

Commentary

Job-creators share ideas for region, nation



PUBLISHER'S PICK
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Out of the corner of my left eye, I saw Jane Belau scribbling notes on the paper name tag she had decided not to wear. If I were Jane, why would I wear a sticky name tag? Her hallmark over-sized eye wear and signature bold, beaded necklaces announce to everyone within 50 feet that they are about to greet Rochester's tour-de-force cable news interviewer.

Noting that the name tag was an insufficient surface for note-taking, I attempted to slip a small sheet of notepaper to Jane. Quietly, it was brushed away. When she had finished, Jane slipped the name tag-note back to me along with my borrowed pen.

The two of us were sitting at a table of eight folks representing various local businesses, banking and other organizations. Oh, I dunno, maybe there were 80 to 100 of us attending a special Tuesday morning breakfast meeting hosted by the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation. This was one of a regular series of don't-miss informative events featuring an outside business expert complimented by a local panel of knowledgeable folks.

Can Washington do anything to create jobs?

If there's a single top-of-mind subject greater than local job creation, I don't know what it would be. Emotions run the gamut from a positive-sounding, "Well, at least, southeast Minnesota is faring much better than the state and nationally," to the nearly visible hand-wringing anxiety of "How much longer before we're back to normal?" Increasingly, the question "Is this the new normal?" is articulated around local kitchen and boardroom tables.

The outside expert at the breakfast meeting was Doug Loon, Vice President, Regional Affairs and Advocacy, U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Loon was here to speak broadly about the national jobs agenda and what Congress must do, now back in Washington after, in my opinion, an irresponsible August-long break following the debt ceiling and deficit-reduction agreement.

It is impossible to detail in this column Loon's entire message to the stakeholders in attendance. The U. S. Chamber of Commerce has crafted and delivered an Open

Letter to Congress and President Obama, outlining six steps to create jobs nationally:

- Expand trade and global commerce to save jobs and grow thousands more
- Produce more American energy from a wide inventory of national resources
- Speed up highway, water and energy infrastructure building projects
- Welcome tourists and business visitors with aggressive promotion and visa reform
- Speed up the permitting process for business expansion
- Pass tax incentives that create jobs while increasing revenues.

For more details on this plan to put Americans back to work and create millions of new jobs, I direct your attention the U.S. Chamber website on this subject, www.uschamber.com/jobs.

Bringing it home

Following Loon's remarks, a panel of three local personalities briefed attendees on their particular business situation and recommendations for economic recovery and job creation. Among the three panelists were:

- **David W. Ring**, Community Relations Coordinator, Kwik Trip, Inc., who gave a brief insight to

the family-owned corporation and its values. Dave then spoke about Kwik Trip's positive working relationship with Rochester City Council in attempting to adjust the city's tree ordinance as Kwik Trip moves forward in its plan to build a new facility that will add jobs and revenues to the local economy.

- **Elaine J. Garry**, President/CEO of People's Cooperative Services, observing its 75th year in providing member-owned electric power serving all of the rural areas surrounding Rochester. Elaine articulated as her main concern the rising cost of energy and promoting the use of the least-expensive and reliable energy alternatives as way to save jobs and encourage business investment.

- **Brent Buchan**, owner, Energy Products & Design, Inc., founded in 1978 as a full-service fireplace and hearth retailer and contractor. The last of the three panelists to speak, Brent specifically spoke about the challenges of the local small business contractor who has been hard-hit by the lack of consumer confidence and slowdown in residential building, causing a significant job reduction in his company. He added deep concern about the cost of government regulations and upcoming healthcare mandates.

The name tag note that Jane passed to me revealed that Brent

was signified a few years ago as a rising business star, one of the Post-Bulletin's "Top 10 under 40" in the Southeast Minnesota Business Journal. In hearing his remarks, Brent clearly has a clean grasp on the changes it will take to hang in there, to survive in the current regulatory and economic climate.

Where jobs are working

My mid-day eat-to-meet yesterday was the 17th Annual PossAbilities Employer Recognition & Awards Luncheon. The downtown Marriott's grand ballroom was tables chock-a-block, filled with employers, people with disabilities, their families and friends, and interested business people like me.

More than 100 employers of people with disabilities were acknowledged in the printed program, an astounding number to me. John Flanders, PossAbilities executive director, noted quite wisely that a community that discovers what it cares about is a powerful community. Providing jobs to those who might never find useful employment — especially at a time when jobs are scarce — speaks to the power of Rochester's business community.

Randy Chapman is publisher of the Post-Bulletin. He welcomes feedback to his column at rchapman@postbulletin.com

UMR's library embraces virtual model of access

By Mary Beth Sancomb-Moran

In the Oct. 7 editorial on UM President Eric Kaler's visit I read that, "Laptops are the preferred information-delivery devices, and the campus doesn't even have a library — at least one filled with books."

The fact that the library at UMR is largely bookless is a decision we made deliberately and is a growing trend in academic libraries.

UMR has a library. And like much of what UMR is doing, it looks different from the traditional model. The library is primarily virtual, in that it provides access to information that is not physically stored on the UMR campus. UMR has access to the full physical

collection of the libraries at the UM-Twin Cities campus, which means that UMR students, faculty, and staff can have a book in their hands in a couple of days, should they request one.



Sancomb-Moran

The UMR model is a direction in which many academic libraries are starting to move; the new Stanford University Engineering Library was recently opened, and the lion's share of their physical resources are stored off-site. Digitization of books, online access to academic publications,

and the Internet itself have changed the face of academic libraries.

Our students are primarily doing their research online, especially in areas like Biomedical Informatics and Computational Biology (BICB). This area of study is so new the information changes almost daily. (By the time you wrote a book on BICB and got it to me in the library, it would be out of date.) The most current information on this cutting-edge research can be found in academic journals — which are available online through the university's massive collection of electronic resources.

A library is no longer simply a warehouse for books. It's not about the ownership, it's about the access. And librarians are more necessary than ever before in this increasingly digital world. Being able to grab information from the vastness of the Internet requires a new set of skills, and those information literacy skills are being taught to students at UMR, to equip them to be able to critically evaluate information and sources.

To quote an old saying, don't judge a book by its cover.

Mary Beth Sancomb-Moran is librarian at the University of Minnesota Rochester.

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