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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 Josh Fenn with us. He's the director of the Henry County, Georgia Economic Development Organization. Josh, thank you for being with us.

**Josh Fenn:** Good morning, Chad. It's good to be with you all today.

**Chad Chancellor:** I can't believe I got a Falcon fan on my show. You're saying you had to wait a year to get on it. Now, that there may not be football, I figured I might as well get you on here.

**Josh Fenn:** Well, at least on this podcast, our conversation is going to be a lot more PG than our usual conversations about our beloved football rivalry.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, I think we won the last game, but honestly, you all beating us down here and you had a terrible year, you all beating us down here caused us a bye and got us out of the playoffs early, but we won the last game, so I've got the bragging rights as of now.

**Josh Fenn:** For now, for now.

**Chad Chancellor:** Yes, I hate these thanksgiving--

**Josh Fenn:** He's a New Orleans native and he loves the Saints' quarterback.

**Chad Chancellor:** He does. Well, I hate these thanksgiving games. I'm glad we're through with that. You're also the first Wayne County native to be on my show. It's a different Wayne County. So, I'm from Wayne County, Mississippi. We're the War Eagles and you're from Wayne County, Georgia, right?

**Chad Chancellor:** Went to high school in Wayne County, Georgia; home to the Yellow Jackets and for college football fans that know Georgia that's the famous home of Lindsey Scott.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, we can't talk all football today, but

**Josh Fenn:** We would if we could.

**Chad Chancellor:** We've been doing our news show folks have been listening to for about the last month and a half and Josh has already had two announcements on our news show. So, somehow you won two deals just since we've been doing that and you've only been in Henry County-- what-- a year? So, why don't you talk about some of the deals you all have done and why you've been so successful?

**Josh Fenn:** Yes. Not even a year yet, coming up on it. The thing about Henry County that has served us well is obviously our position. We're located on the south, south metro of Atlanta, along I 70 Corridor and we're really positioned very well. We've got the easiest access to the Port of

Savannah, which is the fastest growing port on the East Coast, now one of the four largest ports in the U.S. and there's been tremendous growth, not only with the port but also metro Atlanta has continued this growth. When I was born in Atlanta, the metro population was 1 million, now it's 6 million. It just keeps growing.

So, we're well positioned. We are 20 minutes from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport; the world's busiest airport. Even with all this, they're still the busiest right now and so we're there trafficking their cargo. We've been very well positioned, but the other thing that has really helped us here recently as we were going into 2020 in late '19 towards the end of the cycle, our developers well positioned their building products, so whether it's a million square foot, 500,000 square foot or less speculative type product. We even have assets of land that are entitled infrastructure ready to go. We even have the metro's only million square foot rail serving the building and that's available and that has drawn a lot of attention.

Just this year alone we have lots of announcements, Love's Travel Center is repositioning a retread tire manufacturing and distribution center in the city of Locust Grove which is on the south end of our county. That was a nice little win that we got. Two weeks ago, we announced Ferrero Chocolates.

We literally got that deal done the day before the Shelter-in-place order for the state was put in. So, we had to wait a few weeks to announce it with the timing, but that was a great win. I know everyone is trying to work off their Covid 10. I'm just saying but I had to break it and enjoy a Butterfinger.

Ferrero makes some great products and those are really great value add; 250 jobs. They went into one of our tech buildings that had been sitting for a little while, so we're glad to get that filled. We feel good is probably what I can say right now. We do this again, Chad, I feel good that we're going to have some more stuff to talk about on your show in the next few weeks and we're just well positioned.

Another great driver about Henry County is our growth patterns. We're the second fastest growing county in Metro Atlanta. The Atlanta Regional Commission projects us at about 70% growth. In the history of Henry County, for those who don't know, Henry County really kind of started out as the outer ex-hub of Metro Atlanta and has now moved into that suburban status. So, the northern

end of our county is much more suburban, but the east, west, and south still have that rural feel to it.

The larger land lots, housing, our school system is doing well has drawn a lot of people here to come take a job in Metro Atlanta not knowing what's in Henry County you know, dealing with a community trying to get to the airport and some other places past the airport and the downtown, getting tired of the community and then trying to find job opportunities that we have here with our established industries.

**Chad Chancellor:** So, the food deal you won, is that just distribution or are they doing food processing there?

**Josh Fenn:** It's distribution right now and one thing Henry County is obviously known for is distribution. We've had a lot of wins in the ecommerce sector over the last few years; Home Depot, Wayfair, or large campuses here. Tory Burch as well. They have served us very well and that transportation network has also served our manufacturers very well from a pricing standpoint as those products are being brought in-- imported in, our manufacturers they are looking to export going out the Port of Savannah or the Florida ports. They really have got some great pricing power to take advantage of.

We've got some great manufacturers; Ecolab, if you washed your hands with a soap at a commercial facility, there's a good chance that soap was made here in McDonough. Luxottica-- Chad, I know you like to rock the Coasta's and Oakley's. Those are made here in Henry County by Luxottica and if you have prescriptions they are made. There are various other types. We like to joke that we always sort of fly with all the names and companies that we do have here in Henry County manufacturing and distribution and we can probably do about seven or eight slides just with logos and with the great bases there.

And then another thing that really served us well during this event is our professional service outlets. For over 20 years, the Georgia Power has counted on Henry County to be the home of its customer care center, what really was clutch during this time. We've had some storms come through Georgia as well too in that response.

And then TSYS, now part of Global Payments. There are a lot of people who are doing ecommerce transactions or using their credit card. Those transactions are being processed here in Henry County out of TSYS's facility. So, just lot of great stories to tell as we went through this event and our strength we help. We only had one real major layoff and that was tied to automotive distribution to the dealerships or processing center. That was it. Otherwise, we're pretty much-- Most of our service industries right now as of mid-June are 80% capacity or better.

**Chad Chancellor:** We were talking offline before we started. I told Josh I walked to the grocery store in New Orleans yesterday and it's like a ghost town and we're recording this June 16. So, things are supposed to have been back open a month now. It's still like a ghost town. There are no tourists here. A lot of the business people are working from home and so I think it's going to push a lot of projects to the suburbs. I think more and more professional service people are going to work from home now because they've seen they can and that might drive some of those office leases in downtown Atlanta. Folks might just as well be looking for communities like yours.

**Josh Fenn:** Yes. It's going to be interesting on that front. We're starting to see some of the corporate headquarters in Metro Atlanta start to setup satellite facilities where some population base is commuting in where they can work from home or have a place closer and a shared space. So, they are kind of setting you their own "WeWorks" if you will in the metro and there are some test cases on that.

So, we're watching that very closely as we do have a lot of folks who-- 53% of our workforce leaves the county every day to go into downtown Atlanta. So, we think there's going to be some opportunities there for our professional services. And the other thing that really helps us I mentioned is the Georgia Power Customer Service Center. We're also home to the FAA southeast Air Traffic Control Center in Hampton and that telecommunication infrastructure is very strong in our commercial corridors to get those facilities redundancy and we're looking to take advantage of that.

**Chad Chancellor:** So, how long does it take you to get from your house to your hotel to your tailgating spot by the Mercedes Benz Stadium every Sunday morning?

**Josh Fenn:** It's not too bad as long as the Who Dats don't come up from Louisiana and the Gulf and forget how to drive. No, we enjoy. We always have fun. It's not a bad drive. It takes about 25-30 minutes to get to the Mercedes Benz Stadium or anywhere you want to be in Metro Atlanta.

Our Department of Transportation is doing a very good job of working on the congestion issues getting in and out of the city. We've got a new interchange on I-75 that's about to break ground. The State of Georgia is adding two new commercial only and truck lanes between Macon and McDonough that 75 Corridor. The north bound ones will be going first. Then the development is south bound. So, that's to help freight coming from the Port of Savannah into the Metro area and we also got the fast commuter lanes. These are reversible lanes that have helped as well. Henry County right now-- Georgia has 159 counties. Chad you and I could probably spend about a half an hour going over the history of that and while we have 159 counties, we're second only to Texas in the number of counties, but we have the most GDOT projects going on of any county in the state and that's really impressive for our community considering you've got counties like Fulton which is Atlanta and you got Savannah in Chatham with a port and all the infrastructure there. We lead in GDOT projects right now.

**Chad Chancellor:** Wow! I like the fact you've got all those counties. There's more counties needs an economic developer when you're hunting for one of these days. So, that's all right with me. Josh starts tailgating about 7 in the morning according to his Facebook.

**Josh Fenn:** Yes, I got to get a spot early and we set up. We always have a good time and every time the Aints come into town, we have some Aints friends I hosted, Chad, and you and I we keep talking about it and every time we commit to do it when the game is here a Christmas weekend or thanksgiving night or we can't pull it off, one of those years that Facebook post between us showing us both at each game is going to be interesting.

**Chad Chancellor:** That's right. We've only been to one game now when the Saints played and we won at overtime that day. Your coach went forward from fourth and won from his own like 20 and we stopped them and kicked a field goal. Now, as we think about your career, you also did this in rural communities. What's the farthest you were from Atlanta because you kept your tickets? I remember you drive up there for every game. How far away were you when you were down near Savannah?

**Josh Fenn:** Yes. Actually, longer than that. I've been an Atlanta fan since 2002. I was down in Waycross which is about a four-hour drive to the Georgia Dome back then and every bank filled the home of the Jaguars was only about an hour and 15 minutes from downtown Waycross. It's a loyalty team. I went to a college that didn't have football until about 12 years ago, so really I just kind of evolved from growing up in a Florida State house and not having that connection like my mum had for Florida State, moving on over to a pro team from the city that I was born in.

**Chad Chancellor:** Thank you, Josh. We're going to take a quick break for a message for our listeners and be right back with a lot more with Josh Fenn 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:** Well, I kept my Saints tickets when I was all the way in Paducah, Kentucky nine hours away. I only come to two or three games a year, but I kept my tickets.

**Josh Fenn:** It was a little easier and luckily going to Atlanta to do some maintenance or something like that. My board is pretty good about letting me schedule that and taking that Monday to do that. I needed to go to SEDC or something like that.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, talk about what you've learned considering you've done this in both rural areas and now suburban areas, micropolitan areas. Talk about what advice you might give others who are in similar situations.

**Josh Fenn:** Rural is still very endearing and dear to me. Chad, you know one of my favorite things to do when I've got some downtime is to get in the car and just drive and drive places all over there and three years ago, I finally completed a personal mission just to go visit all 159 counties in the State of Georgia. There are some things that still bothered me when I see there just lack of economic growth.

One of the things that served me well, I worked in a rural community in central Georgia-- Dodge county-- so I'm also the only person probably in your podcast that got the heck out of Dodge. It's okay. My old county chairman told me I can say that. The thing that served me well in rural was just not sitting around waiting. You have to get out. You have to knock on doors. You're going to get told no a lot. You're going to get told oh, good gosh! That's two and a half hours away from the metro or the market or where deals are happening, but you keep knocking. You keep putting that message out there.

Eventually, something is going to hit or something that says hey, I want to take a look at that. He keeps coming by. Let's give him a shot. He's got a spec building. He's got a site that has some title and maybe a good deal for this company. They've got a workforce. It's a little bit of a stretch, but let's see if it works. Let's give him a shot. Once you get that shot, you got to do well. If you get it, just keep going and just keep repeating that, repeating that. That's the best thing you can do.

I still do that to this day. We got great partners. The state utilities will make sure they know what our projects are with our developments, what's going on, etc. We do our own marketing as well



too and we shake hands and let folks and influencers know what our advantages are because the more you can get your message out there, the wider your net is and something is going to come in.

**Chad Chancellor:** What really drives you at a local level? I know you also worked for a while for an engineering firm doing business development for them and you made your way back to local economic development shops. So, what is it-- I know you thoroughly enjoy and have a passion for it-- what is it that's in you that just makes you enjoy doing local economic development?

**Josh Fenn:** I'll share a story. We got a new project manager on our team. I'll say he's been with us for a few months. We were kind of talking about coming on the local side and where you can get to see the impact. I remember a time I did a deal. It was actually in one of the rural communities I worked in. They had a job fair on a Saturday morning just to see who really wanted it which I thought was kind of interesting.

So, I made a point, got up myself and went over there and sat and took the HR team down to get some coffee just as a thank you and I was literally sitting there waiting to go in and see how they are doing the interview and to drop things off and a little kid dropped his toy. I picked it up and gave it to him. I started a conversation with this parent who was in the line with him. He's a single parent. He's working at a Walmart. I was like okay, why are you here today? They've got Fortune 500 benefits. You're kind of talking about that.

Fast forward a few months later, I'm on a plant tour with that group and I see that parent there. Whatever I do, whatever my team does, that's out there. It's already achieved. I've helped a family. I've helped a kid have a better opportunity. There are people that help me get better opportunities growing you in a single parent household most of those years in rural Georgia. Just that drive and that passion.

I thought I was satisfied when I went to the private sector and they allowed me to do some things personally I wanted to do that I just hadn't had the time to do in life and I've been very grateful all those opportunities my young family-- and I say young I've got two teenage step-daughters. One just graduated. We're working towards them investing. You see those-- I'd never want to know who. I just want to know that some kid has got a better pathway out there just because of an opportunity that the team I work with got to the community and the American dream is still out there. I don't care what anyone says. It's still there if you want it. You just got to work for it and

kind of this is a way of me just paying back those who helped me get ahead to where I was because statistically where I should have been probably I shouldn't be where I am and people stepped up either it's in my family or friends of the family or just teachers or individuals throughout and it's that call to service that's out there making that positive impact and you know you can work sometimes. It can be frustrating. There's no doubt about that. It's not as easy as being a state lad or being on the consultant side. It's out there, but you really do get to see the impact of your work every day.

**Chad Chancellor:** How did you first get exposed to the economic development or how did you get into it?

**Josh Fenn:** That's a funny story. I was actually a political science major from LaGrange College. Georgia has all these private college or university-- go Panthers. I wanted to be a county or city manager was the pathway I was looking at. I went back to southeast Georgia to do my internship.

Luckily, a buddy of mine I grew up with his dad was in the neighboring county; a county manager. They moved over there. He was county manager in Wayne County for a little while. I called him up, said hey this is what I'm thinking about doing is what you're doing. I'm looking for an internship. Do you know anyone close to the campus? He was like your grandmother is still at home. Why don't you come here and intern for me and save some money? I was like yes, I can do that.

And I got into that and then I did my internship in my junior year. I just needed a break from school, but I wanted to keep moving forward in my progression. When I got out, the Downtown Development Authority position was open. They called me and just said hey, I know you're looking. Why don't you apply here? You already know us. It would be a good starting point for you, help you build up if you want to get in this-- being kind of a department level head and work your way up to assistant manager type status and whatnot. Then I just discovered economic development through that position there in Downtown Development.

That's one of the purest forms of economic development is the downtown developer and their services very underappreciated. They are not paid well. That's why I moved in county wide community-- county wide type of positions, but it really just opened my eyes to the industry and I never met very few who have trained to be an economic developer and gone through school.

Chad, you and I have been very active in SEDC YP during our years coming up in the game and all the friendships we made and people we would network with. I can't think of anybody who really-- you kind of fall into it. We had some pathways that were kind of parallel to it, but we really all fell into it.

**Chad Chancellor:** Talk about the SEDC YPs. We're neither one young enough any more to do it, but I think we-- at least I'm not. I can't speak for you, but we were the first.

**Josh Fenn:** I was the first one of our group to get kicked out.

**Chad Chancellor:** You were the oldest one of--

**Josh Fenn:** I'm still the oldest one of our little crew right here.

**Chad Chancellor:** I still remember that New Year's Eve where you talked about how bad you hated the Saints, but you flew to New Orleans when you had to get a few extra miles on your Southwest card to have lunch with Diane and some of them.

**Josh Fenn:** Absolutely. Diana and Rachel and I had to get that last flight in. I think you were tied up with something. We were trying to get you out.

**Chad Chancellor:** Actually, it was the day for Sugar Bowl. I usually have people down here. I don't know if we're going to have one this year.

**Josh Fenn:** Advil COVID-19 may come out tomorrow and we got a football season. That program and kudos to the leadership and SEDC years ago who saw some vision. It was really important to me because Georgia GBA is a great organization. It has done a great job. As far as developing young professionals, Georgia was a little bit behind and when I saw the SEDC YPs coming, I was like I've got to jump on this and get some more exposure to broaden my vision what can be done in economic development and that I still remember.

I was thinking about driving to the office this morning that person out in Greenville; you, me, Diana, Rachel, Laura, I think Daniel Web was there too and a few others talking economic development in Greenville till about 2 a.m.; what our experiences were, what we were seeing, what we could get better, some valid debates about different things in our industry that we really had to think about being younger.

So, if there's anybody who is younger in the industry and your SEDC or your state organization has that YP program, take advantage of it. It's not just a social hour. It's the network that you build. It's also a network to give you great opportunities to get that outsider's edge of just a neighborhood thinking. One of the things I was always taught that the world does not end at the city limit. It doesn't end at the county line. It doesn't end at the state line or national border. You got to get your vision and your thinking very broad. So, take advantage of those connections that you can make for the regional or national organizations if you have those opportunities.

**Chad Chancellor:** Well, and I think that's good advice. When we started Next Move Group, we had a base because we knew a lot of economic developers in all the other states. Still to this day, I go back to Mississippi or Alabama where I got my starting and I'll talk to people there who kind of know everybody in that state and then I'll say you know this person in Georgia or Florida, which is just the next state over.

So, you just figure everybody knows them and they won't know them because they've only really gotten-- they've just gotten to know everybody in their particular state. So, it's always helped me because when we're competing for business or needing to know something, it's good to have a base of people. I think SEDC is in 17 states because IEDC is in the whole country, but it's good to have friends you can call to ask hey, what do you think of this?

**Josh Fenn:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Chad Chancellor:** All right, well Josh, anything that you'd like to share with our audience I haven't asked you about?

**Josh Fenn:** We're all going through some interesting times right now. I've got a white board in my office and I usually change out the quote every few weeks, but I've kept it on there once we started seeing the first cases of COVID come into Georgia. I remember something an old state labor commissioner told me years ago. It was stay calm, stay focused, and solutions will present themselves. Even though we're getting into phases of recovery, the economic side there is still potential left hook out there. So, you've got to again, stay calm. Don't panic. You panic, you drown. It will work out, but you got to stay focused and stay diligent. That's the key. Just stay safe and that's the other thing. Let's not get these relapses. One other note I will say I don't think your listeners can see this, but this just talks about mine and Chad's rivalry dynamic. He would be

wearing a St. Louis Cardinals' hat today. Knowing me being the big Braves fan that I am. You've got too many bragging rights on me right now. I'm ready for this thing to be over so I can get some back.

**Chad Chancellor:** Did we score 12 runs in that deciding game in the-- 11 or 12 runs in the-- but it's kind of funny. The Nationals swept the Cardinals in game four that season. They scored eight runs in the first day. So, they kind of did what we did.

**Josh Fenn:** No, the Cardinals, I was there.

**Chad Chancellor:** Oh, yes. That was a bad one. That was a bad one there. I'll tell you. When did the Saints play?

**Josh Fenn:** I knew you were going to worry today.

**Chad Chancellor:** Yes. When is baseball season supposed to be? When did the Saints play the Falcons this year? I haven't looked at scheduling now with the COVID.

**Josh Fenn:** Oh, come on. I sent you the schedule release and there was that I think they played the Stefon Diggs highlight showing what week it was this year.

**Chad Chancellor:** Is it another Thursday game this year? I can't--

**Josh Fenn:** No no

**Chad Chancellor:** Because of COVID, I'm not even sure there are going to be fans there. So, normally by now, I've already studied, but I really haven't even gotten into it yet, looking at who we play when.

**Josh Fenn:** I'm going to be the optimist. I think we'll get in the summer games this year. I really do. And actually that's interesting, one of the Henry County industries I mentioned is Luxottica. Oakley is working with the NFL to develop additional PPE so that the players can play safely. Some of the new face shielding were very helpful for that.

**Chad Chancellor:** All right, Josh. Well, thank you for being with us today. We really appreciate it.

**Josh Fenn:** Chad, I appreciate it. It's good to catch up with my friend and stay safe and we'll see you soon.

**Chad Chancellor:** All right. Who that?

**Josh Fenn:** Rise up, baby.

[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? And 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](http://thenextmovegroup.com/movement).

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