

I was looking back at the December 2012 article I wrote for the RGJ and the first paragraph said, “As we head into the holiday season it is sobering to consider that more than 25,000 of our neighbors, family members and friends are still, yes, **still** unemployed five years into this recession. If we don’t do something as a community to more aggressively attract, retain/expand and grow the quality jobs we so desperately need, these families will face another sad Christmas in 2013, 2014 and beyond.”

So where are we now? According to the state data, we have added more than 30,000 jobs since January 2012 and cut our unemployed from 27,214 to just 10,411. That puts us at a 4.5% unemployment rate, well below the state and national average. Area Development Magazine recently ranked Reno-Sparks as the **number one** mid-size city in the nation of the 100 leading site locations for 2016. In September SYNEVA Economics reported that the **Reno metro ranked 12th** among the 387 metros in the nation for its employment growth rate, up from 331 in 2012. This year alone, there are more than a dozen other positive national media stories about our dramatic recovery and the “New” Reno-Sparks. So how did we come so far - so fast?

Some people attribute our good fortunes to the national recovery or the Tesla announcement. While both have helped, the Tesla deal happened a little more than two years ago, after more than 70 new companies were already attracted to the area and after three years of aggressive marketing of the region as a great place for business and manufacturing. I believe we have experienced this remarkable transition because five years ago **we were ready for change**: a change from the long nagging recession and high unemployment; a change from the brand as portrayed by the New York Times, “*of worn-out casinos, strip clubs and quick divorces*”; and a change from a place that seemed to put little value on education. The days of low unemployment and a vibrant economy, linked in large part to gaming and construction, had ended. We were ready to work together to recover and reinvent our economy. When asked, “How did this happen,” my response highlights three things, teamwork, attitude and the investment in accountable economic development.

Teamwork Is the key: While EDAWN is looked at as the leader in our regional economic development efforts, anyone that has been to a new company announcement knows that it is the larger community team that gets the job done. As a small non-profit, we depend on you, the community, for support and involvement in promoting and selling the region. It is the success of this team effort, with partners from all levels of our government, our many educational partners, the real estate brokers and developers, and countless other supporters, especially those that invest in EDAWN, that make us an unbeatable team.

Get it done attitude: Teamwork is important, but when you couple that with a “make it happen” attitude you have a real winning combination. Our government partners, from the Governor and his staff on down, respond quickly, in a professional and welcoming manner which helps companies believe that we really do want them to invest in our region and are supportive and friendly to business. The clients we see from California are blown away by our positive pro-business attitude. We also depend upon our education partners at UNR, TMCC and WCCCD to understand the needs of these incoming companies and demonstrate a real willingness to adjust to the needs of these employers. Many deals are won as a result of their efforts.

Economic Development Plan: The community’s economic development plan to revitalize our economy was developed collectively with our partners and focused on the three legs of economic development, attraction, retention/expansion and entrepreneurial development. Our initial focus was on attracting

mid-size manufacturing, logistics and technology companies. We worked very hard to market the region to prospects as we pushed our new brand as an “up and coming” manufacturing hub, “a place for entrepreneurs with a life” and an emerging “college town”. With aggressive goals, solid metrics and total buy in by the board, staff and community; we collectively have accomplished so much and have a very bright future ahead of us.

So thanks to you - We have come a long way in the past five years, but we are far from being done in this revitalization and reinvention effort. There are still significant challenges and incredible opportunities ahead of us. However, if we continue to work together, keep a positive attitude and support and engage in our collective economic development efforts, we will remain on this path to becoming a truly “great” community. In this holiday season, I can think of no greater gift to give to the next generation, our kids and grandkids, than this! Happy Holidays!