

Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation has had a very busy start to 2007. We just concluded our Annual Membership Meeting and Membership Appreciation Banquet, we added a new board member, Rick Braught, and elected a new executive committee. Chairing the DAEDF Board for 2007 will be Don Gooch.

We will conclude the session of the Building Blocks of Economic Development today. I realize that when we build a house it takes time and patience in the process. To this point we have poured the foundation of Leadership, Workforce and Community Capacity. Today, we will put the walls and roof on this house of Economic Development.

The next two building blocks are Existing Business Development and Entrepreneurial Development. These blocks are critical to our existence and continued community growth. The nice thing about both subjects is that we have the ability to assist businesses within our community.

What do we mean by Existing Business Development? Simply put, it is taking care of what you have. All of our existing businesses are equally important to the continued growth and support that they give to the community and area. Those existing businesses are retail establishments, manufacturers, service centers, and tourism. Without them, we would have very little reason to move here and raise our families.

A major push is made to not only support our existing business and industry but to see how we can help them grow their opportunities. In our profession, we call it "Retention and Expansion". Studies show that 60 – 80 percent of employment growth is generated through the expansion of existing companies. Therefore, it makes sense to work with the business and industry that is within your local economy. They are already here and understand our culture.

Someone else that is here in our community is the entrepreneur. Our guest speaker at the Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation banquet was Jack Schultz, author of Boomtown USA. He asked the question, "What if Erle P. Halliburton would not have stopped in Duncan? How big would Duncan be today?" Look at what one entrepreneur was able to do for our community. There are inventors and creators in every community. Sometimes inventors do not realize that they have developed a new process. The ones who do can capitalize on their creation.

My background is centered on the creation of incubators. An incubator is a building that houses new start-up companies for approximately 3 years and assists the new company in growing their market. On their own, 80 percent of start-ups will fail within the first two years. Being in an incubator helps them weather the difficult time and become successful. The concept is a "Grow your Own" business mentality. At Meridian Technology Center in Stillwater, where I was just prior to coming to DAEDF, they have had 40 companies go through since 1998. The results are that one failed, two quit while they were ahead, and two left because of military duty. That leaves 35 successful companies, or an 87.5 percent success rate. Those are new businesses within the community.

Finally, the last building block: "New Business Recruitment." This is the one that gets citizens the most excited, but can be the most difficult building block if your community is not focused or doesn't have the resources available. Fortunately, we have the tools in place to compete. But understand that each year there are about 200 deals that have 200 employees or more looking to relocate and there are 32,000 economic organizations vying for those deals.

When a new company is looking at a community, they are actually trying figure out how they can eliminate the community from their list, not how they can keep a community on the list. Therefore, having industrial site development locations, along with local incentives and a targeted marketing tool; we can attract new industry and business to Duncan.

If you have questions, I can be contacted at the Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation office at 580-255-9675, or just send me an e-mail at lyle@ok-duncan.com. Visit our website at www.ok-duncan.com.