

Ep.3.43 - Terri Fitzpatrick

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SPEAKERS

Announcer, Ed Clemente, Terri Fitzpatrick

A 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.

E Ed Clemente 00:29

Hello, I'm your host, Ed Clemente. And we're very fortunate to have a good worker here at the MEDC. I have to admit, I haven't met her myself a lot. But it's great to meet you sort of the most, I think I've had a chance to, Terri Fitzpatrick. She's the Executive Vice President and Chief Real Estate and Global Attraction Officer as well as the Executive Director for Tribal Business Development at the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. It's a mouthful. Thank you, Terri, for being here.

T Terri Fitzpatrick 00:57

Well, thank you for having me.

E Ed Clemente 00:58

Ya know, it's great to talk to you about this, because I've been wanting to get you on the show. I know, quite a few different times, but things just seemed didn't work out for us. So I'm glad you're on. And, you know, we're having you on today for two things kind of. One is to talk a little bit about what you do at your job, because it's such a uniquely qualified job and how your background and your foundation got you to this position. And secondly, because you are a member of a Tribe, and will tell us more about that. But why you do tribal business

development and what it means to you, because this is just celebrating Native American Month, and I thought this would be a good time to have all this, have a chance to do two things at once. So anyway, first of all, let's go with your job, your regular job at the MEDC first.

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Terri Fitzpatrick 01:46

Okay, well, thanks again, my regular job, you already gave up the title. Now I'll sort of tell you what I do. On the real estate side, we look for sites across the state to use for business attraction and expansion opportunities. This is a program that other states have had in place for many years and even decades. And so Michigan's behind, we only started a couple years ago. And during that two year time period, we've worked on building the program at the same time, we're working on a lot of deals. So that's very interesting. And it's very busy. Because sites, of course, between sites and talent, it's the biggest two things that companies are looking for, in their decisions about where they're going to locate, and the global attraction team, we lead all of the new attraction projects. So we have a global team in Europe and in Asia, and also in the U.S., North America, and lead that team on doing outreach and making sure we're converting leads to opportunities that lead to real projects for the MEDC. And then the Tribal Business Development program I also oversee, is a program I started for the MEDC back in 2010, I was recruited to start that. And at that time, there was like only two operating EDCs, Tribal EDCs in the state. And now a lot of business development. That's grown tremendously since we started on the program. And a person that I hired when I was when I started that back in 2010 is still with the still with the program, even though I left, went to the private sector and came back. So there's been great continuity and development in that area. And the fourth area really falls under attraction, but that's the site selector outreach. So we deal with site selectors across the country, and trying to encourage them to look at Michigan as the place to consider doing business in.

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Ed Clemente 03:51

Yeah, legislatively, you were probably working there when I was in the legislature, but I remember doing a lot of bills for them, and quite a bit was for the same attraction issues, right? Usually, it seems like and could you maybe explain a few of the things most times companies, you know, when they want to move somewhere, and it varies from what the company needs to what the state is or the geography sometimes. So what do you usually find the few top things company's are looking for?

T

Terri Fitzpatrick 04:22

Consistently the top things that companies of any size, but especially, you know, the mobility sector as we're going through this conversion in automotive industry in the country and certainly in the state. Sites and talent. Do we have a place to build or to go to and do we have the talent and the workforce to support our operating needs, not just now but into the future? And then you have probably the third and fourth factors are transportation logistics. Not just is there a highway or railroad or port nearby, but how close are they? And then also energy. What kind of energy is available in the area? How long would it take to get enhanced energy if needed to the area? And then and then the other one would be infrastructure related to

utilities, sewer, water, stormwater. So all of the things that, you know, make a site ready for investment. That's what the companies are looking at. But without question, the focus is on sites and talent.

E

Ed Clemente 05:32

And then obviously, it's like, sometimes a pendulum how that moves around, because maybe 10-15 years ago might have been a little different. And you always have to keep adapting your game plan, sort of your strategic plan as to how you sort of meet these needs. Right?

T

Terri Fitzpatrick 05:47

Yeah, that's so true. That's really true. And the thing that we don't know when we didn't have a site portfolio and we or, you know, an active site program, an active talent engagement is, what did we miss? So, part of it is that the industry, certainly, it changes, what is needed to get these deals done. But also, you don't know what you missed when you didn't have these tools available too, so it's a good thing we're working on both of them now.

E

Ed Clemente 06:18

And it's up to you how you want to answer this next part, but your career guide you here through a lot of different ways. And that ties into the Tribal business development. But can you sort of give us a retrospective, because I don't think it's something you grew up thinking you're going to be doing this, like most people? How did you get here? What other jobs did you have before you got here that?

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Terri Fitzpatrick 06:40

Yeah that's interesting. I started working in real estate in 1985. So I'm getting I'm getting pretty close to that 40 year mark of working in real estate. And I've done a number of different things. I worked as a commercial appraiser for eight years. And then I went, I lived in California, then I came back to Michigan, to my hometown in the Upper Peninsula. I'm a member of the Sioux Sainte Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. And I went to work for my Tribe for 10 years and worked in their economic development arm, also was their real estate director on the government side, and the vice president of development on the enterprise and casino side. So, very interesting interplay between the three of them, different kinds of land status for Tribes that affects how you could get financing, especially back then in the 90s, how you can still get financing today. And, so that was a very, very important learning time in my career. And I went to work for the Tribe like the first the year after the gaming was legalized in Michigan. So they actually started to have some begin to have some resources to do other things. Loved my tribal work still, more than anything I've ever done, because we got to see when we had a successful project, that money put back into the community in the form of education or health care, or elderly services. So the you know, the joy of working in an Indian Tribe is seeing what you can do for your people in your community. And you don't often get to experience that so closely in anything else you do. So worked for my Tribe, and worked there 10 years. Under Governor Granholm, I was a real estate director for the State of Michigan Department of Technology

Management and Budget for six years, and then I went to the MEDC to start the Tribal Business Development program. But even when I was with the DTMB, I served as a Tribal liaison for the department. So I never really had a break in dealing with Tribes in the private sector, then I went in the private sector and did mostly commercial development work, but also did consulting with Indian Tribes across the country, and economic and strategic planning for economic development, diversification, and also for housing and just master land use planning for Tribes. And so, had that private sector experience. And then I came back and just a couple years ago, recruited to lead the site readiness efforts for the state. So I have a really unique perspective, having worked in a Tribe, so a lot with federal government and working for the state and then also working in the private sector kind of in between those two times. That gives me a unique perspective when we're looking at deals and looking at projects because there's a lot of questions that get asked and process that needs to be complied with that many people think the other party's been unreasonable or they don't understand why they're asking it just being an impediment, but really, when you've seen it from all those sides, you understand that people are, for the most part, doing those things because it's required by a funding source or legislation or something like that. So there's usually a reason there's not as many obstacles put up as people think they just have to understand why things are being asked for.

A Announcer 10:11

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E Ed Clemente 10:27

What is it sort of mean to you? This is more of a personal question, maybe but what does it mean to be a member of a tribe?

T Terri Fitzpatrick 10:35

With respect to economic growth?

E Ed Clemente 10:38

No, no, no, just you growing up as a person.

T Terri Fitzpatrick 10:40

I'm very proud to be a member of an Indian Tribe. I grew up in the late 60s, early 70s. So it was a very different, Indian people weren't treated that well, you know, they were very marginalized. I would still tell you that goes on today, but in different ways. And so, very proud to be a part of a Tribe. I have so much gratitude for growing up with tribal people, and where there's such a strong sense of community, that what you do, it really should be always to benefit others, and that comes back to you as well, because you're part of that community. And

so that community-driven focus, really has tribes look at business differently. When tribes, with gaming, people think all Tribes, and all Indian people are rich because of gaming, that's not true. You know, a lot of tribes do not give out per capita or payments to their members, our tribe is one of them that does not do that. Revenues go back into the infrastructure of the community. And that's the broader community, because your Tribes, where we are in Michigan, you're not in these isolated areas, 1000s of miles away from others, you're incorporated into the community. And so when there are jobs, and when there are benefits that tribes put into the community, and healthcare and education and infrastructure, it benefits that larger community. So I think that that's, I feel very fortunate to have had that background and also be exposed to the cultural traditions and the spirituality of an Indian tribe compared to my Catholic faith. It's an interesting blend. And so there's so much to learn, from the way that indigenous people feel the connection to the earth and the world and their community in a in a very seamless way that you don't often see in other cultures that I've ever dealt with.

E

Ed Clemente 12:56

I've been to I think the church you might have grown up with, St. Ignatius? [Yes.] Yeah, I've been the mass there. But I'm Catholic, though. And that dovetails into your last question. If you could go back and talk to your 17-year-old self before you had the path, what would you tell yourself today?

T

Terri Fitzpatrick 13:18

I would tell myself a few things. And I would tell others the same as try to find your balance early on, you know, when you're when you're a hard worker, and when you produce results, people will tax you, they'll tax you personally, they'll tax you privately. And there's that saying, the days teach us much that the years never know. And I think that's so true. Because you if you aren't really finding your balance and protecting your balance along the way, life just goes by really fast. And you miss out on a lot of things that are really important, doing things that aren't. So I would say, find your balance. And I would say take risks. I've made, I've worked on billion dollar deals, multimillion dollar deals, made people in the private sector 10s of millions of dollars. But I was never able to just take that risk and go out on my own to do those things for myself. And if you can do it for others, you can probably do it for yourself. So I would say don't be afraid to take risk. And the last thing I would say is, make sure that you're not perpetuating the prejudices that you attribute to others. And I say that, today in the 21st century, where there's been a lot accomplished I still think there's a lot of bias against women particularly and it is often so you know ingrained into our work and what we see and do every day that people don't think about it. And women can be just as bad as men at sexism. So you have to be mindful of that, we'll have females who I've worked with say, Would you think that if I was a man, honestly, would you think that if I was a man or, going into a room with colleagues, and always assuming the man is the one who's in charge by the other parties? I mean, those things still exist today. And I think that you can't assume that someone else's responsibility to get past that, you have to take responsibility for your role in it as well. So I think that's what I'm, that's what I would tell my 17-year-old self.

E

Ed Clemente 15:07

I hope they could handle that. That's because I know I wasn't ready for a lot of that stuff I think

at 17. But it's the kind of stuff you wish someone would have told you at that point. That's the challenge. [That's for sure.] Yeah. Well, anyway, once again, our guest today was Terri Fitzpatrick, she's executive vice president for chief real estate and global attraction officer here at the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, as well as executive director for tribal business development. And you did a great job today, Terri, and I appreciate you taking some time to do the show today. [Thank you.]

A

Announcer 16:18

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