appointment process. Additionally, legislators receive hundreds of invitations. Those received in a preferred method (e.g., mail, e-mail, fax, phone, district office, etc.) will receive attention first.
2. Tailor your invitation to the legislator's interests as this will help you increase the likelihood your invitation is accepted.
3. Don't be discouraged if it takes several invitations before the legislator accepts. Legislators have many demands on their time. Your persistence will pay off.
4. Begin scheduling as soon as possible. If you are interested in a member visiting during the busy August recess, begin your invitation process by the end of June.
5. When arranging the tour, ask the legislator's scheduler how much time the legislator will have to spend at your facility. Adjust your agenda and tour schedule appropriately.
6. Provide multiple dates and times for the legislator's convenience. Flexibility on your part increases your chances of acceptance.
7. Provide the official with a personalized packet of information about the company and the visit. See the "Distribution Center Tours: Points of Interest" page provided in this packet for an idea of the information that may be of interest to the legislator.



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SPREADING THE WORD

1. Let employees know the exact date and time of the visit in advance.
2. If possible, share the highlights of the visitor's biography.
3. A visit from your legislator is a big deal and should be talked about as such. Market the program with posters, e-mail and intranet announcements, voice mails, etc.
4. Recruit key contacts and prominent organization leaders to play a role in the visit and generate buzz for your event.

CONDUCTING THE TOUR

1. The senior executive on site should be on hand to greet the official first.
2. Start with a brief introductory session and background on your company in an office or conference or break room to overview the tour. Include who and what the official will see.
3. Keep close track of time. Don't rush the tour, but keep things moving. Ask how much time your guest has when he or she arrives and make last minute adjustments to your schedule if needed.
4. Remember, all employees are constituents, so be sure to introduce your employees by name.
5. Consider following the tour with a short private discussion in your office or conference room. It might be advantageous to arrange for the legislator to meet with selected employees. In either case, discuss with the legislator those issues of greatest importance to the company and the facility.

AFTER THE TOUR

1. Send a follow-up thank you letter to the legislator and a courtesy copy to any staff that attended.
2. Provide the official and his or her press aide any press clippings that covered the event (including your own newsletters).
3. Maintain this relationship by keeping up with the legislator and designated staff on legislative issues of relevance.
4. Offer to remain available to the official and his or her staff as a resource on the industry.
5. Follow up with the employees or members in attendance. Thank them for representing the organization and educating the legislator.
6. Provide HDA with feedback on the experience and any issues or questions posed by the legislator that you would like staff to follow up on back in Washington, D.C.
7. **We will be promoting the 2016 DISTRIBUTION CENTER CHALLENGE. Send copies of photos and any press releases to HDA to feature in the *HDA Weekly Digest* newsletter and other publications.**

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POINTS OF INTEREST

As constituents, company-specific information can be very helpful to legislators. This type of information illustrates the volume and scope of your business. Here are some sample points of interest you should compile for your legislator:

- The number of employees at your facility;
- The variety of products you distribute;
- The volume of products in specialized storage, such as the cage, vault or temperature-controlled containment devices;
- The number of customers served and the variety of dispensing entities;
- The number of manufacturers whose products are distributed through the facility;
- Turn-around time and accuracy in fulfilling orders;
- The estimated tax revenue your company generates in federal, state and local jurisdictions;
- The total amount of sales dollars and how they are allocated for supplies, rent, depreciation, payroll and taxes;
- The dollars spent locally to purchase supplies, materials and services; and,
- Regions or states covered by the distribution center.

Additional points of interest that may be important to legislators could include the following:

- Facility improvements and new equipment;
- Such safety and health standards as protective equipment or technology;
- Community improvement projects and activities; and,
- Employee education or development programs.

HDA can provide additional resources to you on any of the above action items. For more information, contact Jewelyn Cosgrove at (703) 885-0272 or jcosgrove@hda.org.