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October 2007

Economic Development Newsletter

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Tuesday, November 29
10:00 am CST

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As I See It

Great Boards Aren't Born, They're Made
By Bob Ady



Every economic development board has its own unique makeup and culture. However, virtually all successful boards demonstrate certain common characteristics which differentiate them from "unsuccessful" boards, or to be more politically correct, "less" successful boards.

Many of the characteristics of successful boards are not innate, but simply reflect an understanding of the basic economic development process along with a set of common management and communication skills. Chief among the characteristics of successful boards are:

- An interest in the community and in its economic development program
- Training in how the site selection process works - before a prospect comes to town
- Active participation in the site selection process and with prospects
- Open communication with other board members and the staff

As an outsider, it is relatively easy to pick up on board members who have little interest in their community's economic development program or the visitor. Comments such as: "Now, who are you and why are you here?" or "We really haven't been very successful in business attraction" are indicators of someone who would rather be someplace else -

any place else.

It is amazing how frequently board members acknowledge openly or reveal through their questions or answers to site selector questions, their complete lack of understanding regarding how the site selection process works. To place an inexperienced and/or untrained board member before a prospect is fraught with danger. Questions such as "What is the name of the prospect company you represent?" or comments such as "Ask not what we can do for your prospect, but rather what your prospect can do for us" are tip-offs of site location ignorance.

You'd think active participation in the site selection process by its board members would be a no-brainer. Quite the contrary. One of my favorites is the board member who immediately says to me: "Hello, I know you will love our community - wish I could spend more time with you, goodbye." I mean, who was that guy and why did he bother to show up? Obviously, being on the board and participating in the site visit was not one of his priorities.

Finally, and most awkward of all, is the disagreement among board members in front of the consultant and/or the company representatives. It could be a telling disagreement regarding a proposed incentive package, or as simple as which site to see first. Both issues can result in quite a vehement discussion. It indicates that the board members are not communicating with each other or that they are not working as a unit toward common goals. Most damning of all is when a board member contradicts the comments or the information provided by the professional economic development staff. This transgression can result in a quick exit by the site seeker - it forewarns of trouble ahead.

The best way out of the situations described above is to not get into them in the first place. Be proactive about providing education and training on the fundamentals of economic development and the site selection process to your board before a potential project inquires about your community. You've only got one chance to make a good first impression.

Ady International Webinars

Webinar: Board Governance

Tuesday, November 29, 10:00 am CST

Economic Development Boards can have a huge impact on the site selection process. The Board Members and their

actions are critical to a successful economic development campaign. Learn how the best boards operate and what trends are impacting boards today.

Bob Ady, President of Ady International Company has located more facilities in the U.S. than any other individual, and brings years of site selection expertise to the table. Karen Buellesbach, President of Management Training Professionals has 20+ years in the Human Resource field with expertise in organizational development, team dynamics and executive coaching.

Don't miss this lively session led by experts in their respective fields as we explore the latest trends in governance facing community boards.

During this webinar, we will discuss the following and related topics:

- Who should be on your board and what is the role of your board in the site selection process?
- How do the best boards operate? What are the Do's and Dont's of Board Governance?
- How effective is your board? How can board performance be improved?
- How important are board members to economic development programs?
- What are some of the biggest mistakes boards make and how do you prevent them from happening?
- What do site selection consultants expect from a community board?
- What are some of the latest trends in ED boards?

This 60 minute webinar will include a presentation, question and answer session and a copy of the presentation content downloadable in a PDF format after completing a brief anonymous post webinar survey.

Price: \$150.00

[Register now, seats are limited.](#)

Ady International Company is the authority on site selection. Our principal, Robert M. Ady, has conducted more corporate relocations in the United States than any other individual. He brings a wealth of experience to your site selection project, as well as longstanding relationships with economic development organizations nationwide.

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