

Ep.8 - Maureen Donohue Krauss_mixdown

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SPEAKERS

Announcer, Ed Clemente, Maureen Donohue Krauss



Announcer 00:01

Welcome to the Michigan opportunity, an economic development podcast featuring candid conversations with business leaders across Michigan. You'll hear firsthand accounts from Michigan business leaders and innovators about how the state is driving job growth and business investment, supporting a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, building vibrant communities and helping to attract and retain one of the most diverse and significant workforces in the nation.



Ed Clemente 00:28

Welcome to the Michigan Opportunity brought to you by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Hello, my name is Ed Clemente. I'm your host for the podcast today. And we're lucky to have my friend and guest Maureen Kraus, Chief Executive Officer of the Detroit Regional Partnership. Welcome, Maureen.



Maureen Donohue Krauss 00:45

Thanks, Ed. I'm really pleased to be with you today.



Ed Clemente 00:49

And I don't want to tell people we've known each other a while. But I think I've known through at least two jobs maybe more.



Maureen Donohue Krauss 00:55

A little while.



Ed Clemente 00:57

Yeah. So why don't I think I first met you when you were at the Oakland County Economic Development, but I think you were even when further back in Port Huron, was it?... No?



Maureen Donohue Krauss 01:09

Yeah. I've spent a little time doing economic development throughout Southeast Michigan started out as a college intern in Ann Arbor, McComb County, Port Huron, Oakland County. So I know the the Detroit region quite well.



Ed Clemente 01:27

You count... I think it covered the four biggest counties in the state almost there except for Kent County. So good job. So when you also I know had a stint to at the Detroit Regional Partnership as well, doing economic development there as well. Right.



Maureen Donohue Krauss 01:43

So that was actually at the Detroit Regional Chamber, which for many years, right, yes, yeah. Right. How's it, yeah, the names are close. So they house Regional Economic Development for a long time. And it was just two years ago, that really the business leadership decided and the Chamber's was a part of the conversations, that having a standalone economic development organization was the way to go. And so they put together a best in class strategy and program and appropriate funding. And the Detroit Regional Partnership was formed two years ago.



Ed Clemente 02:20

And, you know, I think you sort of gave a little bit but why don't you give the sort of the elevator speech when people tell ask you or say, what is the Detroit Regional Partnership?

M

Maureen Donohue Krauss 02:31

Yeah, absolutely. It you know, it's, um, it covers the city of Detroit and the 11 counties surrounding it. So to give people perspective, I always say from Port Huron to Flint to Ann Arbor to the Ohio border, 5.4 million residents. And we are our job is pretty focused, you know, economic development is a wide range of activity. We focus on one area, and that's business attraction. We are charged by our regional partners and our business leadership board to tell the story of the Detroit region around the world to be very strategic on who we talked to, and bring new opportunities for jobs and investment to communities throughout the Detroit region.

E

Ed Clemente 03:17

And I know when this was getting organized, that it's quite a conglomeration of different people on your board, right? Could you highlight just some of the organizations that I know that I can read you don't have to read them all off but you want to hit it?

M

Maureen Donohue Krauss 03:33

Well, you know, our our board leadership really is regional and focused and they all share a common goal of good jobs for all and new investment, ranging from right laser at Henry Ford health system. Let I should have started by saying led by Gerry Anderson at DTE. Chris Ilitch from Ilitch Holdings is on there. We have foundational representation. So Lajune Montgomery Tabron from Kellogg, as well as Kylee Wells from the Ballmer Group on there. We have the mayor of Detroit and the county executives from Wayne, Oakland and McComb County. So it really runs the gamut Ray Scott from Lear, private sector, philanthropic in government working together for a common goal, which is a really strong message about our region.

E

Ed Clemente 04:26

Yeah, and when you mentioned those counties, so you work like you work with trying to get companies to come here. So like, what would it be? What would be like a good example of like, just a, you know, an example of some company just a random one that would want to you to be able to help out with?

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Maureen Donohue Krauss 04:46

So one of our recent successes I can share with you because it talks about the whole process that we go through, we bring in opportunities, we provide great data and

research. To answer the questions companies need to make their decisions. We work with the MEDC when it comes to things like incentives or job training programs that we need, but in the end our local communities close the deals. So Lordstown motors is a great example, Lordstown is based in Ohio. They do electric vehicles actually light truck vehicles, they announced the new vehicle that they were going to be producing. That is, you know, an all electric light truck. So they needed an r&d Center in the Midwest, they did a search throughout the Midwest. I mean, they did a national search, but the reality was, they were going to manufacturer in Ohio, but they needed some really strong talent, pipeline in order to succeed. So we helped them, you know, the real estate search was one portion of our assistance, but what was the most influential was giving them the talent sort of map about where they would get the talent that they would need. They knew in the end, that they needed to be in the ecosystem that is certainly rapidly evolving here on the whole electric vehicle space. So they chose Farmington Hills, there'll be up to 140 employees, they're driven by the talent and the need to be a part of the ecosystem here for this really new and growing sub industry of electric vehicles.

E

Ed Clemente 06:29

You know, it's funny, because you touched on some of the points, but whenever people ask, like, well, what is economic development is it's very confusing to the general public. But it is such a multitude of variables given upon like you just gave a couple, but it could be 10 other things, if you you know, if you didn't know what the project was.

M

Maureen Donohue Krauss 06:48

It really is to help businesses make smart decisions, and in the end, match up the right businesses with the right communities. And, you know, our data has to be strong and consistent. We have an amazing research team, we spend a lot of effort on that. At the Detroit Regional Partnership, I put our research team up against any in the country, we have to know our communities and what their value proposition is, you know, what might be important in shiawassee County might not necessarily be important in Troy. So you know, we have 348 communities to understand what their goals are, and what makes sense for them. And then, you know, once again, getting back to talent, we really need to understand what talent Do we have to offer not just today, but the talent pipeline. And that's how we determine which companies makes sense to talk to. And that's how, who we tell our story to.

E

Ed Clemente 07:46

You know, and I'm wondering that when you talk about this is another variable, but this is

a unique variable, because you got this job, sort of in the middle of the COVID Era, right? And that makes things a lot different. And I would imagine even how you approach companies now is a whole different platform. At least I don't know how you're doing it, but go ahead and explain some of that.

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Maureen Donohue Krauss 08:08

Well, it is a little different, you might not think that taking a new opportunity like this in the middle of a global pandemic, and an economic downturn would be the smartest career move I've ever made. But actually, I'm in the perfect job. It's it's just a really a dream come true for me. I think you know what we had to do. And it's such an overused word of pivot. But really, we didn't pause. So our job is to go out and meet with our customer. We don't sit here waiting for a customer to come to us. So as an example, last year, we had over 70 trips on the book, where the team, you know, I would have gone out to meet with customers, strategic customers, that came to a grinding halt in mid March. But in the meantime, we had to figure out how do we allow company's prospects our customer to experience being in this region? So you know, we went virtual, and we've done over last year, we did over 25, trade Michigan missions overseas and hosted delegations here in the area virtually. So you know, we had delegation come in, virtually from Israel, we had one from France, we have two from France. We've also had to learn how to show off real estate virtually, whether it's using drone footage, we've done buildings inside using drones, we've done outdoor tours of property. So really, to show our customer to go through that first or second round about what we, you know, have to offer in this area when they can't fly over here and then we can show them

E

Ed Clemente 09:53

When you talk a little bit about these trade missions, I imagine because I think you told me this At one point where you're actually more productive since COVID, a little bit, because you don't have to drive in your car as much, you know, maybe to get places. But what's like a virtual trade mission like now when you know, you're across the globe timing, you know, all different hours, you know, you have to worry about all that stuff.

M

Maureen Donohue Krauss 10:17

Yeah, it is different. And you know, you have to be a road work warrior to love this work. And I am I mean, it, it's, but it's not glamorous, we're not going on vacation, right. So you travel, I mean, I've traveled 18 hours, and then two hours later, I'm in meetings for eight hours. But so you know, and then you're dealing with the timezone issue and the travel issue and the different food issue and whatever. But it is really exciting to represent your

region around the world and tell your story. So there's that. So virtual trade mission, how could we do that? So it's, it is different. So let's say we've done a couple of virtual trade missions to Germany in the past year. So we have a target, it might be, let's say about Next Gen Automotive, that would be our target that we were visiting. And we target the companies, we connect with them. And we set up appointments all on a virtual platform to talk to them and give them our elevator pitch and, and answer their questions. The differences in the past, we could have crammed 40 meetings in a week. Now, we might do that over two or three weeks, so we can adapt a little more to our customers schedule they're not crammed in, you know quite as closely.



Announcer 11:32

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Ed Clemente 11:50

When you talk about, I would imagine with our industry, you've probably clustered with certain sort of countries around the world, who are usually the best prospects. I know, on your website, which I won't repeat it, but you there's a lot of companies here already from other countries, but I guess that helps dovetail into your approach in how you you know, you want to attract more business to this this area?



Maureen Donohue Krauss 12:12

No, you're absolutely correct in that the region has over 1,400 international companies here, there are certain countries that we've seen more activity through the years, Canada, obviously, Germany, Japan, the UK are all big investors of big numbers, Italy came up during the Fiat years. But so those are obvious targets. But we've done more of a deep dive with our clusters that we target. And then we've looked per cluster, where where are the strings are per country. So we do try to be very strategic about that. It doesn't mean if someone comes from another cluster, or another country that we haven't targeted, of course, we'll talk to them. But we try to really, you know, take care of our investors that invest with us by being good stewards of their funds. And that's how we take care of them. They want to invest in a strong regional economy, we have to be great stewards of that investment. So we make sure that you know, I mean, yeah, we'd all love to go to fun countries and places for trade missions. But sometimes you have to know that sometimes you always go where the business is. And I always laugh because I love Italy. I could never justify a trade mission to Italy before Fiat? Well, when there's a lot of activity there all of a

sudden, but there's a reason for instance, I've been to Germany over 30 times. Lots of action there.

E

Ed Clemente 13:42

Yeah, I'm partial to Italy, because my parents. The other thing, this is the part of a two part question. Yes. You've already sort of touched on this. But I think it's important for people to understand how fortunate we are, you know, people go "auto auto auto" and we're always like, 'oh, auto, but I'm like, you don't have any the rest of the world would love to have what we have here." So what sectors include auto with their suppliers Anyway, you want to do it - But then is there other sectors that sort of percolate up that are unique to our region?

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Maureen Donohue Krauss 14:13

Absolutely. And the first thing I'll say about auto is you hear about the new new companies like I talked about Lordstown Motors, new companies that are in the new, you know, electric vehicle autonomous vehicle space. What we have here that people don't see every day is how many of our existing companies are already doing this work and spending a lot of effort in it, whether it's the OEMs or the tier ones or the tier twos. So that's, you know, that new next gen industry for auto is really a strong anchor here. Logistics is so important. You know, sometimes we take for granted that we sit and look across the river at Canada. That's really important. So the logistics industry, not only the proximity to Canada with that, the busiest North American border crossing, but we Look at our airport, it moves people around all over the world in. I don't want to say we take it for granted because we're so used to it, but you can go to many other cities that do not have that air access that we do. So logistics has been a big industry, outside of automotive smart manufacturing is tremendous, because we just know how to build to engineer design and build things here and it's strong for auo, but we also have other industries like defense that have built on sort of that culture that we have in our area. In other industries, I was looking at a company the other day that makes sales for huge sailboats here, and parts of a sailboat. And that, you know, we do things that move right. And we have a good sense of how to go through the whole process to get from idea to market. And so we always look to build on those core strengths. And if your idea sectors.

E

Ed Clemente 16:05

And last couple questions I wanted to get to you, Maureen, is that is there any sort of like, if you're someone for job training, I think your talent channel in this place is pretty good for the Southeast Michigan. But is there anything you like? Like the highly focused when

you talk to people about how the talent like you mentioned that for your when you brought out of Ohio, right? What is really deep down attractive about us for Workforce here.

M

Maureen Donohue Krauss 16:37

So it's the whole variety of workforce that we have in all the different components of bringing that product to market. The university research corridor, is really tremendous. When you look at the strong, you know, University of Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State and the pipeline they provide, our community college system has some really unique pockets of expertise that they bring to that workforce. We value education, when it comes to providing that pipeline. We have more engineers than any place in North America here. 99,000, that's a talent strength that we have - And guess what, it's 30% cheaper than the coasts?

E

Ed Clemente 17:20

Oh, yes, we know that.

M

Maureen Donohue Krauss 17:22

You know, it's telling that story, though, to companies and influencers to say, you know, you can get the same engineer here and they cost 30% less. And companies care about their bottom line, they want talent. But there's always that accounting department that cares about the bottom line. And we can put those forces together and really help companies succeed.

E

Ed Clemente 17:45

The last question I have for you might be your hardest one, but what do you love best about Michigan?

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Maureen Donohue Krauss 17:51

I truly love the diversity of the seasons here. I love that today is a beautiful sunny day, but there's still snow in my backyard. I think fall is spectacular. There's nothing like summer in Michigan and being at a lake. You know, you're never more than six miles from body of water here. And once again, when you so I've spent time living in, for instance, Phoenix, which has its own unique beauty. But it does get a little monotonous after a while there aren't those changes. I think that makes I mean, this might sound a little deeper than we

want to get here, but I think the changing of seasons here makes us a more resilient people to changes in our economy and in our life. We can roll with it a little easier, because we know that things change and they get better and they come back.



Ed Clemente 18:43

Well. Once again, our guest was Maureen Kraus, Chief Executive Officer of the Detroit Regional Partnership and friend again and Maureen, thanks a lot for taking time and you brought up some great points and hope to work with you in the future in the MEDC.



Maureen Donohue Krauss 18:57

Absolutely, Ed, I look forward to it. Thanks for having me.



Announcer 19:01

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