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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: Hello. This is Chad Chancellor with Next Move Group. Before we begin today's podcast, if you've been enjoying our podcast series, please go over to Apple Podcasts. Leave us a five-star review there. That'll sure help us out. We'd appreciate it a whole lot.

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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 Joe Melvin with us. He's the Director of Business Development for North Carolina Southeast. Joe, welcome.

Joe Melvin: Thank you, Chad. I appreciate you having me on your podcast today.

Chad Chancellor: Well, I hope you all can understand Joe today with his deeply southern accent. I told him I don't know if I ever had anybody on my show talks as southern as him and so I just hope that you all have somehow-- our listeners have somehow been trained to be able to hear southern and decode that into a normal language.

Joe Melvin: I'll do my best and if not we'll have a transcript, Chad. Hopefully, it's not in hieroglyphics.

Chad Chancellor: I just told Joe I didn't know folks in southeast North Carolina sounded like they were from Mississippi, Louisiana, but I guess they do. Joe, why don't we start out with telling these folks kind of what the region is that you work there for North Carolina Southeast?

Joe Melvin: Yes, Chad. North Carolina Southeast we're a regional economic development partnership. For many years, we were only 11 counties. We've grown over the last five or six years. We're now 18 counties so we represent 18% of the State of North Carolina. So, geographically as you move east from Charlotte all the way to the coast-- I know you said you had been to Wilmington, one of our fine port cities there-- pushing through Pinehurst. I know you're a golfer. We'll have to get you here maybe get you on no. 4, maybe no. 2 to play and then pushes through Fayetteville and then right on out to Newborn. So, a very large, very diverse region. Hopefully, we'll get a chance to talk about that. I love our 18 counties.

Chad Chancellor: Yes, we're doing an executive search right now in Fayetteville and I've toured the GE plant in Wilmington and had a great-- I actually was there right before the hurricane was coming. So, I was like one of the last nights before everybody had to rush out of town and I think it made everybody have even a better time, Joe because they figured this was it.

Joe Melvin: The end might be coming, but hopefully, all our folks treated you extremely well, Chad.

Chad Chancellor: Yes, yes. I really enjoyed it. So, talk about really how you go about marketing your rural counties. So, it's probably not that hard to market a Wilmington, for instance, but I know you all have got some rural counties in there. So, talk about your efforts to market those.

Joe Melvin: Yes, we do. We have, both of them that you mentioned. Fayetteville and Wilmington are our two large MSAs-- metro areas, but 11 of our 18 counties are actually designated tier 1 or economically distressed here in North Carolina. We have an expression that we dress all the children in same chair. So, we treat those rural-- and I know you're a big fan of rural America and promoting those. They are often quite the hidden gems with a labor force that is there, generally a little bit more aggressive on incentives. They got good property to recommend and to market for those guys and quite honestly, they are hungry for a lot of different types of deals. They look for some of the smaller ones and then really be able to work those things well. We're able actually to blend those nicely because they obviously border the MSAs and so they play off with that for a workforce and they are an excellent source of transportation arteries also.

Chad Chancellor: Well, I spent some time two or three weeks ago going through Indiana, Illinois, and a little bit of Iowa and meeting with manufacturers what were all looking to expand. None of them we're talking relocation. They all needed to add capacity and they all told me they wanted to be in a small to mid-sized town and so I think that COVID has exposed that the big cities maybe have more problems with that and so I think there's going to be a whole effort especially as things get reshored. I've told people I think this is a Super Bowl for the rural towns now because they've been hollering for years nobody look at us. Now, I think there are going to be people who want to look at them.

Joe Melvin: Well, I agree with you, Chad. It's what I call sort of a ruralization potentially of some industries and some things. Generally, tax base is a little bit lower-- tax rates are a little bit lower as you move out of some of those urban areas. I agree with you 100%. I mean this could be rural America's time to shine. We got a lot of them and they are hungry to get out and do some things and be receptive. We're out pounding the pavements in a lot of different ways even through COVID to make sure that they may be small in size and not as robust economically, but they've got some pretty strong value propositions also.

Chad Chancellor: Why don't you talk about some of the recent wins you all have had there?

Joe Melvin: Over the last six years-- I'll start there then I'll hit the last year when we transitioned to our public-private partnership model. We've done a little over 5400 jobs, \$1.1 billion with a B, 38 locations. Last year was a pretty good year for us, so we're 740 jobs, 128 million in Capex, and six company locations; three of those actually being international companies. So, a nice little diversity of aerospace, food, plastics, distribution and logistics. So, a pretty solid year for the Southeast.

Chad Chancellor: So, six years ago you say you transitioned to a public-private partnership?

Joe Melvin: Yes. We were a state commission-- kind of an entity of the State and we got funding and had a couple of private investors and the State of North Carolina decided they weren't going to fund the seven partnerships anymore. To steal a line from Shawshank Redemption, you can get busy living or get busy dying and so we contracted with a firm to help us do some private fundraising which we were very successful at and so now, we are 60% privately-funded through about 28 private investors and then our member counties also participate in our organization.

So, we really like this model actually better. So, you're not waiting on the legislature to decide whether or not you're going to eat tomorrow and the other thing is when we go out to companies and they understand that we operate like a private business because that's the bulk of what we are, it resonates with them differently, Chad. That we're here not just trying to get the state numbers even though we partner with them, but we think like you think and the bottom line is how do you grow, how do you become as effective, and how do you make money.

Chad Chancellor: Well, we're going to have a lot of listeners jealous of that who are dealing with only the public sector. I know you all launched a new website this week, so tell these folks what the website is and what all went into that. I just saw it today before we logged on.

Joe Melvin: Yes. We were fortunate. It's been way longer than I'd like to say. We've revamped our website. We've been patching it up some, but today, we launched our new website ncse.org. We went into it with a goal in mind and that is to be dynamic and so we looked at some other folks' websites, we took bits and pieces of that, but what we really wanted to do is because you are trying to market such a wide eclectic diverse region, how do we build on those assets?

So, we took one entire week to go and take existing industry photos, quality of life photos, anything that was an asset of our region. We incorporated that using GIS planning. That's a permanent piece of what we have. A lot more infographics and just getting away from all that text. And so we really believe that it's pretty user-friendly, a two-click model type of website. Maybe it's award-winning at some point, but we want to make it extremely interactive and engage with the clients with whom we're working and we've received several very nice comments already today since it rolled out this morning at 9.

Chad Chancellor: Well, I'll tell you you hit the nail on the head. People don't like text anymore. They want videos and podcasts and all this kind of stuff.

Joe Melvin: Yes, and you're doing a great job with that. So, we're going to integrate some more videos and some different things in there. It's about-- we're always trying to stay on the tip of spear, Chad. I know everybody talks about that. It takes some money. It takes some time, a whole lot of planning and effort. It is the global face and back to your point about our rural counties, many of them don't have huge budgets as you know to be able to go out and travel and to get face-to-face in front of companies. So, they're saying okay, your website is my global footprint for marketing. So, we're always keeping that in mind. Our local developers participate in the process and we're here because of them and what they need.

Chad Chancellor: Well, let's just take that straight in to I know you all are doing some virtual marketing. So, why don't you talk about your virtual marketing efforts and how you go about generating leads?

Joe Melvin: Yes. So, with COVID here and obviously airplane travel stopped and we all love to get in front of people, I was getting on some webinars and talking with some site consultants and I kept hearing the phrase virtual site visits. One afternoon, I was sitting around pondering life and I said the virtual site visit is a good component of it, but what if we broaden that out to virtual market? What if we thought about different ways not only just to the medium by which we talk with somebody being different virtually as compared to face-to-face? What if we market properties differently? What if our slide deck and our message is different? What if we begin to think about the use of technology, not just Zoom or Google meets and all of that?

So, we went to our counties and said how do you want your properties marketed differently via the use of technology? And so they came back with some ideas and we interviewed a lot of people with a lot of different thoughts on how that technology ought to work and so we're getting ready to integrate that within the next two weeks and use interactive mapping. We already have drone videos, but drone videos with 2D and 3D conceptual renderings on top of that.

We decided that if we can't travel, we want to have a perpetual lead generation virtual marketing campaign. A lot of that is working with Bruce Takefman and Research FDI and has really helped us kind of shape that concept just a little bit and so we are already into our first round of meetings and just got finished programming a budget that will hopefully put new opportunities on the table to a continuous basis as compared to just make a recruiting mission this month, wait three months or waiting for the phone to ring and other opportunities to come in. So, our virtual marketing will gel nicely with our website we think and give us a different virtual footprint and we'll use virtual marketing as the vetting tool and then we'll go see.

Chad Chancellor: Thank you, Joe. We're going to take a quick break for a message for our listeners and be right back with a lot more with Joe Melvin 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. 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: Well, I tell you I think you're right on the cutting edge and you're talking my language now. I like all this marketing stuff and we think Bruce is the best at lead generation, but I was in a seminar. Goldman Sachs picked us a few years ago for this small business boot camp program they do and we were in a seminar and they told me something that went off in my mind. They said this was in 2017, so three years ago. They said within five or six years, YouTube will replace Google. You'll go to YouTube when your air conditioner breaks rather than Google because you're going to want to watch a video of how to fix it. You're not going to want to read it and the little country boy from Mississippi, that made sense to me so we've been getting in all this YouTube and our business has more than doubled and so I think that's just a prime example. I love the fact that economic developers are thinking that way because you can do so much with this technology. I think COVID has made people use the technology, so you might as well take now what we're learning from it and really compound it.

Joe Melvin: I agree with that, Chad. It gave us time to think. We were so busy out beating the bushes, getting on airplanes, trying to get in front of people then it really calls us to stop and pause and think okay, we've got to adjust. And I tell people if you want normal, don't look back. Look forward because we're not going back to where we were and that's a good thing as economic developers, as professionals, but the beauty is that we get to define what that normal is moving forward and so our whole part is how do we create and engage the experience and being able to look people in the face as we have this in the platform, but I think also as importantly, can we set the construct that all our future meetings will be face-to-face be at that platform as well because I always tell people getting in the door the first time is not the first time that hard. It's that second point of contact that has to struggle.

Chad Chancellor: Right. We'll having a region that big, how do you all keep your partners engaged? How do you all leverage resources and so forth?

Joe Melvin: If we're not with a client, we're probably in a car going out and trying to understand what's going on in our counties. Our goal has always been to know their property and know their assets as well as them, Chad so that when that call comes in, I've got a couple of properties on my mind already of that community that would fit nicely. The other thing we do is when we develop any of our strategy, if all 18 of our local developers don't sign off on it then we don't do it.

So, as we traveled when we used to go to trade shows and went on recruiting missions, we had them participate with us to go out there and turn over those rocks around the country and be able to tell their story and what their value proposition is or go to meet with site consultants across the country and then like in our building and sites database, we're able to pass that along to them. So, that's a seamless representation of their properties and it's just making sure that as I said that everyone gets treated equally. Some have more products, some have more assets, but what folks want to know and we strive really hard over 26 years now that our organization has been in place is to make sure that everybody's voice is heard, that they've got representation and leadership of that group and that they say hey, we need to chase this or we need to take this strategic path, we're always at their lead.

Chad Chancellor: Let's transition now more into your story. So, I know you're a certified economic developer. So, you not only want to do this, you've got a passion behind it. Anybody that goes and receives that certification I say they've got a real passion behind them. So, how did you find this business?

Joe Melvin: Just like everybody else, Chad. You grow up wanting to be an economic developer, right? I had done some other stuff. I've been very blessed. I had state-wide and regional jobs all my life and I was working with the North Carolina Department of Transportation overseeing a state-wide rural landfill program and as part of that is direct contact with employers and so I was doing that in Raleigh and then one of my good friends is one of the local developers in our county called me up early December 2007. He said you're still interested in getting in economic development? I said sure.

He said listen, it will be the coolest job you've ever had in your life. Now, the turnover was about every three years in economic development at that time. You might not be there long, but I promise you you will enjoy it and so I said hey, why not? So, I left Raleigh, took a 25% pay cut, and came into the world of economic development.

When you talk about passion, yes. If I go to the grave, I want people to say the guy was passionate about what he did and truly, I've gotten up for twelve and a half years and come to this office. I've gotten on an airplane or done whatever and it has been the coolest job in the world because everything that you touch, somebody made and you get to say wow! I met the company that does that and that's a pretty cool deal.

And being able to get that certification was something I aspired to and I know having had that for a couple of years now, that's a badge of honor for me. I'm really proud and the organization has supported me in doing that and it has sort of a small group of people respectively speaking and God, that was a hard test to get past.

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

[Music]

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 confidentiality 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. 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. You can find it there. We'd sure love to have you join our Movement that we've created by joining the Movement.

[Music]

Chad Chancellor: Well, what advice would you give maybe up-and-coming economic developers? What have you learned in these years that you wish you had known your first year that you had to learn the hard way?

Joe Melvin: Well, one thing I will tell them is one phrase that I use now even with companies, Chad and that is if the deal doesn't work for everybody, it doesn't work for anybody and so be prepared that eight or nine out of ten people will tell you no, but that's okay because it's not personal. It's just business and there is no end cap shopping. It is the proverbial marathon, not sprint and so just stay focused.

And the other thing that I learned that I had a buddy of mine a guy named Russ Rogerson. He's up in Morgantown, West Virginia right now. He was in Charlotte region. He said listen more. Don't get so busy selling everything that you have in your bag that you never qualified the personal or even thought if it was even significant to them. And we're catching a flight back from California one night and talking all the way back across the country about how do you just listen? You should be talking a third of the time, but asking those probing questions to get that information from folks.

The other thing that I would tell them is it is about follow-up. Even when they don't pick up that phone, even when they don't respond to that email, politely just still continue to nudge that thing forward and so if you continue to do that, I mean folks, understand your earnestness and you put yourself and say listen, as I had said earlier, it's really about helping your company grow and be successful and if we're not the right area for you and some economic developers think we should win every project, be in the hunt for everything; no. Know what your strengths are, know what you need to target, don't chase everything or you're going to go down a lot of rabbit holes.

Chad Chancellor: Your tip about follow-up I think is very smart. We just last week-- about once a quarter, our staff will do a little training. We will bring in an outside person and last week, we were talking about it and just general business sales which for economic developers is harder than

just a normal business making a sale. It takes eight follow-ups from the study we did last week. It takes eight different follow-ups. So, I find a lot of economic developers may give up after no. 2 and no.3 and you just got to remember nowadays, we've got so much noise coming at us at all times. If you ever visit my house, you'll see I've got four TVs for Saturday's and college football. I don't know if I get to turn them on or not this year. I'm watching four games at a time. You got so much noise coming at you that you can't be afraid to be persistent.

Joe Melvin: You've got to, but understanding that those companies aren't in the business of economic development. So, you've got to flex on their schedule. Hit them with what's appropriate at that time. Give them the opportunity to do some things when they have some downtime, but you can't jam that down their throats because they've got employees to worry about. They're worried about their product or service often at that moment. I think that's been more prevalent than ever during the time of COVID, Chad, and try to be respectful of that by continuing to show them hey, we really want you here and we really want to find the ideal situation that's going to help grow your company. And I agree about the college football thing. I'm all in as Carolina getting Mack Brown back. We were finally starting to get excited about something and we may not be able to get to Kenan Stadium this year.

Chad Chancellor: Yes. Unfortunately, I lost some money on you all last year the first game of the year against South Carolina. They were like a 10-point favorite, but you all came out and beat them. I remember that was not on one of my four TVs that particular Saturday.

Joe Melvin: I'm surprised I'm on this call.

Chad Chancellor: That's all right. I root for North Carolina in basketball. It drives my Kentucky fans crazy and I was at that game in Memphis, Elite 8 when North Carolina beat Kentucky on that last Luke Maye I think was his name.

Joe Melvin: Yes, Luke Maye.

Chad Chancellor: Yes, I was sitting there amongst all the Kentucky fans quietly rooting for North Carolina. I didn't have on any particular color because I'm a Mississippi State person. Joe, as we wind down, is there anything you'd like to share with our listeners I might not have asked you about?

Joe Melvin: I just want to say it's folks like you guys, Chad, that are really out there giving economic developers the opportunity to talk about what they do. The other thing I will share is just continue to network with folks even if it's your peers when you go to IEDC or wherever, keep in constant contact with those site selectors. We're doing a series of webinars. They are so available right now like they've never been before, but also don't be afraid right now to reinvent yourself as an organization, to get aggressive. I tell people don't think outside the box. Throw the box away and just think because if the box is there, you might be tempted to hop back in it.

Chad Chancellor: I like that. I never heard that before. I'm going to steal that.

Joe Melvin: Just send me the royalties. That's all I ask. Thinking differently; you don't have to be like anybody else because you're unique in either your region or your county or whatever, but just think about ways that you can tell your story best whether it's via the use of technology or whatever, but don't fail to leverage your partners. Many of our folks are investors in this organization, that they support us only financially, but through knowledge and traveling and going places. It all about leveraging your counties, your partners, your workforce; all those types of things and so, economic development as you well know, Chad, is a team sport and so don't leave anybody on the sidelines who wants to be in the game.

Chad Chancellor: Joe, as we close out, give these folks your website one more time. It was literally launched this week, so it's best in class with all the bells and whistles.

Joe Melvin: I appreciate that. We actually launched this morning. North Carolina Southeast www.ncse.org.

Chad Chancellor: All right. Joe, thank you for being with us today.

Joe Melvin: All right, Chad. Thank you very much.

[Music]

Chad Chancellor: Next Move Group has launched a new initiative designed to both grow the American economy and improve the quality of lives of economic developers. So, we're going to grow the American economy in multiple ways. We've got all kinds of different ways to really help economic development organizations be more successful including helping them bring back jobs

from overseas and China, reshoring that production into the United States and we're going to help economic developers improve their quality of lives.

So, you always hear this; the economic developer's job is to improve the quality of life of everybody in their community. Well, whose job is it to improve that economic developer's quality of life? At Next Move Group, we're taking that task on for ourselves. So, to learn more about the movement that we're creating go to thenextmovegroup.com/movement.

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