



THE GROWING EDGE

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Dear John,

I am fortunate to be able to meet and speak with a wide cross-section of people as part of my job marketing Greater Statesville. Recently, I had an opportunity to address a group of Charlotte marketing professionals, and the questions they asked were a little different than those we typically get from the general business community. Their questions focused more on the mechanics of positioning and getting the word about Greater Statesville to our regional and national target audience. Following is a summary of those questions and the related answers:



Q: How does the GSDC sell Iredell?

A: A number of different factors come into play when positioning the Greater Statesville area. At the macro level, we position ourselves within the state of North Carolina. North Carolina is one of the most successful states for industrial recruitment, and we make a conscious effort to associate ourselves with all of the factors which make the state such a desirable location; skilled workforce, temperate climate, low cost of living, pro-business atmosphere, low unionization, excellent colleges and universities. Regionally, we position ourselves as part of Charlotte USA; again associating ourselves with all of the positives the region has to offer; large airport with non-stop flights to major cities in the US and abroad, sports and entertainment amenities of a big city (Panthers, Bobcats, NASCAR, symphony, etc.), and headquarters of major international companies (BOA, Lowes, Sonic Automotive, etc.).

Q: What are Iredell's most attractive attributes to interested companies? How does the EDC market these features?

A: Iredell County - and by extension, Greater Statesville - has one of the 10 lowest property tax rates in the state of North Carolina, and is the only one of those lowest taxed counties located in a major metropolitan area. This, combined with somewhat lower property values than are found in surrounding counties such as Mecklenburg, makes the relative cost of locating a business here significantly lower. Greater Statesville's location

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In The News

The Statesville Record & Landmark recently ran this

at the intersection of two Interstates is one of its strongest selling points, but beyond that, the ACCESSIBILITY of those Interstates is rather unique. Virtually every industrial site in the area is within 5 miles of an Interstate exit. Greater Statesville is also attractive because of its airport - one of the better regional airports in the southeast in terms of facilities and runway length - and the availability of large tracts of developable land immediately adjacent to that airport. We also boast fine educational institutions - from the top-10 rated Iredell-Statesville Schools to Mitchell Community College.

[article about growth at Statesville-based TharpeRobbins.](#)



Q: What advertising mediums have you used? What success have you had with this? Do you have any numbers to go with this?

A: Greater Statesville has traditionally used a mix of print advertising placement in regional and national publications targeting corporate developers, site selection professionals, and the business community at-large. Over the past two years, we have augmented these print campaigns with an aggressive, targeted Internet strategy which includes elements of pay-per-click advertising, permission-based email and social networking. We have run a series of pay-per-click campaigns with Google Adwords which have very significantly increased our Internet profile. Since the inception of our Adwords program in May of 2008, more than 6 million people have seen our ads, and 2,100 of them have clicked on one of them and visited our website. On the email side, many people in the business community are familiar with our "Growing Edge" e-newsletter which is sent twice each month to more than 500 local and regional business contacts, but we also publish a quarterly e-news blast called "Front & Center" which is more closely targeted to approximately 250 contacts in the site selection and corporate development community. Greater Statesville has also developed a presence on several social networking sites, including LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

Q: How has Iredell faired in the past in recruiting new businesses?

A: Greater Statesville, in conjunction with Mooresville-South Iredell, has unquestionably been the most successful region -- for our market size -- in recruiting new business over the past 10 years. According to Site Selection Magazine, the acknowledged authoritative source for professional site selection and corporate real estate development, Statesville-Mooresville has been the #1 Micropolitan area for new and expanding industry four of the last five, and six of the past ten years. That is an extraordinary level of consistent performance and success.

John

As always, feel free to email me with news about your company's events, awards, new products, honors, etc. and I will include them in an upcoming issue of *The Growing Edge*.

jmarek@greaterstatesville.org

Firefly Balloons Finds a New Home

Largest hot air balloon manufacture moves to new facility on Meacham Road

People who regularly drive by the former Firefly Balloons manufacturing facility immediately off I-77 on Salisbury Road have probably noticed the lack of activity around that building since the first of July. Not to fret, though, Firefly has not become a victim of the down economy. In fact, quite the opposite, as they have moved into a new facility across town.



Preparations began several months before the actual move on June 29th. Because hot air balloons are strictly controlled by the FAA, it was necessary to get FAA approval for the new facility. This process, while fairly standard, is extremely time consuming.

Firefly General Manager Keith Gantt indicated that the company had been looking for a new building for some time. Although the new facility -- the former Badger Sportswear HQ on Meacham Road -- is not significantly larger than the former facility, it has far more useable space. "We have kind of an unusual product in that we require a fairly long, narrow production area without physical obstructions like posts and columns." Keith also mentioned that the large parking lot immediately adjacent to the new building was a major plus for the site. "We need a large flat area to test-inflate the finished balloons. At the prior location we actually had to go off-site to do this, which was a logistics nightmare. Now we can just walk out the side door."

When asked about making such a significant investment during difficult economic times, Gantt indicated that, while the pace of orders has slowed somewhat since the first of the year, a significant backlog of projects will keep production busy for the foreseeable future. "Balloons continue to be very popular, both as personal recreation and as an advertising medium. The people who buy our balloons tend to be very, very passionate about them. The market will bounce back, sooner rather than later."

More about [Firefly Balloons](#).

NC Department of Commerce to Begin Calling Small Businesses in Greater Statesville

New program funded by Recovery Act aims to identify at-risk companies and provide referrals to state agencies

Over the next several weeks, local companies with workforces greater than 10 employees will be contacted by representatives of a new state program that is designed to "head off" layoffs and closings by identifying companies who are at risk and referring them to the appropriate state agencies for additional assistance.



"Fundamentally, the program is very similar to what we have been doing at a local level since the start of the economic downturn last year. We are

certainly happy to have the assistance of the state and encourage all of our Greater Statesville businesses to cooperate fully with the representatives from the NC Department of Commerce," said John Marek, Director of Business/Retention/Expansion & Marketing for the Greater Statesville Development Corporation.

Companies that are deemed to be at-risk or with opportunities for immediate job growth will receive a face-to-face visit from a Department of Commerce case-worker.

Mitchell Community College to Add FastTrack Certified Training for Entrepreneurs

New program seeks to assist new businesses in getting off to a good start and growing here in Greater Statesville

Later this month, faculty and staff from Mitchell Community College will participate in a FastTrack training program at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte. FastTrack programs are delivered by a variety of over 300 alliance organizations -- non-academic, academic, non-profit and for-profit-including chambers of commerce, business development centers, local and regional economic development councils, colleges, universities, consulting firms, and many others across the 50 United States and select countries around the world. These organizations pursue meaningful goals to support entrepreneurship every day. And their leaders are passionate about:



- Building their communities by building strong economies.
- Growing their organizations by providing valued services.
- Fulfilling their missions by transforming principles into practice.

The facilitator training the Mitchell staff will complete is designed to take their practical business skills and experiences and convert them into powerful entrepreneurship training and coaching skills.

FastTrack is a practical, hands-on, entrepreneur-learning program designed to help entrepreneurs hone the skills needed to create, manage, and grow a successful business. FastTrack participants don't just learn about business, they live it. They work on their own business ideas or existing ventures throughout the program-moving their ventures to reality.

FastTrack is a framework for entrepreneurs helping entrepreneurs. Programs combine facilitator-led sessions, small-group exercises, guest subject-matter experts, and idea sharing with peers with business coaching and mentoring.

FastTrack programs help individuals at each challenging stage of growth:

- Starting a Business
- Growing a Business
- Specialized Business

GDSC Director of BRE & Marketing, John Marek, who is also a corporate trainer for Mitchell, is one of the staff who will be participating in the certification training. "Honestly, I have always considered start-up ventures as a little outside the focus of my responsibilities with the GSDC, but with the economy rebounding slowly and jobs scarce, more and more people are looking at the possibility of starting their own business. As a former entrepreneur, myself, I have a pretty good understanding of the business development process and I hope to be able to share some of my experiences -- both good and bad -- with budding entrepreneurs."

John also sees entrepreneurs as the "third leg" of the economic development platform. "Typically, our focus has been, and will continue to be, on recruiting and developing existing industry. But, I think there is a place for entrepreneurs at the economic development table, and hopefully, my participation in the FastTrack program will help."

EDM Systems Opens New Facility in Statesville

Machine rebuilder/refurbisher plans to begin manufacturing operations at new, larger site

Electrical discharge machine (EDM) repair and recondition specialty company EDM Systems LLC recently completed its move into the former Hanesbrands building on Meacham Road in Statesville. Prior to the move, EDM leased approximately 9,000 square feet in the Kontane Logistics building on Old Murdock Road in Troutman. The new facility incorporates more than 17,000 square feet of storage, office and manufacturing space. This added space allows EDM to position itself as one of the largest companies stocking used EDM machine in the country. "Every machine located at our warehouse is under power and can be fully demonstrated," Says Tim Harwood, National Sales Manager for EDM. "If the machine you are looking for is not in our inventory, we'll find the machine for you through our vast database of EDM customers and dealers throughout the USA, Canada, and Mexico. EDM Systems also has the ability to work with our customers to provide the best fit machine at the most creative financing packages available."



In addition to new and refurbished machinery sales, EDM plans to begin manufacturing precision metal components at the site, and is currently working out a contract to provide parts for a nationally-known firearms manufacturer.

North Carolina Ranked #2 for Workforce by CNBC

Earns spot in Top 10 overall for business

North Carolina was recently named in the Top Ten of CNBC's "America's Top States for Business in '09," and ranked No. 2 in the Workforce subcategory. In 2008 North Carolina was ranked No. 3 for Workforce. Georgia, which ranked No. 10 overall, was No. 1 for Workforce.



The state, which finished 9th overall, also scored highly for Transportation & Infrastructure, Business Friendliness and Technology & Innovation. See the [full ranking](#).

Green Workforce Workshop Planned

Commerce program coming to Hickory in September

Commerce's Division of Workforce Development is sponsoring a seminar focused on the emerging green industry sector. "Green 101: Planting a Green Foundation for N.C. Workforce Development," scheduled for Aug. 27 in Raleigh and Sept. 1 in Hickory, is designed to provide foundational information on green jobs, green businesses in the state and green workforce



training needs. For more information and online registration see www.ncwia.com and click on Training Center; or contact the Workforce Development Training Center at (919) 329-5588.

Mitchell College to Offer TechnoMarketing Series Again This Fall

Four workshop sessions focus on using Internet technologies to reduce marketing costs and improve marketing results

Mitchell Community College and the Greater Statesville Development Corporation will team up again this Fall to offer the TechnoMarketing series of workshops for businesses seeking cost-effective instruction on web-based marketing technologies. The series of four workshops will be conducted as two hour lunch-and-learn sessions on Tuesdays, beginning September 22nd.



"We are really pleased to be able to bring John (Marek) back for a second round of these workshops," said Mike Tucker, Director of the Small Business Center at Mitchell. "The response when we first offered it last Spring was very positive, and so many people said they wished they could attend, but the morning schedule didn't work for them. We hope that the lunchtime sessions will open the program up to more businesses. Certainly, the price is right. I just got a flyer the other day from a training organization offering a similar program for \$750."

The complete Mitchell TechnoMarketing series will cost \$60, or \$15 per lunch-and-learn session. Each session will focus on a specific web-based marketing technology:

September 22 - Networking with Social Media: How to Use LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to Grow Your Business

September 29 - Permission-Based E-mail Marketing: Reaching Your

Customers with Constant Contact

October 13 - Search Engines and Internet Advertising: Targeting Your Markets with Google AdWords

October 20 - Digital mass Media: How to really Use Blogs, Podcasts, YouTube and RSS to Build Your Brand

The workshops will be facilitated by John Marek, Director of BRE & Marketing for the Greater Statesville Development Corporation (GSDC). The GSDC was recognized nationally in 2009 as a "top 10" economic development organization, in part because of its innovative web-based marketing efforts. John has also been recognized by Google AdWords and Constant Contact as a qualified solutions provider.

For more information about the TechnoMarketing Workshop Series or to pre-register, please contact the Mitchell Community College Technology and Workforce Development Center, 704-878-3226.

Just for Fun

Mad Men Returns to AMC

Its been almost 9 months since we last saw our friends at Sterling-Cooper. In the last episode before the break the Cuban Missile Crisis loomed and Don's own personal crisis came to a head as trouble at work was compounded by Betty's revelation that she is pregnant. The preview for Sunday's episode reads, "Changes at Sterling Cooper affect Pete and Ken. Don and Sal go on a business trip." For a more complete recap and hints of what's to come, check out Countdown to Season Three.



The Greater Statesville Development Corporation (GSDC) is a public-private partnership of local governments and business leaders. Our purpose is to promote the industrial and commercial development of the City of Statesville, the Town of Troutman and the surrounding area of upper Iredell County, North Carolina. We provide a variety of services and assistance to help locate, maintain and expand new and existing businesses and industries in our area.

View available [sites and buildings](#).

View [resources](#) for existing industry.

Learn more about the [Committee of 100](#).

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