



**Next Move Group**  
We Are Jobs Podcast  
With Special Guest: Adam Knapp

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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 Adam Knapp with us. Adam is the CEO of the Baton Rouge Area Chamber of Commerce down here in Louisiana. We affectionately call it BRAC in this parts of the world and not only is it a Chamber of Commerce for the Baton Rouge Area, but it's also a regional economic development organization. So, Adam,

I know you all are doing a great job with your COVID recovery plans, but also still having success in other areas. So, thank you for being with us today and sharing a little with us.

**Adam Knapp:** It's an honor to be invited. Thanks for having me.

**Chad Chancellor:** Why don't we start with you sort of telling these folks how big of a region you cover, how big your EDO is, and then talk about maybe things you're having to do differently now than normal because of the COVID situation.

**Adam Knapp:** Sure. We're-- like you said, we're a regional economic development organization. We cover a nine-parish region. We call them parishes just to be different Louisiana. These are counties. Our population in metro Baton Rouge is a little over 800,000; about 830,000 people and we have a coordination with local economic development partners in each parish throughout the region. It's been quite well-knit-- tightly knit over the last decade or so.

We've been doing this regional econ development work in this manner of coordination and cooperation and I'd say it's actually been more important than we realized to have a really tight relationship across our region. That is a lot of trust and regular communication that's been in place.

If anything, we've amped that up even more to be in regular coordination with each other as partners. That has allowed us as a region I think to make sure that we're communicating in close to real-time to all of those areas of our region that are trying to help restart their economy and each parish has a little bit different feel and so that regional partnership has helped us quite a lot.

Just to give you a sense of it, at the start of the year, of course, we launched our economic development plans for this year with our board of directors. Well, after COVID started to hit, the State put down a lockdown in mid-March. We moved to shut down all of our existing plans for the year. We laid out with our board a five-point plan of operation for the COVID period which we put out our press release in late March and our team has been awesome. They have kicking butt to focus on those five priorities and largely, that has driven everything we've done as a framework since whenever that was-- late March when we moved in that direction.

And that's the exact model-- we've looked at a lot of peers around the country-- that model of giving a real solid clarity to your staff has been I think extraordinarily helpful to keep us

coordinated. Now, that means we really stopped everything that we had planned and that meant our staff had to be very nimble and agile to be able to switch over to all these new responsibilities.

But that has been our focus since COVID-19 is to be highly focused on those things that businesses need right now from a week by week what they need in terms of information, coordination, response, advocacy for state-level or local-level things or even federal level changes. We played a big role in each of those levels in trying to just hear them their concerns and then respond to those concerns with the actions at the state and federal level. So, it's been a wild ride over the last few weeks, to say the least.

**Chad Chancellor:** Talk about what you're doing with the PPE market place. I think it's just incredible what you all are doing; helping get PPE out to businesses and it could be something that other economic developers or chambers learn from. So, just talk us through that whole process.

**Adam Knapp:** Yes. We're no different than anywhere. We did a few things right after COVID 19 started to help get PPE primarily for our healthcare community. We work with something called the Baton Rouge Health District which in normal times is our way to do targeted marketing to build the bioscience sector in the Baton Rouge metro market.

Right now, what the Health District staff has been doing is to help work with us to get donations of PPE for hospitals. That was our early approach. Through that, we ended up getting a lot of great PPE information about suppliers and supplier access we could tap into around the country and around Louisiana. From that, we were able to actually then set up what we just launched is the market place where businesses can get our website [brac.org](http://brac.org) and they can go to our recovery page and then click through to an online purchasing link to buy all of the different types of PPE that they need.

Our goal was to create a cooperative purchasing agreement where we can keep our prices down, but try to expand the number of customers and the amount of business that is available through a single supplier and that has helped us with our supply chain partners that we've found through this whole process to get better prices we think and better accessibility; the two big challenges that are out there today.

We've done with a business that's here in Baton Rouge; a wholesaler called Lyons Specialty. It has been a great partner to us since, but they said we'll set up the purchasing. We'll take care of the logistics and distribution if you all just help us get customers. So, it's been a nice partnership for us that went live and is now-- we're seeing somewhere between 70 and 100 businesses over the last few days that have taken up PPE every day which is pretty cool. I think that's an important part of this reopening is making sure that the employers that you want to be open and you want them to do so safely to make sure they have access to the supplies to do it.

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

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**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.

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**Chad Chancellor:** I really appreciate that effort. As you know, I live in New Orleans and Orleans and Jefferson Parish have been hit hard. My brother is a nurse practitioner. The vice president of our company's wife is a nurse and so I never dreamt two months ago that we'd have problems getting PPE, but it is a problem and so thinking about economic development organizations stepping out to help their businesses and healthcare workers in this regard when we really probably never heard of PPE three months ago. We would have wondered what it stood for.

**Adam Knapp:** I guarantee I would have thought it was something from higher education or FEMA. I'd have to make up what that name was, but I think it also points-- and I've been so amazed at what chambers and economic development groups across America are doing to be nimble and to be oriented with a bias towards action and finding creative ways to meet the needs. Every day and every week it's different and they have been doing this across America.

It's been-- for me, an inspiring part of this recovery is to see how creative different groups are being and that has really driven us to try and make sure we're doing the same. How creative can we be as a community to serve the needs of our businesses who are trying to get as many people back to work as possible and try to save their companies in many cases.

So, these little things; trying to get PPE to people, trying to-- another project we're doing is trying to help make sure that there is an extended access to child care every week and that's what employers are telling us they need us to work on. We're tackling those kinds of things that we would have never worried about being involved in childcare on a personal level, direct level with different businesses the way that we're-- We're trying to do outreach and yet, like you said, you throw out the rule book and you try to be responsive to what they need.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, it makes me proud of our profession and so our listeners can go to [brac](http://brac.org/recovery), which stands for Baton Rouge Area Chamber, [brac.org/recovery](http://brac.org/recovery) and you can see all the different initiatives that Adam's group are doing and so a couple of other ones that stood out to me is you've got an initiative for displaced workers to get folks to companies that are hiring and you've got kind of a weekly economic indicator dashboard. So, talk through a couple of those things and other items in our recovery.

**Adam Knapp:** Yes, you're spot on. I think these are two other examples of something that I think has been exceptionally high quality. Their staff has stood out. So, let me talk about both of those, but the project came to us from one of our companies here in Baton Rouge Capitol City Produce that was actually expanding by leaps and bounds early on as there was an incredible amount of demand for grocery stores to be able to continue to fill their shelves. Capitol City Produce sells in multiple states and has a big distribution business here for produce obviously as well as other foods and food items. They called us and said hey, we unfortunately can't be doing onboarding right now the way that we normally would for new staff and I had the idea that if we can trust the HR work of another employer who is furloughing or downsizing, we could onboard their people immediately and simply have confidence that they did a good job of screening and also at the same time move much faster to be able to scale up.

So, that gave us the idea to create BR Works as an initiative and we're now up well over 90 employers that are listed on that site. It's working through the central hub of [brac.org/recovery](http://brac.org/recovery) that you mentioned earlier and we have been helping hundreds of folks to find jobs that employers that are actually hiring right now through this dramatic downturn. Many employers that are expanding are having trouble getting their word out there, so that's what that has turned into and something I think will probably live past the disaster for us to continue to have some kind of jobs platform or postings platform well into the future.

Many other regional economic development groups have that kind of jobs board platform as a repository of information for talent living in their community and I think that's where this is going to head for us if we're going to likely stand up something that becomes the platform where our econ development projects after a win can list jobs for projects and then we can promote those out there in a single repository. Also give community information a central point to put that information out. So, that's the first one that I wanted to mention.

The second one that we worked on that I think is really creative is the economic indicators dashboard. Early on in COVID-19 we read a piece that McKinsey & Company had done about the importance of data dashboards for companies to be able to provide their internal leadership teams decision-making data. We took that idea from McKinsey and said wouldn't the same hold true for an economy that you need to be able to have rapidly available information about the status of the economy every week.

Normally, you would see an indicators dashboard of the economy on monthly economic data or quarterly and that's just too slow in this period and so we looked for data points that we could find on a weekly basis and we publish this every Tuesday. We've done that now seven or eight weeks in a row and I can't tell you the number of people who have reached out to us to say that data is the best available to be able to understand what's happening in near real-time.

We get data on weekly unemployment insurance claims in our nine parishes to track the up and down of the spike of unemployment. We've been getting automotive fuel sales for retail and commercial vehicles to see year over year each week how much less fuel we're selling, which we think is a good barometer of overall economic activity. And then data like traffic on major interstates or thoroughfares; it kind of similarly gives you a picture of what's happening out there in the economy.

So, that point of entry has changed a little bit each week depending on what data we discover. Each week it seems like we find new resources that we hadn't had the week before and that has turned out to be an incredibly valuable tool. We've gotten calls from everywhere; from construction companies to retailers to insurance underwriters who track that data as a helpful resource to understand what's happening.

We've been really creative to use-- our staff who would normally be doing business intelligence for our econ development projects have been able to pivot over to clean a lot of that data out every week. So, it's been a new way to twist what we were doing in terms of data collection and put it out in a different way.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, Adam, I've got one more COVID-related question then I want to talk about Baton Rouge as a market for economic development projects non-COVID related because I know last year you all did 27 deals and won Site Selection Magazine's list of I think no. 2 among mid-sized metros. So, I want us to also talk about all the good stuff going on non-COVID related, but one last COVID question before we make that transition. I know you all as a big regional chamber get involved in legislative affairs and so, what type efforts do you see there both at the state level, maybe even at Washington, DC? As we get into recover, what do you think-- what are you all doing and what do you think economic developers as a profession maybe ought to be focused on?

**Adam Knapp:** That's a great question and thank you for asking. The priority for the state level our legislature came back into session on I think 5<sup>th</sup> May. Our session is a limited session every year in Louisiana, so they are meeting through the end of June. So, they'll basically have a month to enact any legislation that they can enact and over the period of weeks before they came back on May 5<sup>th</sup>, I tell you we probably heard most about PPE and childcare and the paycheck protection program, but probably right after that was the risk for an employer to reopen when they could have the virus enter their workplace whether through employees bringing it in their building, vendors or their customers and that legal liability is a huge concern to a lot of employers and it could be a wet blanket on the reopening of the American economy and the Louisiana economy if something is not done about that.

So, we've been working with a lot of our law firms who are investors in our organization to get a common understanding of their take on the liability risk for employers and then we've drafted a bill in partnership with our state chamber, the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry that will be hopefully moving-- beginning to move through the process this week and so that has been an enormous task to get drafts ready and then look at what the politics of that might be to get that through the process.

So, it's COVID related and it didn't exist when the legislature came into session, but then immediately had to call us because of COVID-19. There was nobody working on that topic obviously three months ago or two months ago.

The other big priority for Louisiana in looking ahead to jumpstarting the economy is to try to enact legal reforms kind of on the same topic that many other states have taken on to try to put their business climate in the best possible framework for investment and for business activity and Louisiana has had some issues with tort reform needs that the other states have done that we have not done yet. So, we're working on a coalition of partners that are working on state-level tort reform and trying to drive through some legislation around that. That is actually in committee and moving through the process right now.

So, those are two of the biggest priorities for us going to the session and then at the federal level, to your point, I think while we've all been I think aggressively communicating the paycheck protection program and the need that businesses have for capital and a lot of variety of types of



access to working capital through this crazy period that we're in, in the long run, we're going to be wanting to see that there are federal again liability protections for employers if possible as well as incentives that will drive the economy whether those are reshoring incentives for America to bring back many of its manufacturing lines that have moved overseas that probably need to be back in the U.S. now that we kind of understand the challenges that that has created over the last two months as well as-- what we'd like to see is a stimulus to the economy and transportation sector. I think we'd like to see major federal investments in our transportation infrastructure and I think it's going to drive economic activity as well as create a lot of near-term jobs. So, those are two of the big areas we're focused on over the next few months and I know that many of our partners around the country are focused on the same priorities.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, as we sort of transition to talking about the Baton Rouge Area non-COVID related, let's start with maybe telling these folks some things they may not know. So, everybody thinks of Baton Rouge for the National Championship, LSU Tigers, and State Capital, Mississippi River and there's all kinds of investment been made up and down the river and petrochemical plants and whatnot, but you guys have a lot of software and stuff that people may not think about. So, why don't we start with you talking about some of the high tech jobs and software companies that you have and then we'll branch into things that people may think of Baton Rouge more often for.

**Adam Knapp:** Well, I think that's a great jumping-off point to talk about it. LSU, we're all thrilled about seeing the Tigers win and seeing Joe Burrow go first in the draft. That was exciting and it points to the fact that higher education is at the heart of this economy and talent has been probably our biggest competitive advantage is being a higher-ed market. So, that's a few points on that.

We had over 50,000 kids enrolled across the many higher education institutions; two community colleges in the Baton Rouge metro area and then LSU which everybody knows at 30,000 students - over 30,000 students and then historically black college or university, Southern University which is located on the bluffs of the Mississippi in front of the most beautiful campus you'll ever see right on the bluff of the Mississippi River; the band that you see in Baton Rouge if you're looking at this on a map. That has dominated the opportunities that we've had as an economy over the last few years. So, having access to students that are being educated in Baton Rouge, the research that's happening in those institutions has really been driving a lot of those new opportunities.

So, while we have a very diverse economy, I think Brookings pointed out that we're one of the top 10 most diverse economies in the country when you look at the spread of industry sectors we have. We still want to drive more of that diversity. Historically, we've been a strong center of manufacturing. In fact, we're one of the most dense places in America for chemical engineers and chemists. To give you a sense of the strength that we've historically had in petrochemical manufacturing, if you're on a barge and cruising up and down from New Orleans to Baton Rouge you'll see manufacturing facilities that are exporting across the world making every kind of medical product, plastic product, or refined fuel that you can make and that advantage has been a long-standing one.

When the shale gas revolution took over America, we saw billions of dollars in investment flowing into, not only the U.S. and Gulf Coast but even right here in the Baton Rouge metro area. There are miles of construction and expansion. Then a transit started back in 2013 and has continued right up until COVID-19 and I think it's going to come back again eventually as the world starts picking up in demand again.

After that, to your point, we've been aggressive at diversifying the economy in a few ways. One you mentioned is software. Louisiana put in place an incredibly lucrative center that we helped support Louisiana in an act probably a little over a decade ago and that incentive for digital media production has helped us attract companies like IBM and Electronic Arts who have put in major facilities here in Baton Rouge as well as seeing a domestic software cluster that's grown up around that sector.

So, that talent has continued to grow dramatically and we've seen our super-region between Lafayette year at Louisiana to our west and Orleans and the north shore in St. Tammany Parish to our east have lots of other IT firms and so we when you draw a large circle around southeast Louisiana you see this incredible density of IT talent and they are not our competition. They are our partners in helping go after this sector and so we work closely with our friends in New Orleans and in Lafayette to go nationally and internationally to talk to companies about the IT sector that is here.

Another great thing, Chad, that I will highlight is our universities have been an incredible partner in building this sector. LSU has been able to quadruple the number of students enrolled in its

computer science curriculum. They have an incredible program with business college for data analytics and that's part of the MBA program and then our community colleges have started to play an even more aggressive role at pursuing what IBM calls the new collar economy and that they are incredible job opportunities that can be available for adults to go in and re-educate and re-train at our community colleges or even students that want to finish with a two-year degree and not there for a four-year degree can get jobs in coding or in analytics and other fields and in some of those ways where we've been leaning in with our higher education partners have made us more attractive to go after companies too that they want to see that entire continuum of education tools as part of the talent solution. So, these two highlights therefore that I think have been going really well.

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

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**Chad Chancellor:** If you want to join our movement, which is to create economic growth for small to mid-sized companies, communities, and non-profit organizations, please go to our website at [thenextmovegroup.com](http://thenextmovegroup.com). Browse around and you can see the different services we offer all designed to create that economic growth for the small to mid-sized companies, communities, and non-profit organizations. Most of our leads and growth has come from word of mouth referral. So, even if you don't need a service, we want you to know what we do so when friends and contacts of yours might need something, you know what we do and you can refer us. So, again, go to [thenextmovegroup.com](http://thenextmovegroup.com) to learn more about the Next Move Group.

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**Chad Chancellor:** And talk about you all have had 100 job tech announcements within the last few weeks. So, tell our listeners about that.

**Adam Knapp:** Yes. So, Click Here Digital is a new announcement. There are not many economic development announcements happening during COVID-19, so we were thrilled to see that they made an announcement to keep their 64 jobs here that they have had and then add another 100 jobs. They're just on fire. They've been doing a lot of specific online social media marketing and

that has really helped their company to continue to expand. They were a project we were working on from before COVID-19 and fortunately, we're not derailed during the period of COVID-19. So, again, it underscores the example of what's happening in our community to be able to expand technology jobs in this economy at the same time that there is another growing addition of what has been a really robust sector, not just national names but a lot of entrepreneurs that are building those companies here in Baton Rouge.

We've been seeing a lot of economic activity a lot more I should say than I probably expected. We had an assumption I think going into COVID-19 probably most of our econ development projects would be on hold, but we have had firm tours for companies and consultants in different sectors we've conducted virtually. We've also done site selection conversations with prospects. Their time horizon for this isn't 18-24 months out and so they are still gathering data on projects and on sites and asking questions. We've been giving traditional econ development work throughout even for companies that may not make a decision for another year or two. So, it's been a wild ride to change how we do that. Those are not flights in and conversations with us in person, but virtual ones, but we're trying to make these as robust as possible either way.

**Chad Chancellor:** I think people are getting used to this new normal. Just our own company's experience probably for the first three weeks from that mid-March whenever everything shut down, I don't think we signed any deals. I think everybody was just in shock and over the last three or four weeks, we're not back to our normal levels, but we're certainly signing some deals and getting prospects and seeing activity. So, I think it was such a shock to people at first that almost the world stopped and now people have figured out okay, how do we do this virtually and maybe it's not how we want to do it, but we got to keep the economy moving a little bit.

I know last year you all were ranked by Site Selection Magazine 2<sup>nd</sup> on its list of communities with 200,000 to 1 million people. You all did 27 different projects; either new companies or existing industry expansions, \$3 billion of capital investment in that region. So, talk about what type projects you typically see. We all know petrochemical. Well, maybe talk about some of those 27 projects and then tell these folks if you've got any advice to give, what have you found to be the secret sauce of getting a deal over the finish line?

**Adam Knapp:** Yes. That's great. The year we had last year was probably our best year that we have seen in terms of both project volume and deals won in a single year since what was an outlandishly great year back in 2013. So, we had a strong 2019 and we were heading into 2020 with expectations of an equally strong year in 2020. Obviously, that's been derailed a little bit, but I think that we still had so many incredible project announcements last year and it really was a marriage of three things I would say.

One is the continued expansion of the U.S. economy was creating opportunities across almost every sector and we increased our amount of business retention and expansion activity to visit with existing employers to help them with expansion opportunities here in Baton Rouge. We saw many who were contemplating investments outside of Louisiana and we wanted to make sure we captured as many of those investments in our metro area as possible. So, probably the vast majority of those deals came from us being able to work with existing companies on expansions that we were able to win.

And the second big part of that obviously was what you said. It was another wave of petrochemical investment deals that were committed last year. We spent a lot of our time with our local communities working through incentive offers to make sure those were able to be offered to a lot of these big companies making billion-dollar investment decisions for multiyear horizon investments.

And then the third thing I think was that we were more aggressive on a handful of industry sectors that we were trying to go after. I guess that we've highlighted what's been happening in software. We also spent quite a bit of energy with our health district to look at opportunities for investment alongside our biomedical industry. So, part of that deal that I'm most excited that happened last year is a really small one that we were able to work with our biomedical research institutions here in Baton Rouge. It's affiliated with LSU, but it's really an institute. It's called Pennington Biomedical and Pennington is one of the world leaders in chronic disease research related to obesity and diabetes and really chronic diseases related to obesity is their specialization.

They are an incredible institution that just hired a new CEO who came to Baton Rouge from the Cleveland clinic. A doctor named Dr. John Kirwan and Dr. Kirwan last year working with us in the state economic development agency recruited in the number one surgeon in the world for

bariatric surgery. So, those stomach surgeries that we do to reduce the size of the stomach which in many ways the science around that is continuing to develop about what that looks like as a potential to being a cure for obesity. We think of obesity as-- it's not something that you cure, but in many ways, that's what Pennington is focusing on the science. It's to look at the combination of behavioral changes and medical procedures that in combination can be a cure for that and that can be lifesaving to so many people that are dealing with a crisis in that.

So, that was an incredible announcement last year. It brings 50 jobs to Baton Rouge affiliated with the science and the research that's going to be happening. It also was done by the possibility of a medical partnership between Pennington and one of our leading hospitals called Our Lady of the Lake. And so he is going to be providing clinical services for bariatric surgery through Our Lady of the Lake while doing research at Pennington. He's bringing in a lot of his scientists and adjuncts that are coming in to do research with him. He had previously been in Pittsburg and at the Cleveland clinic and so he is coming to Baton Rouge helping us put really a named brand leader in the science and the research that Pennington has already been exceptional at.

So, we were very excited as a potential way to continue to see diversity in the economy into new sectors where we can see, not only in-bound medical services but also pharmaceutical research can happen around that.

In the third area I had highlighted that was a sector we got and we went after and this is the software and the healthcare part of our economy has been the water cluster. We've seen that Louisiana is faced with coastal wetlands lost, something that got a lot of highlights after hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana, but we've been focusing on that as an opportunity for Baton Rouge to build the combination of for-profit companies that are dealing with the science of coastal wetlands loss and sustainability alongside LSU and our state government who are investing significant dollars into the protection of our coast.

So, that combination is brought us a single point in Baton Rouge in a development called the Water Campus and that Water Campus is a beautiful facility right on the Mississippi River. Right on I10 as you pass through Baton Rouge on the interstate, you can see this beautiful iconic building just south of the interstate that is the center of all that research and it's something that we see as a great

opportunity to build a new practice, a new area of science, a new area of innovation for Baton Rouge.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, Adam, as we wind down, I always like to ask economic developers what their story is. Very few people grew up as a kid wanting to be an economic developer. Maybe you did. I didn't ask you this before we came on air, but we got a lot of young up-and-comers that listen to our show. Give us a little bit about your story and what led you to now running the Baton Rouge area chamber.

**Adam Knapp:** I think you nailed it. Not many if anyone thinks about this. Maybe they're starting to get there, but when I came into it and you came into it, there were very few programs that were telling you about what this could be as an opportunity. My story is that I came out of college in North Carolina. I went to work in Chicago for a company called Accenture that does technology and management consulting and spent a number of years working with them in Chicago and then in the Bay Area in California.

As the downturn was happening back in 2001, the dot-com bubble was busting. An opportunity came to me to go and work in the governor's office in Louisiana. I believe that time it was something I thought about but never really pursued and it kind of fell on my plate and the stars aligned. So, I worked as the economic development policy analyst in the governor's office back in 2002 and in many ways faked like I was a lawyer to draft legislation related to econ development incentives, funding programs, research initiatives, and had just an incredible time doing it.

And I'd say this; if you have some part of your DNA that likes the idea of public service, but you really believe that your life and your roles belong in the private sector, that's where this felt like the right harmony. It offered an opportunity to be of public service while doing so on behalf of the private sector and that's really what made this really attractive to me is being able to make a difference and doing that for a state that I love and a community that I love and yet being able to do it try to help drive the economy and think about things that are going to drive the economy.

Every year, every week, it feels like it's new and different and for those that are thinking about being in the profession of econ development, I will tell them that you do it for the love of the work. You do it for the love of the experiences that you get along the way whatever your profession is going to be and for me, this is one that-- it definitely felt right. Some jobs fit like a glove where

they just match up with your personality and interests. So, this was definitely one that felt like that when I got into it and I've been at it ever since. That was back in 2002 that I worked in the governor's office and have continued to work in one way or another in economic development between post-Katrina recovery work, working at Louisiana econ development, and then now at the Baton Rouge Chambers.

It's been an exciting ride and I think it is a profession that I would also emphasize we need to continue to diversify our profession. We totally need way more women and diverse leadership in our community and something that we have been trying to live into ourselves for our team and encouraging others to try to do that as well. Something that I think will help our profession even longer.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, Adam, as we wind down, is there anything that you would like to share our listeners about BRAC or your story or Baton Rouge that I didn't think to ask you?

**Adam Knapp:** Well, I think I would implore everyone to continue to innovate, to collaborate, and to share your best practices with each other. A lot of us in this work whether we're site consultants or we're economic development practitioners have incredible knowledge that we've built up from our work and that we rely incredibly on those out there who have different experiences to teach us and that helps to make us stronger.

So, I think there's only a word of encouragement if you're listening to this and you want to reach out and offer suggestions or tell us a story or an experience of something that has gone well for you, we love learning and I would just say to those out there that don't know much about us to pick up the phone and reach out to us. We are very accessible and I think that the Baton Rouge Area is really one of the up-and-coming big capitals in America that is a mid-sized city that is absolutely on the rise and it's exciting to watch.

**Chad Chancellor:** You know, Adam, you're right. I had been really impressed with site selectors sharing best practices and information during this time and a lot of economic developers I think especially those in the small towns may think site selectors are unapproachable. We had Bob Hess on our show and he was very forthcoming. Didi Caldwell has been putting out great information on LinkedIn and I've been really proud of the site selection community sharing and trying to be there for economic developers because I think a lot of times economic developers look at the big



site selectors as untouchable or unapproachable. It's been good, at least for me, to see it seems like they really went above and beyond to try to be accessible to economic developers. Well, Adam, thank you for being with us.

**Adam Knapp:** Absolutely.

**Chad Chancellor:** We are very much appreciative.

[Music]

**Chad Chancellor:** If you want to join our movement, which is to create economic growth for small to mid-sized companies, communities, and non-profit organizations, please go to our website at [thenextmovegroup.com](http://thenextmovegroup.com). Browse around and you can see the different services we offer all designed to create that economic growth for the small to mid-sized companies, communities, and non-profit organizations. Most of our leads and growth has come from word of mouth referral. So, even if you don't need a service, we want you to know what we do so when friends and contacts of yours might need something, you know what we do and you can refer us. So, again, go to [thenextmovegroup.com](http://thenextmovegroup.com) to learn more about the Next Move Group.

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