

Workforce retention and attraction is key to economic development

Circa 1980, 1990 and 2000: Students graduated from college, applied for jobs and physically moved to where their job was located. For decades, this method worked for employers. Fast forward to 2022, and talent attraction efforts look completely different. Companies are now locating high quality talent, and taking their operations to the employees. They're adjusting their operations so they can be located where the employees can be found.

Talent scouts now look for educational institutions known for breeding innovative student bodies who are hungry for professional opportunity. Employers are also known for choosing to locate in geographic areas known for their work ethic. Whatever the reason, this shift in approach to workforce attraction changes the economic development game: to get ahead, focus on attracting and retaining the talent. Business growth will follow.

How do you attract and retain the talent companies are looking for? Provide an environment, culture and quality of life in the region that is ideal for a people with diverse interests, needs and desires. The good news is this is where the Dayton Region excels. Our quality of life, cost of living and diversity of activities is perfect for individuals and families who are looking for a Midwest lifestyle. Outdoor recreation including great parks, 350 miles of paved bike trails and a downtown kayak run make the Dayton Region attractive to outdoor enthusiasts. Dayton also boasts a visual and performing arts scene that rivals communities much larger than ours, low cost of living and home prices, dozens of high quality school districts, a downtown renaissance, professional and collegiate sports, and urban/suburban/and rural living options that provide great living opportunities for singles and families.

In an era of flexible work and work-from-home, the Dayton Region has a unique opportunity to attract high quality talent seeking a Midwest lifestyle that meets their unique needs. To do this, we need to continue to identify who we are as region and tell that story across the country and around the world.

This isn't a hard sell. Just look around at your neighbors, friends and co-workers who have lived in different locations or transferred around the world with the military and have now chosen to settle down in the Dayton Region. It is not by accident that they found a home here. We have something special and the secret is getting out.