

2005 Synchronist Award Winners

“Profiling Fast Growth Companies”

Greater Louisville, Inc.
Lisa Bajorinas

Greater Louisville, Inc.’s High Impact Portfolio Program is the 2005 winner for “Excellence in Urban or Suburban Economic Development” presented by the United States Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration. The High Impact Portfolio Program uses data captured by Synchronist to identify, profile, and nurture fast growth companies in the Louisville region. In addition, Greater Louisville, Inc. hosts an annual recognition event for local companies, High Impact CEO roundtables, conferences, and leadership reports to further the success and growth of the program and local economy.

“Turning Lemons into Lemonade”

Tennessee Valley Authority & Mississippi Development Authority
Amy Bunton, TVA
Gina Everetts, TVA
Ken Johnston, MDA

Several issues posed potential problems for rolling out Synchronist statewide in the state of Mississippi, specifically shaky resources and a wide variety of economic development agencies not on the same page. Instead of perceiving this as a dilemma, TVA in conjunction with the Mississippi Development Authority, saw this as an opportunity. An opportunity to engage economic development professionals and organizations into a single collaborative effort yielding the following results: 1) a formalization of the regional utilities roles in BR&E programs; 2) a more inclusive approach to BR&E that has occurred through the synergy of the power utilities, the relevant distributors, MDA, and local economic developers; 3) a model for leveraging state, local, and regional resources for the betterment of all involved.

“Media Magic”

Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce, NC
Jerry Saunders

While many ED professionals believe the key to success is business retention and expansion, not as many are able to use it to draw the attention of regional media groups like Jerry Saunders. Jerry understands the importance of growing the existing economic base, but even more importantly he has paired a face to go with the program. He has added a personal touch, if you will. Thanks to his efforts the Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce has achieved positive exposure and recognition, not just among the local businesses but the community and media as well.

“Cluster Analysis: Driving resources to portfolios of companies”

Campbell River EDC Rivercorp, British Columbia
Patrick Marshall

The Campbell River EDC Rivercorp defined companies to be contacted by one of four cluster groups. With the assistance of a contract interviewer, along with two EDO staff members, Patrick Marshall and his colleagues were able to complete 106 interviews within a 12 week time frame. Next, using basic charting software, the group was able to illustrate Synchronist findings by economic cluster/major employers, and compare them to the results of the entire survey aggregate. The end result was a bar chart series clearly indicating which clusters should be focused on for various development activities.

“Cross Selling Synchronist Info”

Economic Development Institute, Georgia Institute of Technology
Greg King

In 2004 a statewide initiative was begun to bring a number of agencies together as a partnership to improve their approach of working with Georgia’s established industries - moving away from the “quick hits” as the yardstick, to that of funneling the right resources to the right companies. The Business InSight Partnership consists of teams from the GA Dept of Economic Development (DEcD), the Technical College System (DTAE) and Georgia Tech. Using reps from the combined regional office network and the technical colleges they targeted approximately 200 key manufacturing companies in the state (outside Atlanta). With Synchronist as the common platform for company understanding the Business InSight Partnership had the opportunity to address interests in new product development and prototyping as well as buyer/supplier matches, and innovation research grants in addition to the numerous traditional areas of assistance. The increased company understanding is of interest to multiple audiences and interest groups. The heightened level of understanding about Georgia companies has provided the opportunities to push information outside the partnership adding greater value and leveraging additional resources and information.

“Program Success & Sustainability Through Longevity”

Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
Steve Sparks

The Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program targets the manufacturing sector of the regional economy, and utilizes the Synchronist Business Information System. This program has been in affect since November of 2002 and has compiled data from over 250 original and follow-up visits. Over these past 3 years the Nashville Area Chamber has compiled a database of referrals specializing in workforce development, community services, public policy, transportation, state resources, utility services, and international trade. As a result, the Chamber has identified and will nurture over \$221 million dollars in investments/expansions over the next 3 years.

“Growing the Base”

Longmont Area Economic Council, CO
Wendi Nafziger

Using a 20 person volunteer system, the Longmont Area Economic Council was able to identify local businesses with plans for expansion. Through the first 10 months of 2005, Wendi Nafziger and her colleagues in Longmont successfully identified 29 local companies with detailed plans for expansion. Of these 29 companies, 9 of them have already completed their expansion, 2 are presently working with the economic council, and several others have been put on a spreadsheet for follow-up at the appropriate time mentioned in the interview. Additionally, the Longmont community has seen a net job increase of 369 primary jobs through the second quarter of 2005.

“Voice of the Customer”

Rockford Area Economic Development Council, IL
Mark Podemski

The Rockford Area EDC has ventured into uncharted areas of business retention and expansion. The RAEDC is using The Language Processing® Method to analyze the information gathered during executive visits using the Synchronist On-Site Visit survey form. Mark Podemski and his colleagues identified six broad issues needing improvement at the Rockford Global Tradepark, 6,600-acre industrial park, and set forth to take action. As a result, the RAEDC was able to provide specific action items to address each of these broad issues previously identified. This has added a new element of completeness to reports, demonstrating the RAEDC as an accountable and action-oriented economic development organization.

“Privileged Information”

Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, TX
Susan Davenport

Portfolio Austin is Susan Davenport’s answer to “How do you manage your local economy?” Portfolio Austin has several key components including a pre-defined portfolio of local business made up of the region’s top 25 employers, start-ups, fast growth firms, top tier earners, and targeted industry sectors; a SWAT team composed of local professionals specializing in city politics, workforce development, public policy, communications, economic development, international business, and air travel; quarterly analysis; and a newsletter released to the local businesses addressing the findings found during the most recent analysis of the data gathered with the Synchronist survey forms. The quarterly newsletter is particularly crucial because it informs local business executives of updates on public policy, international business trends, company announcements, air travel, and workforce. The kicker? Only those companies who take the time to sit through a retention and expansion visit are privileged to receive the newsletter.

“Enhancing the Competitiveness of Local Businesses Through Collaboration”

Greater Colorado Springs Economic Development Corporation

Kara Roberts

In Colorado Springs collaboration is crucial to creating positive change and increasing the overall competitiveness of its primary employers. The Economic Vitality Group meets monthly to discuss and review the Assistance Request Report. As a result of this continual review process, the Economic Vitality Group has an astounding 89% issue resolution rate. This group works aggressively as a team to put together a cohesive, collaborative package that ultimately retains, expands, and attracts businesses and jobs.

“Engaging Local Business Leaders: Assistance Referral by Committee”

Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce

Steve Russell

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce has structured its business retention and expansion committee in a way that maximizes goal achievement for the city of Mobile. The BR&E committee is chaired by a local business executive with leadership experience and a strong belief in the concept that an active BR&E program is good for the community as a whole. The rest of the committee membership is made up of twenty-five high level community leaders such as CEO's, executive directors, and business leaders. This committee model allows an audience of high level business executives to engage in discussions regarding community problems and in brainstorming sessions that collectively work toward problem solutions. Further, it allows these committee members to directly participate by utilizing their experience and expertise to assist firms to resolve their organizational problems.

“Increasing Reach Through Relationship Building”

Savannah Economic Development Authority

Lee Grimes

The Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA) has formed a unique partnership to serve established industries. The group goes by the name BRAT (Business Retention Action Team) and involves six agencies that operates locally or in the region (SEDA, Georgia Dept of Economic Development, the Technical College System, Georgia Dept of Labor, Georgia Tech and the Savannah Chamber of Commerce). BRAT's combination of local and state agency partners has provided the opportunity for SEDA to leverage the technical knowledge, resource reach, and agency access for their local companies. By providing a common customer platform, SEDA through BRAT has become more responsive to immediate issues and become more strategic in its approach to working with companies.

“Tireless Champion”

Birmingham Area Chamber of Commerce
Brian Murphy & Griffin Lassiter

The Existing Business Team (EBT) is a joint effort between the Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, utility companies, local governments, and various non-profit agencies. All members of the EBT are economic development professionals with many years of experience, are highly capable, and significantly contribute to the growth and retention of businesses in the Birmingham region. The Birmingham region and the EBT highly depend on its volunteers to achieve success as BR&E organization. Brian Murphy, Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, specifically notes one volunteer as a “Tireless Champion”, Griffin Lassiter. Griffin, in addition to his primary job as a close aid to the mayor, has made 37 documented visits thus far in 2005 and continually goes out of his way to provide solutions and assistance to the companies he visits. This an excellent example of the impact volunteers can make on the local economic base.

2004 Synchronist Award Winners

“New Investment Opportunist”

Mike Greene, Richland County Economic Development Corporation, OH

“Ace Research Analyst”

Ed Sitar, ComEd/Exelon, IL

Jim Anderson, Upper Peninsula Economic Development Association, MI

“Tireless Champions”

Deb Calvert, MidAmerican Energy Company, IA

Ted Hiding, CEcD, Arizona Public Service Co.

Tanya McQueen, City of Nanaimo, BC

Lynn Parman, Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, KS

“Champion Process Innovators”

Gail Conkey, Economic Development Association of Northern Nevada

Matt Cramer, Economic Development Association of Northern Nevada

“Holy Roll-Outs”

Greg Sheek, Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

Sidney Hoover, Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

“Merlin’s Strategist”

Greg King, CEcD, Economic Development Institute, Georgia Tech

“Information Artist”

Dan McDonald, Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, IA