UGA MBA Student Presents Strategies and Tactics for Attracting and Retaining a Qualified Workforce

In December, UGA MBA Student Charles Simpson wrapped up 11 months of research and idea-generation by presenting the Dalton-Whitfield Archway Partnership Executive Committee with strategies and tactics that the Flooring industry can use to attract and retain a qualified workforce. Specifically, Simpson shared the following strategies:

- **Strategy #1**: Create content and experiences that link flooring industry attributes to middle school students’ aspirations for power and beauty.
- **Strategy #2**: Create content and experiences that tangibly illustrate to high school students the advanced technology and variety of opportunity in the flooring industry.
- **Strategy #3**: Spark a dialogue about Dalton’s role as an incubator for tomorrow’s engineering and manufacturing innovations.
- **Strategy #4**: Thrust the flooring industry to the forefront of the national dialogue regarding sustainability and energy/waste conservation challenges.
- **Strategy #5**: Tell Dalton’s story to “rust belt” migrants in search of engineering work and “30-somethings” who are seeking a community suitable to raising or starting a family.

Simpson gave the committee several tactics to accomplish each of the above listed strategies. In addition, Simpson articulated brand “pillars” that the industry can use to influence the manner in which the tactics he provided are executed.

As part of his presentation, Simpson identified the key audiences that the strategies and tactics should target. These audiences include the future workforce (middle and high school students); “thirty-something” professionals in large cities considering a move to locales such as Dalton to start or raise a family; Dalton’s education community; the flooring industry; and the Dalton community. Simpson stated several times that Dalton should purposefully seek to position itself as a family-oriented community within the heart of a multi-billion dollar global industry.

Following Simpson’s presentation, the Successful, Sustainable Industries Issue Work Group met to discuss how the strategies and tactics could be implemented locally. The Work Group is chaired by Mohawk Sr. Industrial Engineer James Gordy and is co-chaired by Rick Hooper of Shaw Industries Group’s Corporate Legal Department.
Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority Enters into Contract with Georgia Tech to Study Community’s Readiness for a Business Incubator

Over the past year, the Diverse, Forward-Thinking Economy Issue Work Group has discussed the possibility of developing a business incubator in Dalton-Whitfield. In furtherance of these discussions, the group has toured the business incubator in Chattanooga and entertained guest speakers on the topic. In December, the group invited representatives from Georgia Tech to make a proposal for conducting an incubator feasibility study. During the presentation, Georgia Tech presented a three-phase proposal involving a community readiness study, business plan preparation for the incubator, and a feasibility study.

Following the Georgia Tech presentation, the members of the group voted to formally recommend to the Executive Committee that the community enter into a contract with Georgia Tech to conduct the community readiness study. The Executive Committee discussed this recommendation at the December meeting and agreed to move forward with the community readiness study with funding from the Joint Development Authority and the Archway Partnership.

The Joint Development Authority is currently working with Georgia Tech on the logistics of the study. Georgia Tech hopes to begin the 8-week community readiness study in February.