



Next Move Group

We Are Jobs Podcast

with Special Guest: Robert Ingram

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Chad Chancellor: Welcome to this episode of Next Move Group's We Are Jobs podcast. This is Chad Chancellor, the co-founder of Next Move Group. I'm happy to have with me today Robert Ingram with Common Sense Economic Development. Robert was probably my first mentor at economic development 15 years ago. It is the first time I've ever got to ask him hard questions on the record. So, the shoe is on the other foot today. Robert, tell these folks a little bit about Common Sense Economic Development and also your AEROready® certification program you all are doing.

Robert Ingram: Okay, thanks, Chad. I retired in 2013 and decided-- my wife decided she didn't want me at home as much as I was there so I started seeing if I could do a little bit of consulting with old friends and old clients and got busy and did a lot of community assessments and targeting studies and that type of thing.

Then a project came along that I needed some help on and Tucson Roberts had retired about the same time I had in 2013 and he had a little consulting company so we joined forces and did a couple of nice community projects and got to talking about how we could do more work together. We both realized that the last part of our career and for most of his career, aerospace was a big part of what we did.

Tucson has been a dean of an aviation school and has recruited aerospace, and I've worked with dozens of aerospace companies and aerospace real estate location people and just-- I love the recruitment side of it and he loves the education side of it and the recruitment side of it.

So, we sat down and started comparing notes and developed a process we thought would work to evaluate communities that maybe had not had success in recruiting aerospace to see if they had the assets necessary to be successful in doing it.

You were a big part of us getting our first client and doing that at One East Kentucky. We appreciate that early referral that you got us on track. So, we went off to One East Kentucky and worked with them and analyzed them and certified them and we went from there up into Ohio and then to Ashland, Kentucky and we've been into Texas and Louisiana.

So far, we've had an awful lot of success. Both Chuck in One East Kentucky and Tim in Ashland have recruited aerospace companies since we've come up and worked with them, but we look at a community, we look at the assets that the aerospace companies are most looking for when they do a site search. We'll tell a community we think you've got the assets or we think you've got some of the assets and here's the areas that you need to work on and improve.

When they are ready or we think they are ready to successfully recruit aerospace, we certify them as AEROREADY® and produce a marketing plan for them and basically stick with them forever. We're still getting clients out of Tim and Chuck from work that we did three and four years ago. So, it's not a job for us. It's something that I do and we do because it's fun and we like helping

people. We love the economic development profession and we want to continue as long as we can to be a part of it.

Chad Chancellor: Well, it's interesting you not only analyze all their data, you then give them a marketing plan and I think that's where a lot of folks sometimes mess up. You can get a good strategic plan, but if you don't know how to market it, what are you going to do with it?

Robert Ingram: Right. The last thing we want to do is create a plan that sits on somebody's shelf. So, we give them what we think is the best strategy for them with their resources to go out and recruit aerospace; some communities that might be an MRO-type operation. For some, it may be a parts manufacturer. For some, it could be an engineering firm. It just all depends on what we find in the community. We give them a recommended minimum budget that they will need to be successful and tell them where to go find the companies and how to recruit them.

Chad Chancellor: You know we all talk about regionalism. Robert was in Baldwin County, Alabama when Mobile County won the Airbus project and of course the project ended up going to Mobile, but Baldwin County has a number of suppliers and aerospace machining and it was a big part of the effort. So, you've got major credentials in this arena all the way up to the Airbuses of the world.

Robert Ingram: Right. I was on the recruitment team for Airbus and thoroughly enjoyed working with the Mobile Chamber on that. They are an outstanding economic development organization, but I'm glad you brought up regionalism. It's important in all economic development. It's especially important in aerospace. We don't just look at one city or one county when we do an assessment. We look at the whole region to make certain that they've got executive housing. Most aerospace companies bring engineers with them and specialized management and they don't want to live just anywhere. So, we look at quality of life areas just like we look at the labor force and the technical data.

Chad Chancellor: So, if somebody wanted to get a hold of you, what's your website and how would they get a hold of you?

Robert Ingram: Our website is www.aeroready.us

Chad Chancellor: And then I can't let you get away without talking a little Southern Miss sports. So, I guess your basketball team has been on a roll. Are they still winning?

Robert Ingram: They got beat. The Conference USA has a weird format and they rescheduled the last four games of the year to put all the top games against each other and we got beat in overtime our first game. We've got a pretty good baseball team; not as good as Mississippi State right now, Chad, but--

Chad Chancellor: Well, one game went to ten innings and the other one went to the bottom of the ninth.

Robert Ingram: It was a good series, but Mississippi has great college baseball even down at the lower levels. Delta State is the number one team in the country in their division. Ole Miss, Mississippi State, and Southern Miss all ranked in the top 25. So, if you love college baseball it's a great place to be.

Chad Chancellor: I got in the economic development profession in 2004 and Robert was one of my first mentors and told me basically I didn't know what in the world I was doing, and I needed to go work for somebody that did. It all worked out well after that, but he has a real passion for economic development. More so than probably most anybody I know. Robert, where does that passion come from? What makes you so interested in economic development?

Robert Ingram: You know the profession is just fun, Chad. To start with, it's just so much fun what we do and anytime you help people and improve a community and improve people's lives it's easy to go to bed and sleep at night because you know you've done good. Chad called me up and I didn't know him from Adam and he called me up and said he had been told by several people that he needed a mentor and that I would be a good one for him. Since that time, I suspect he and I have enjoyed it most of the time, but there's probably been a few times we both wish he hadn't made that telephone call.

Chad Chancellor: And he told me if I asked him too hard questions, he wouldn't answer my call anymore. So, Robert thank you for being with us today and everything you've done to help Next Move Group grow and if you want to check out the AEROready® website it's aeroready.us. Thank you, Robert.

Robert Ingram: Thank you, Chad. I enjoyed it.

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Chad Chancellor: A special thank you to Younger Associates for recording, editing, and publishing this podcast for us. I encourage you to visit their website at younger-associates.com.