



Next Move Group

We Are Jobs Podcast

with Special Guest: Subash Alias

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Welcome to this episode of Next Move Group's We Are Jobs podcast. This is Chad Chancellor, co-founder of Next Move Group and I'm happy to have Subash Alias with us here today. Subash is the interim CEO of the Missouri Partnership. I affectionately call him "Subaaash" because being raised on a farm in Mississippi, it's hard to say "bash". At least I don't feel natural. Welcome, Subash. I'm glad to have you.

Subash Alias: Thank you, Chad. I wish I could come up with another way to say Chad, but yes, thank you.

Chad Chancellor: Actually, one of my friends just called me Ched with an "e". Yes, she couldn't say Chad for whatever reason. So, thank you for being with us today. Of course, most of our listeners know that we are based in New Orleans and St. Louis and St. Louis is very important to us as is Missouri. So, Subash, why don't you start off with giving us a little bit of the state of economic development in Missouri?

Subash Alias: You know, there's a lot happening. First, we do business attraction projects for the State, on behalf of Missouri and so if you kind of go all the way across the state, in Kansas City, CBS just did a big distribution center. They're seeing also some shared services centers in Kansas City. Littler labor law firm has a big project there. Company Sungevity put up a big shared services center in Kansas City, so a lot of those are coming from the coast.

You sort of move further east in Sedalia. Probably our biggest project today when it comes to capital investment for Missouri Partnership is Nucor Steel. So, they're building a steel bar micro mill in Sedalia. It's a \$265 million plant. It's a really exciting project in Sedalia.

Warrensburg 1.2 million square foot distribution center for Dollar Tree, so that's really exciting for Warrensburg and then center of the state, in Colombia, Missouri home of the University of Missouri, Colombia they're building-- we're about to cut the ribbon in April for an organic dairy plant. So, it will be-- it's the largest for organic dairy, the largest private label dairy in the country.

Chad Chancellor: Wow.

Subash Alias: So, if you buy organic milk from Costco or from Walmart, it's going to be coming from both Colorado and now Colombia, Missouri. So, it will all be processed there. Spring Field, southwest Missouri, One Call Care Management, they recently did a call center there, really nice project, 100 summer jobs.

Further north-- northeast on I44 in Rolla, Hartmann, they're doing-- about a year ago they started egg cartons out of recycled newspaper. It's a really exciting project for Rolla and then in St. Louis, western suburbs of St. Peters, Amazon is building a fulfillment center, 1500-job fulfillment center.

In midtown St. Louis, Square, local payments company Square, they have been hiring like crazy and they have been doing extremely well with their hiring.

Chad Chancellor: Of course a lot of our focus with that company is on small to mid-sized communities. So, the Nucor deal in Sedalia is really interesting for me because that's a pretty small town.

Subash Alias: It is. Sedalia is between twenty-five, thirty thousand people and so, they won that project because they have a large site that they basically prepared and got ready. It's around three-- they were looking for three to five hundred acres for that site, rail served.

So, the local team is just incredible. Jessica Craig is a local economic developer there. The state also mobilized the governor's office. The cabinet members all got behind this project, went made the pitch to Nucor and it is probably our crown jewel in the state.

Chad Chancellor: Nucor's got a big presence in Louisiana. I've never met anybody that works for them that was unhappy. They've got a heck of a company culture. That's a good win. Talk a little bit about what Missouri Partnership does and what the state of Missouri's Economic Development Department does because that's a little different than some states do and I like it frankly. Tell our listeners how that works.

Subash Alias: In 2007, the state of Missouri's Department of Economic Development privatized its business attraction function to Missouri Partnership. So, we were formed in 2007. Missouri Department of Economic Development they still work on retention and expansion projects and startups, but we really just work on attraction. That's all we do. We don't do advocacy, we don't do policy. All we do is work to bring new companies to the state, so laser-focused on just doing that.

Chad Chancellor: We've been asking all our listeners how they got into this profession. A few people roll out of bed when they are like 8 years old and go I want to be an economic developer. What's your story?

Subash Alias: It's a little corny, but what happened was I was in college in Davenport Island, the Quad Cities and I grew up in St. Louis and in Colombia, Missouri, so home state. I found that in

Davenport I enjoyed taking my classmates back to my hometown and showing them around. I had a lot of civic pride.

At the same time, a lot of exciting things were happening in St. Louis, so dare I say the St. Louis Rams were headed to St. Louis. They were building a new stadium. The Blues built a new stadium which is now the Enterprise Center. They're building a new mass transit system, the MetroLink.

So, this is the early to mid-90s. A lot of exciting things were happening there and I was like how-- I didn't even know there was such a profession at the time and I thought how can I get part of this action? So, I basically-- when I finished college, I harassed the St. Louis Regional Chamber to hire me as an intern and so that's pretty much what it was. I learned about this whole industry just from reading about what's going on.

Chad Chancellor: Wow! And you worked there for a while and ended up going to Pittsburg if I remember well.

Subash Alias: Right. Yes, I was in St. Louis for about nine years and then went to Pittsburg to work for the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, specifically the Pittsburg Regional Alliance which is an affiliate of that organization. A wonderful community, a wonderful place to work and I got lucky. Pittsburg saw a really nice renaissance while I was there. I'd like to take credit for it, but I was just-- I was really just riding the wave. It was really exciting to work there at that time.

Chad Chancellor: Well, Subash knows that we're big St. Louis Cardinals fans and we go there at least one game a year and I think they're going to have a good team this year. The Blues have been-- they started terribly, but they've won like, I don't know, 15 or something out of 80. I haven't kept that well in the last week, but it looks like they're going to get back in.

Subash Alias: They are on a hot streak. Yes, that's really exciting.

Chad Chancellor: If that's what you think at this point if the Blues won the Stanley Cup, St. Louis would just go crazy and more so probably than the Cardinals because the Cardinals have won so much.

Subash Alias: Right, so I guess the Blues are in their 51st or 52nd season. They have not won a Stanley Cup yet. They made it to the Stanley Cup their first three years, but they didn't win. So yes, the Blues will go crazy.

Chad Chancellor: I love St. Louis. I used to live in Paducah, Kentucky. It was halfway between Nashville and St. Louis, so you kind of had two options if you wanted the big city and most of the people for whatever reason went to Nashville, but not me. I always went to St. Louis. I love St. Louis. I've never had a bad time when I went there.

Subash Alias: That's great.

Chad Chancellor: And I like what you all are doing for the state of Missouri. Missouri is a big state if you just look at it from a map. It's tall. I didn't know that until I had to drive one day from St. Louis to Omaha for the College World Series and I was like I'm never going to get to this place. It's really tall.

Subash Alias: Yes and in this job that's what we do. We go all over the state, so we put a lot of miles on the cars.

Chad Chancellor: Well, thank you for being with us today, Subash. We appreciate it and look forward to continuing the-- to work with you and try to make good things happen in Missouri.

Subash: Okay, thank you, Chad. Appreciate it.

Chad Chancellor: I want to thank the University of Southern Mississippi's Masters of Economic Development for sponsoring today's podcast. We work with Southern Miss a lot and they do tremendous research for us whether we're working with a site selection project and we need Southern Miss's help to understand labor and the market around that area, transportation-- they do a lot of research here or whether we need talent from the University of Southern Mississippi.

We have hired-- their students actually work for us as both interns and full-time employees. So, you can get a Master's degree in Economic Development from the university. They have two options to do that. One is mostly an online option where you go in a few weekends and one is the more traditional classroom option.

So, whether you run an organization and need talent or whether you run an organization and need research, you should really consider the University of Southern Mississippi's Masters of Economic Development program. [music]

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