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As far as I'm concerned, they are absolutely the best lead generation firm in the business for economic development organizations. Call them now. They can help you create real prospects.

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**Chad Chancellor:** Welcome to this week's episode of the Next Move Group We Are Jobs podcast. This is Chad Chancellor, co-founder of Next Move Group. Today, we've got Eddie Crittendon with us and Eddie is the CEO of the McNairy County Tennessee Chamber Of Commerce. Eddie, welcome.

**Eddie Crittendon:** Hi, thanks for having me, Chad. I've been watching these videos. Glad to be able to join you guys and be a part of it.

**Chad Chancellor:** Yes, well I think you are one of our successes. We've got about 100 executive searches now and you are like no. 3 and you're still there. So, that's good.

**Eddie Crittendon:** I don't know whether that's good or bad. I've been here so long now-- you guys kind of started this in '15 and I came in December of '15. So, I've been here four and a half years.

**Chad Chancellor:** That's right. Well, tell our listeners I know you've had some real successes in McNairy County. It's a small rural county. So, tell us how big it is and some of the successes you all have had.

**Eddie Crittendon:** It is, Chad. It's 26,000 people in the county. There are 11 municipalities in the county. That will give you an idea of there's really only two bigger communities; Adamsville and - of course, everybody out there listening will say Adamsville and then Sumner, Tennessee, but we hit the ground running as soon as we got in here kind of looked and saw what we had as far as the assets we had to sell and what product we had and things like that and started out with a bang.

We had our first announcement right after the beginning of the year. When I got here and started working with our team, I think our unemployment rate was about 10.5 and within a couple of years, the lowest it's gotten to is down about 4.2. So, we did it rather well with that.

We've sold about 10 buildings in the county; a couple of them that I never thought would move, but we were fortunate enough to work out the deals to get those things done, and overall, we've had about a little over 500 old-time job announcements and we've had roughly \$30 million of investment in the county. So, it's going really good over the last four and a half years.

**Chad Chancellor:** And what one of your big deals was it GE that did a big expansion there I remember?

**Eddie Crittendon:** It did. We got GE Monogram, the subsidiary of GE now. Of course the company is Monogram. They were purchased the year before last I think at the end of the year by Haier which is a Chinese company. If you go pretty much into any Sea Store-- not a Sea Store but

a Walmart or place like that, you'll see the little Haier. They are the biggest appliance manufacturers in the world. So, it's been a good acquisition for them and they've put a lot of money in it.

We currently had 124,000 square foot building and we did 124,000 square foot addition to it and hired another 220 people. They are not only making high-end refrigerators. Now, they're making air conditioners; heat and air-- HVAC systems. So, yes. That's doing really well.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, have you run out of buildings now? Do you have a product left? If you sold ten of them, you can't have much left.

**Eddie Crittendon:** We pretty much have, man. We've got some areas that we're looking to purchase. We've got a little bit of land in our industrial park. We just finished up a due diligence study with the State of Tennessee gave us a grant back end of last year. So, that property just got finished. Our next move on that will be site development grant, getting it up and going. It's about 15 acres, but we're a little lacking on properties.

We're like every other community out there. We've got the little buildings and the ones that were the t-shirt shacks-- t-shirt manufacturers back in the day and everybody thinks it's a great building. Why isn't it being sold? Why is it just sitting there falling apart? They don't realize you've got 12 foot roof ceiling in it and they're just not conducive to today's manufacturing world.

We're currently looking at purchasing as I said some property and on top of that, building a spec building. People talk stuff on those things. Whether you build it, don't build it. I personally come from the economic side of it where I want a building. I want to bring somebody to the community. I'm not going to get into the whole virtual thing. I think it's a great thing if somebody wants to take that route and can't afford to build a building.

We've been fortunate with all the projects we've done. We've been able to build up our nest egg pretty good. We're going to be able to leverage some of those homes hopefully to build this building, but thank goodness we spent the last 12 years or so in economic development and have a pretty keen eye on what we need. We're talking about building probably about 75,000-80,000 square feet no lower than 35-foot center height, a lot of floor, just kind of like some of our colleagues did up in Calloway County and some of the other counties. Something to draw people there and get them there. If they don't buy it, maybe they buy the lot across the street.

**Chad Chancellor:** Yes, well I know how much you think of Mark Manning. He gave a talk in a conference we had on how to do a spec building and it was the number 1 rated. After it was over, we sent everybody a survey; which did you enjoy the most and they rated it the best. So, he knows how to build a spec building. He's in Calloway County, Kentucky.

**Eddie Crittendon:** Gorgeous building and that's the thing. Anybody who is watching this podcast, I would encourage-- it gave me some great ideas. I'm not going to go out just build a metal building. It's got to have some look to it. I think in today's day and time, when you see a lot of European investment come over as you've been kind of working hard on, reshoring. We're going to see some of that stuff. Actually, I'd meant to call and tell you we're fixing doing another project with a company and actually, I think two of the products will be reshored product.

**Chad Chancellor:** I'm seeing a lot of it and I don't know how many companies that had plants in China will move them back, but I think a lot of American companies are going to source or contract domestically instead of from China.

**Eddie Crittendon:** I think you're right.

**Chad Chancellor:** Yes, we're already seeing that luckily. So, tell these folks a little about your story. So, I think you're unique especially for rural communities because you were a mayor at one time. You worked at a manufacturing plant. You were even a funeral home director which gives you have a certain way with people, but I think that all adds up to be a good rural economic developer. So, tell these folks your story and kind of what got you into this field.

**Eddie Crittendon:** Yes. I was-- as you said, I started my career in manufacturing supervision. I've worked in industrial plants from south Texas to south Jackson and enjoyed that part of it. I got into the funeral business a little bit and I think that's what gave me my ability to meet people well and talk with folks. If you can talk with somebody in the worst moment of their life, you can talk to a CEO sitting across from a table or in Einbeck, Germany. I got into politics when I was in my early 20s and was fortunate enough to serve mayor as the mayor for five years.

Then the economic development job opened up and I had already kind of been working with our existing folks and really had a calling for it. I loved it. You have to love this job because it's heartbreaking when you lose the projects that was vacated, and I wanted to see what I can do to

put my skills together to try to help grow the community. We were fortunate there. We pretty much sold every building we had there. Unemployment rate was-- in '08 when everything was terrible it shot up to was about 23% and we got it down to 4 at one time.

**Chad Chancellor:** And that was in Fulton. Oh yes, that was in Fulton, Kentucky.

**Eddie Crittendon:** Yes, Fulton, Kentucky. I had actually two counties that I did. I had Fulton County and Hickman County. We were very fortunate. We did well there, served on the regional industrial park board as chairman with you matter of fact one time for just a little while starting your career up that way.

I had actually just one of the biggest success stories we had and that I'm proud of in that small rural community was we were able to land a German company there who came over and they looked at probably about 25 communities in about 7 or 8 states and even looked in a couple of different countries. Kaiser Automotive Systems. Just built a great relationship with them, spent a little time going to Germany, meeting with them, probably went over about three different times and again, as you know and anybody who listens to our story, everything we do in economic development is about relationships and we wound up winning that project, actually having them move their U.S. headquarters to a town of 2600 people and since the time that they've come and they took existing spec building that had been sitting there for about 20 years or better, took that building, retrofitted it and has since bought the building next door and expanded again.

Now, that was a very good success story for Kentucky as well as West Kentucky and the rural parts because you don't really get any more rural than-- you're either rural in West Kentucky when you're down by the Mississippi or you're rural when you're in East Kentucky, but that's kind of way in between you know, of course then when I came down here, I just loved it.

Tennessee is a great place to do business. The Economic Development Cabinet, my governor; they are just top-notch. If you have a project and especially rural communities, they want to put them there as they can. They want to be fair about it. Now, you see what the companies' drivers are, but if they have a chance to develop rural areas, then they do that. That's one thing that I love about the leaders in economic development in the State of Tennessee and our governor. So, they are very proactive.

**Chad Chancellor:** Thank you, Eddie. We're going to take a quick break for a message for our listeners. We'll be right back with a lot more with Eddie Crittendon right after this.

[Music]

**Chad Chancellor:** I want to thank LocationOne-- some folks know it as LOIS-- for sponsoring today's podcast. LocationOne has, in my opinion, the best buildings and sites database in the economic development industry. Now, that coronavirus is here and everything has been disrupted, I've been thinking a lot about it. If I were an economic developer still, what would I do during this time and I know without question I would transition to LOIS and get my buildings and sites as updated as I possibly could so that when we come out of this economic downturn, we're ready to go.

Let me tell you why I like LOIS. It is the most responsive mobile friendly buildings and sites database I have found. It's easy to use. It's just as easy to use on an iPad or iPhone as it is a computer. I was browsing around last week on a state economic development building and site database and the thing it just wouldn't work. It wouldn't work properly. You had to be an engineer to figure it out. It was too much. It had this circle you could draw to look at buildings. The circle wouldn't work when I backed out if I got what square footage I was looking for.

None of that happens with LOIS. This is the best buildings and sites database I have found. I've looked far and wide. It is the most easy to use from a site selection standpoint on any platform. I'm told it's just as easy to use for economic developers. It really walks you through inserting your information and putting it in so the prospects can use it. So, I really encourage you take a look at [locationone.com](http://locationone.com). Use this time while we're down to update your buildings and sites. Transition them to LocationOne. You'll be really happy you did.

[Music]

**Chad Chancellor:** Tell them what you-- two hours east of Memphis?

**Eddie Crittendon:** A little less. We're 85 miles from Memphis. It's all 4-laned traffic either way. We're on the crossroads of 45 and 64. So, basically anybody from Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee to the northern part that has ever went to Destin or Panama City or New Orleans has come through Sumner, Tennessee. So, they are always hitting that 4-way. It's kind of odd you know there are

seven hundred thousand vehicles a month go through that intersection. So, we're sitting in a good spot for transportation for economic development.

But again, we're in McNairy County Tennessee. It's down on the border of Mississippi; Alcorn County. The corner of Mississippi borders us to the south. Anybody really most of the folks out there my age and older are going to associate McNairy County with Beauford, and I tell you just a really quick thing on that. When I came here and you remember of course we had the Chamber of Economic Development and I really looked at the county and the community and said we need a tourism division here. I had some pushback from some of the elected folks. Why do we need a tourism commission here?

And I thought to myself why would you not? You have some of the biggest tourism drawers of anyone around; Big Hill Pond State Park, Beauford brings people in from all over the world, not just the United States. The rockabilly music tradition down here. Elvis Presley and Carl Perkins first met each other in this county and played together and that's a huge thing that they keep going all the time.

So, we started that with the goal of increasing our dollars by about a million bucks and within two-two and a half years, Jessica Huff who is my tourism director and chamber director had just about increased our tourism dollars by \$2 million. And that's clean money. That's money that's coming into the community. We don't have to school their kids and all those things and they come in, they leave that money in McNairy County and they go back home. So, that's why I would encourage that.

**Chad Chancellor:** I know one of the things there. So, you actually run the Chamber. So, you are in one of the combined organizations and I've been seeing your Facebook posts and I know you're also worried about small businesses because they shut down and COVID and everything and so as a small business owner, thank you for worrying about that. I told somebody the other day our business is fine because we don't really have to have an office. We have one, but we're working just as well from home. Some of these poor retailers and restaurants who have to have a physical location, there's probably never been a worse time for them. So, talk about some of the stuff you all are doing to just try to help your businesses who are suffering through this.

**Eddie Crittendon:** Yes. Of course, the main thing was getting information out to everybody with PPP programs and other programs and whatever loan SBA programs that were out there. We stayed on top-- as a matter of fact, when we first started, we spent the first week and a half or so working from home and then I came into the office and basically just locked the door and we worked from here and would meet people by phone and if they'd come in, but really trying to lead people in the right direction depending on what they needed. Whether it was unemployment, if it was help with utilities; just whatever it may be.

On the Chamber side of that, you have to have the heart of the community and the county in your hand and help what you can to help the businesses survive. We've been fortunate-- knock on wood-- I don't think through the COVID shutdown we lost anybody.

As you well know, we had some flooding last week. I was actually out of town on vacation. When you get eight inches of rain for about six hours, you're going to have some flooding issues. So, we did have some retail businesses that got some water in and so we're working on that now and hopefully, all those folks will be able to get back up and going.

Our unemployment rate shot up to about 12.2. I think May numbers and June they started coming back down about 9.2 or so 9.5. So, I'm hoping they're going to drop when the July and August number comes out because most or all the employers we have they are hiring. I always tell everybody most economic developers are probably saying they hear via social media, on the street, oh there are no jobs here. There are no jobs. I always tell everybody I see come by the Chamber office. I'll have you a job by the next day and no later than Monday. It may not be the one you want, but it feeds the family and you've got to take what you can get sometimes.

**Chad Chancellor:** Thank you, Eddie. We're going to take a quick break for a message for our listeners. We'll be right back with a lot more with Eddie Crittendon right after this.

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**Chad Chancellor:** We launched a new initiative called The Movement on June 4 and we have been overwhelmed with the response we have received from it. We have already received about 300% the number of members and revenue that we anticipated. So, thank you to all of our Movement members. If you have not joined The Movement, this week, we came out with a board



training video. It teaches board members why confidentially is important. It teaches board members and elected officials what their proper roles are in economic development and quite frankly, what their roles are not; ways that they can mess the economic development process. It teaches them why economic development is important, what a primary job is, what's the difference in economic development and economic activity and it should give them a better appreciation of the jobs economic developers do. So, that's just one video. We've got about 20 in there. We put two new videos out a month and two new podcasts out a month. So, if you're interested in joining our monthly membership program, go to [bethemovement.us](http://bethemovement.us). If you want to just buy one video at a time, let's say you're interested in that board training video, go to [nextmoveondemand.com](http://nextmoveondemand.com). You can find it there. We'd sure love to have you join our Movement and we've created by joining The Movement.

[Music]

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, as we wind down, you like me are a big St. Louis Cardinals fan.

**Eddie Crittendon:** Oh, yes.

**Chad Chancellor:** I know you've also umpired some baseball in the past. We're scheduled to start July 24 I think now that COVID's gone, you think they're going to play? Do you think they're going to end up putting it off again?

**Eddie Crittendon:** I hope they don't put it off. I'd like to see them play, but tickets are hard to get. It's the only place you can get them, but I'll be up there. Luckily, as you know I can fly to Jackson here-- Jackson, Tennessee you can fly over McKeller-Sipes and ride into Saint Louis and of course, now they've got flights going to Destin and some other stuff.

**Chad Chancellor:** I didn't know that. Well, that is handy.

**Eddie Crittendon:** It is handy. I think it's Air Choice One and I can get down there and park, go right in, walk out and get on the plane and an hour and twenty minutes, I'm in Saint Louis.

**Chad Chancellor:** Does it land you at the big airport or over on the Illinois-- that little airport?

**Eddie Crittendon:** It does at Lambert, but you know you catch Uber ten bucks down to the stadium or you can take the train right to Dallas, but I'm excited. I was really excited about this

team they started putting together then this COVID thing hit. The only thing I hated yesterday was I wished I was a football player and I saw my home has got 400 million. I thought gosh, I wish I could-- I'm a big old guy, but I don't think I can block either of those big old guys on the line. Pay me 5 million; I would be the water boy.

**Chad Chancellor:** That's right. Well, Eddie, thank you for being with us. Anything that you want to share with our audience I didn't ask you about?

**Eddie Crittendon:** No, man. Just really and I've known you and Alex and you guys and starting Next Move Group. You guys have done phenomenal. Your passion is there. You work with these small communities and try to bring in the best folks that they can and I would just encourage any of the economic developers especially younger guys, new guys getting into it, new ladies; we're seeing a lot of ladies getting into the profession now. Thank goodness they provide a different perspective on things.

When I started, there were four counties around us where we had everybody started within about a month of each other. So, we were all green and new. So reach out to your neighbors. If you've got somebody who's a seasoned economic development person, reach out to them. They're going to help you. I've had economic developers that we've competed on projects and we've presented to companies in the same room together. That's the trust factor we had, but if one got cut and the other one didn't or you both got cut or you both were still in and that's when you put the gloves on back up and fight for your community.

But I just would say making relationships man. It's like working with your guys. Everything you do in economic development is about relationships. If you take the road of making bad relationships, it's going to bite you. If you take the road of really making good choices and being a good steward for your community that you're in and working with your state and TVA who powers us. They're great partners in economic development down here and then folks like you. You guys are a multifaceted entity whether its site selection or executive searches and things like that.

So, having relationships with folks like you and your small companies is just as important as working with your national brand site consultant firms because a lot of you are going to get to look at the same things. And if you're looking to move to a different community, you might be moving

up the chain a little bit, getting just a little bit bigger community, you need to kind of pay attention to what firms like the Next Move Group is doing and different SEDC and things like that.

**Chad Chancellor:** Yes, you're right.

**Eddie Crittendon:** I appreciate you guys.

**Chad Chancellor:** And one thing Eddie didn't tell you, I used to be an economic developer. He beat me on that Kayser project in Fulton. So, that just goes to show you can compete and still be friends.

**Eddie Crittendon:** And the funny thing is and I'll add this to it in case there are some folks out there who are new into the business and think they can't win, again, I was a town of 2600 people and a county of-- I've been here for one and a half years now. It's hard for me to remember-- 7500 people competing against a community of a couple hundred thousand in that area.

**Chad Chancellor:** If you look at the metro, your county is 80,000. So, if you look at the metro--

**Eddie Crittendon:** And with every interstate you could think of and railroad and everything running through it, but that was one of the things. It wasn't what you did wrong. I hope it was what we did it right and that was building that relationship with the owners and the ones with the company.

**Chad Chancellor:** All right. Well, Eddie, thank you for spending a few minutes with us today.

**Eddie Crittendon:** Yes, man. I enjoyed it. I look forward to seeing you guys again next event. Good luck.

**Chad Chancellor:** Thank you, Sir.

[Music]