

In The Beginning.....

Locating new business to an area, via relocation or expansion, is the glamour element of Economic Development. A successful siting of a new plant or facility with numerous new job opportunities is the dream of everyone involved in the economic development process. It's huge...new jobs/investment for the community, major recognition, acknowledgement of a job well done, and a grand chance to wave a few flags. Finally someone is doing something! It's the culmination of a successful campaign. I've been involved in a few (never enough), and it is a great day. Let's take a quick look at the beginning and see just how easy it is.

Everyone is involved. Most don't even realize it. It's going on all of the time. Frankly, every time a new visitor enters the area, the process kicks in. A tourist or a business visitor stops for a meal or the night, visits with local vendors and citizenry, talks with a customer, enjoys an outdoor activity, visits a relative, or responds to an ad or a solicitation. All of these are seeds and how we nurture them helps determine what grows out of them. A negative comment about the wind from a waitress or clerk, or overheard from the next table, can send them down the road like the wind. A suggestion that things aren't so good, or that there is nothing to do and interest is squashed. Positive results evolve from positive attitudes. Did I mention that it is as okay to be a cheerleader as it is to be a critic? Probably more fun to do rah rah than blah blah! Honest responses to questions are essential. But positive people with positive attitudes can generate positive results with honest answers to virtually any inquiry.

Next comes opportunity. Positive vibes so how about a little information? Now this is important! None of us can be all things to all people and information has to be accurate. So if Uncle Bill asks a question we aren't sure of, it's positive to say "hey, I'm not sure but I am sure I can get the right info to you" and make a call and a referral. That's one thing Economic Developers and Chambers are good at – finding and supplying the correct information to satisfy a query. That's facilitating & assisting and that's our jobs. We're all on the same team. Call us and get us communicating with Uncle Bill. From that point, synergies develop and things could start to happen.

Could is the key word there. Successful and growing companies are successful and growing where they are located, and changing that because they like the color of the sky in Wyoming may not be enough to continue that success. Relocation is a major decision and is not made solely because someone had a positive experience here. BUT, if someone didn't have that positive experience, it's a sure bet relocation here isn't going to be a consideration. Numerous exit interviews conducted nationwide of companies who chose a particular location provide very little information as to why they DIDN'T choose other locations under consideration. Their answer is always keyed on why they CHOSE where they went – and you can be sure that positive experiences, sometimes "out of the ordinary" positive experiences and sometimes seemingly insignificant experiences, are what they refer to.

Obviously, this is only the beginning. A lot more goes into the big decision and the big announcement, but before it can happen it has to start! The next time you see a press release about a new company in the area, smile & take some pride. It's your town and you should get some credit.

Steve Elledge