



July 20, 2012

Brandi Allen
Conferences & Education Director
Alliance for Innovation

Case Study Title: The Arvada Way

Dear Ms. Allen and Selection Committee:

Please find attached the Arvada Economic Development Association (AEDA) nomination for "The Arvada Way" of business retention and economic development. We believe that this program can be adapted to any community interested in building a collaborative approach to taking lasting care of its business community. Part of our strategic activities includes seeking partnerships within the City of Arvada, as well as external partners interested in building a strong business environment. We further seek partnerships statewide, nationally and internationally to learn and share best practices. In Arvada, this successful approach has proven that we are much stronger and achieve greater successes together than we could possibly do individually.

The "corporate culture" within of the City of Arvada was built over time through the strategic efforts and leadership of our former city manager Craig Kocian. He encouraged employees to "do the right thing" – in our case, whatever it takes to support our business community. This freedom and philosophy affords AEDA staff members the opportunity to engage fellow employees at all levels throughout the City of Arvada to become active and innovative members of our team for the sake of business retention and economic development overall. Our new city manager Mark Deven is of the same mindset. We are fortunate in Arvada to have strong and involved elected officials, City management and employees, volunteer business leaders, and many partners.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our story with you and for your consideration of this nomination for "The Arvada Way."

Respectfully submitted,

Hazel Hartbarger

Hazel Hartbarger, Executive Director
Arvada Economic Development Association (AEDA)

The Arvada Way

July 20, 2012

Case Study Title: The Arvada Way

Category: Economic Vitality

Jurisdiction: City of Arvada, Colorado

City Manager: Mark G. Deven

Innovation Award: Yes, we would like consideration for this award

Project Leader:

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The Arvada Way Synopsis

Where do we start? How about the “end of the story?”

In the 2012-2013 edition of the Arvada Chamber of Commerce annual community magazine, an Arvada primary employer paid for a half-page, full color ad to acknowledge the Chamber and Arvada Economic Development Association stating, “In our opinion, this is how business gets done in Arvada. Thank you, Dot and Hazel.” This publication was distributed in June 2012 to 25,000 homes. Another 5,000 magazines were mailed to visitor centers throughout the State of Colorado and will be distributed during the year by the chamber. A copy of the ad is included later in this packet and will be part of the presentation.

So how did we get there? In large part, it was The Arvada Way of economic development.

First of all, The Arvada Way is not a “program” – it’s a culture. It’s a culture based on collaboration, partnerships, and “doing what’s right.”

The Arvada Economic Development Association (AEDA) enjoys strong working relationships and strategic alliances with local organizations such as several chambers of commerce, Historic Olde Town Arvada district, two county agencies, regional partners such as the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation, and the State of Colorado, as well as many other statewide partners. For the purpose of this nomination, we will focus on a more non-traditional component – engaging all employees who work for the City of Arvada – approximately 700 of them. About 90% of these employees are onboard as active members of the economic development team – and we’re working on the other 10%! How does this happen? AEDA staff members attend other City department staff meetings every 1 – 1 ½ years (more often in some areas) to talk about economic development, business retention, and engaging them as partners in our efforts. Action items were formed as a result of the meetings. Each department proactively seeks ways to attract new businesses and support existing ones, and not just through patronizing them. They are guardians and supporters of our strong, proactive business environment.

Here are just a few examples of the results:

- Employees shepherd over businesses in their respective areas of responsibilities. For example, the code enforcement division works with AEDA staff on business-related code violations. Sometimes AEDA will take the lead to resolve the issue when appropriate. Sometimes it can be resolved through an internal conversation. The lines of communications are very collaborative.
- Each year when the local newspaper invites the public to vote for the annual “The Best of Business” venues in the COUNTY, AEDA staff sends the information to all City employees. With the strong response from our employee population, Arvada businesses traditionally receive the largest number of awards. On July 19, 2012, out of 145 categories, 77 Arvada businesses took 1st place and other businesses placed in additional categories.
- Business cards, WITHOUT individual names, are provided to employees and state: “You were patronized by an employee of the City of Arvada. We support local business!” All employees are invited and encouraged to use these cards as they are comfortable in doing so.

- An active “Invest in Arvada” campaign was developed with the assistance of businesses, employees, Arvada Chamber of Commerce and Olde Town merchants – all using their respective resources for the promotion.
- The Arvada Chamber and AEDA staff join together to acknowledge City employees’ “greatness” – and they are GREAT! For instance, when our wastewater division achieved 365 days without a sewer backup because of their good work, an award presentation was made, press releases were sent, public recognitions occurred, and AEDA used the occasion to market to businesses letting them know that because of the quality work done by this division, time and money were saved for business. We love doing this, and have done so with several City departments to date.
- New businesses were attracted to Arvada through our employees (as customers) completing comment cards requesting that the business consider locating to Arvada, following businesses on social media, and sometimes personally approaching business owners suggesting that they consider an Arvada location.
- As the City and/or its regional partners develop and implements capital projects that may have an impact on nearby businesses, staff engages businesses as early as possible in order to seek input and gain support for the project. As an example, a street near the location of a commuter rail line will be modified by City staff after a nearby business reviewed the plans and pointed out that circulation would be adversely impacted by the original design. This will be accomplished at no cost to the business.

Cost: NO MONEY! We invest our time building relationships – internally and externally.

Savings: LOTS! We are retaining businesses in our community through personal and collaborative caretaking of Arvada’s business environment. Our business friendly culture is being advertised through “word of mouth.” New businesses are being attracted to the community because, in part, of the extra efforts of our employees. For instance, a building official offered to come off vacation for a specialty market project to expedite the permit if needed. Panera Bread has come back 10 years later and is now considering a second location in Arvada noting the good relationship with City staff. It just doesn’t get any better!

Private consultant used? Oh no. This was done one employee, one department at a time and has evolved to “The Arvada Way” of economic development. It was done with the encouragement and support from the top (Craig Kocian and now Mark G. Deven) and our elected officials. In fact, City Council members in 2011 included AEDA’s participation in departmental meetings as part of their goals for economic development. Outstanding!!

Summary: The Arvada Way is a model recognized by local, state, national and international organizations. In 2011 it received the Business Retention Expansion International Award for Excellence. In 2012 Arvada was awarded the “Metropolitan Cooperation Award” by the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation. After a conversation with York County Virginia Office of Economic Development staff about The Arvada Way, the thank you note read, “...We plan to implement several of your programs and I promise to let you know how it goes! Our plan is to become the Arvada of the east.” And the quotes could go on and on.



Bottomline: The City of Arvada enjoys a unique and engaged corporate culture validated by achieving one of the 2012 Top Places to Work presented by *The Denver Post*. The Arvada Way is our success story based on that culture. Kudos to Craig Kocian and Mark Deven for growing and protecting that culture.

Presentation Proposal

Presentation Tools

- PowerPoint
- Video
- Interactive voting tool

Entertain and Educate

- Start with an interactive presentation using AEDA's gold mine story to get people engaged and thinking.
- Explain who we are, where we are, and what we do.
- Provide an overview about Arvada's culture which is centered on passion and pride for our community.
- Introduce The Arvada Way.
- Tell some fun stories with photos and quotes.
- Creative video featuring employees' stories.
- Provide a checklist for audience to keep as a starting place for an action plan.

Group Activity

- Interactive gold mine story with a giveaway token.
- Interactive vote on ideas provided by presenters.
- Small group discussion on ideas that could work in respective communities, asking them to discuss what internal colleagues in their communities are most challenging.
- Ask small groups to come up with ideas on how to introduce and engage colleagues (break down the silos).

Live Demonstration

- Use an interactive voting tool to show responses on the screen.
- Group can vote on most practical ideas, best practices identified, or other ideas.
- Participants will receive a small token of appreciation for "playing."



"In our opinion, this is how
business gets done in Arvada."

Thank you,
Dot and Hazel!

~ Your friends at CES ~



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