

Kosciusko County Business Leadership Network (BLN) Kick-Off Luncheon

KLA White Paper Project

Jenna Campbell

Nikki Harter

Angie Hurlow

Mark Weinstein

Event Held:

Tuesday March 24, 2009

Westminster Hall, Grace College Campus

Winona Lake, Indiana



CardinalServices^{Inc.}
of Indiana



CareerLinks
Division of Cardinal Services

Table of Contents

- I. A Call To Action
- II. Planning of the Event
- III. The Kick-Off Luncheon
- IV. Response to the Luncheon
- V. The Future of the Kosciusko BLN
- VI. Appendix

I. A Call To Action

On September ninth two-thousand-nine a group of 25 business leaders chosen to participate in the Kosciusko Leadership Academy met at the Lake City Bank Training Center in Warsaw, Indiana. At this meeting two representatives from Career Links, a division of Cardinal Services in Kosciusko County passionately presented an idea for a white paper project. Their project was to aid Vickie Lootens, the Employment Coordinator for Career Links, in the development of a Business Leadership Network (BLN) in Kosciusko County. The presentation introduced the class to what multiple states are doing throughout the nation to increase the hiring of the people with disabilities in their respective counties¹. Currently there are 43 active US-BLN chapters and over 4000 businesses nationwide involved in these networks. Business leaders are able to network through the BLN organizations in conjunction with the Career Links program to increase the hiring, training, and retaining of people with disabilities². The presentation ended with a call to action for Kosciusko County to tap into the great human capital available through their population of 1800 physically or mentally disabled citizens. Vickie Lootens asked for a group of KLA students to plan a Kosciusko County BLN Kick-Off Luncheon to introduce this concept to businesses throughout the county.

A group of three students were motivated by the presentation and formed the day of the presentation. A fourth member was added three weeks later. The group came from a varied background and included Nikki Harter, Medical Technology at the Kosciusko County Hospital, Angie Hurlow, Patient Advocate at Medication and Dental Assistance, Jenna Campbell, Pharmacist and Pharmacy Manager at Owen's Supermarket Pharmacy, and Mark Weinstein, Dean of Admissions at Grace College.

¹ See Appendix for Power Point Presentation

² See Appendix for BLN Executive Summary

II. Planning the Kick-Off Luncheon

Beginning in October the team met with Vickie Lootens to beginning planning for the Kick-Off Luncheon. The time was used to get to understand more about the Business Leadership Network (BLN) and Cardinal Services role in the program. Three local businesses were already considered “buy-ins” for the establishment of the BLN; RR. Donnelley’s, Lake City Bank, and the Chamber of Commerce. Vickie presented the team with a timeline and a budget³. The majority of the funds for this event would be covered by Career Links, however, some sponsorship would be necessary to help off-set some of the cost of the event and provide some funding for the continuation of the project. It was also determined that Jenna Campbell would serve as the team captain and liaison between Career Links and the KLA team. She was instrumental in the success of the kick-off luncheon. Jenna worked closely with Vickie Lootens and her staff throughout the entire project.

The team communicated through email a majority of the time, because it was a challenge for the team to meet as a group outside of our normal KLA meetings. This communication was supplemented by a few group meetings following the normal KLA classes.

By the beginning of December, the date and time of the luncheon was determined, and the location had been narrowed down to three sites. The three sites considered were 2517, Ramada Inn and Conference Center, and Westminister Hall, Grace College. Since Mark Weinstein is sponsored by Grace, he was able to get Westminister at a very discounted rate. By the end of December, the team created the invitation and a

³ See Appendix for Budget and Strategic Plan Timeline Provided by Career Links

sponsorship letter to send to local businesses⁴. The invitations and sponsorship letters were printed through the Career Links budget. The local Chamber of Commerce generously donated a CD mailing list of area businesses to expedite the production of a mailing list.

On January 28, Jenna, Mark, Vickie and several Cardinal Services employees helped to stuff over 600 envelopes. The invitations were mailed on January 30, and the recipients were given a RSVP date of February 20. By February 20, the team had very little response, with the majority of affirmation being from Cardinal Services staff. The team felt this was largely do to the current state of the economy in Kosciusko County. Vickie developed a team of Cardinal employees to personally call the area businesses. By March, 130 RSVP's were received⁵.

From late February to the week prior to the Kick-Off Luncheon the fine details were planned including the meal, speakers, and decorations. Through assistance from Allyn Decker, the KLA moderator, Kevin Deardorff from Lake City Bank agreed to be the Master of Ceremonies for the luncheon. Through Career Links contacts, a member of the National BLN, Erin Reihle agreed to be the keynote speaker. Other members of the Career Links and Cardinal Services staff were placed on the program as well. Erin Riehle generously agreed to waive her presentation fee of \$1200 for this event.

⁴ See Appendix for Invitation and Sponsorship Letter

⁵ See Appendix for RSVP List

III. The Kick-Off Luncheon

The Luncheon was held on April 24th from 12 noon until 1:30 p.m. The KLA group along with Cardinal Services and Grace College arrived at 8:30 a.m. to begin decorating and setting up. Guests began arriving at 11 a.m.

Mark Weinstein welcomed and directed guests as they entered the beautiful Westminster Hall, located at Grace College. A Grace College Student played the piano while guests arrived. Jenna Campbell and Angie Hurlow handed out name badges to all guests, speakers and volunteers. Nikki Harter, Kosciusko Community Hospital, directed guests to the banquet hall and passed out programs of the days events⁶.

One hundred and three guests attended the luncheon from many different businesses across the county. Those in attendance ranged from the Warsaw Parks department to tower bank. The atmosphere was light, yet elegant. A Cardinal Services employee or volunteer was stationed at each table as a “table captain” around the banquet hall to facilitate conversation and to answer questions throughout the luncheon⁷.

The luncheon began right on time, with a wonderful lunch catered by Grace College. The lunch was a plated meal delivered right to the guests at their tables and consisted of a turkey club wrap, pasta salad, sun chips, brownies and tea, coffee or water.

Kevin Deardorff, with his very shining personality was the MC for this event. Dr. Manahan, President of Grace College and a KLA graduate, provided the invocation, Tina Skeell, from Career Links spoke about the efforts that Cardinal Services had undertaken to get this project moving. Steve Savage from the Indiana State BLN spoke about the state’s vision for a BLN and how they hand-selected Kosciusko county as a great location for a BLN chapter. Jane Green, Vice President for Cardinal Services spoke about

⁶ See Appendix for Luncheon Program

⁷ See Appendix for Table Captain Responsibilities

Cardinal Services and the wonderful resource they provide to the county. Erin Reihle, the Keynote speaker and member of the National BLN Board delivered a very passionate look at the very beginnings of the BLN in an the Cincinatti Children's Hospital and left a charge with those in attendance to develop a local BLN not only for the good of the handicapped and disabled but for the good of all of those living in the community, and the businesses that serve them. Vickie Lootens, from Career Links wrapped up the luncheon with gratitude for all of those who helped with get the luncheon off the ground.

When Vickie concluded the luncheon, the table captains provided all those in attendance with questionnaires. The guests were asked to indicate on the questionnaires if they were ready to commit to the development of a BLN, interested, but not ready to commit, or not interested at this time⁸. The event concluded as scheduled promptly at 1:30pm.

⁸ See Appendix Participation Questionnaire

IV. Response to the Luncheon

Prior to the event, the Career Links staff set a goal of getting five businesses to take on the responsibility for the development of this network. Due to the hard work of our team, the Career Links staff, and the great speakers at the luncheon, this goal was far exceeded. The participation questionnaires were collected and analyzed after the luncheon and 25 business leaders from 17 different businesses from Kosciusko County indicated they were ready to commit to developing a BLN. Another 12 business leaders from 10 different businesses indicated they were interested in learning more about the BLN, but were not ready to commit at this time⁹.

⁹ See Appendix Participation Questionnaire Results

V. The Future of the Kosciusko BLN

The first official meeting of the Kosciusko Business Leadership Network is scheduled for May 5th, 2009¹⁰. During this meeting the business leaders will establish a mission statement and set basic goals and objectives for the upcoming year. Career Links will be hosting this meeting, but will begin to encourage the group to stand on its own. Lake City Bank, RR. Donnelley's, and the Chamber of Commerce will continue to be the primary community buy-ins for the Kosciusko BLN.

Resources needed to support the continuation of this network are many in nature. These leaders will need places to meet, provisions for the meetings, and financial resources. Funds will be needed to be set aside for mailings, advertising, copying of materials for meetings, and the planning and implementation of a career fair to get Cardinal Services clients, Career Links clients, and other people with disabilities in the community hired into jobs as a result of the BLN's future efforts. Most importantly funds are needed to off-set the expense of sending representatives from the Kosciusko BLN to state and national BLN meetings to aid in their developmental efforts as well as to officially bring the Kosciusko BLN into existence.

The newly born BLN would greatly benefit from another KLA White Paper Project to organize a job fair. The KLA could be a great partner in the BLN efforts.

In a community with such a large population of people living with disabilities, this network, when established, will greatly benefit the businesses and residents of Kosciusko County.

¹⁰ See Appendix BLN Invitation Letter

VI. Appendix