

## Wichita Chamber Business Accelerator

Episode 99

Bill Maness

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Don: [00:00:00] Welcome to another exciting edition of the WCBA, powered, of course, by Evergy. First, thank you for listening. Don't forget to like us. Love us. Share us. Follow us. We truly appreciate you checking us out. Today in the house, E, is Syndeo.

Ebony: Yes. We are really excited. We have Bill here today. How's it going, Bill?

Bill Maness: It's going very well, thank you.

Ebony: Yes. Tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do.

Bill Maness: Well, who I am could probably take more time than we have on this, but you know, we're not gonna go into that right. Too deeply. I'm the, the founder and the CEO of Syndeo Outsourcing, which is a Wichita based company that provides HR outsourcing services to small businesses in the Wichita, Kansas metro area.

Ebony: That's what's up. And you, when did you begin this?

Bill Maness: 20 years ago, we celebrated 20 years in July. Wow. I, I always tell the story, the reason I started the company is cuz I got fired from my previous job, . And, I worked for a similar type of company that was a national company and was a regional representative for 'em.

And, we didn't really see eye to eye on what good customer service was. Their idea of my job was to go get business and being a commission salesperson. I only got paid if they took care of my clients and they weren't doing a really good job. So being not a young man anymore and knowing the difference between good service and bad service, I kind of called 'em to task.

And they didn't like that. They said, well, don't worry about that. You just go get more. And I'm like, go get more, and what? Have 'em walk out the back door again that, that's not good business. Yeah. So we just parted company and then I, I had a choice of either starting my own deal and, and putting my money where my mouth was or going to work for somebody else.



You know, at the ripe old age of 43 thought, you know what? I'm old enough to do this on my own now. So decided that that's where we're gonna go. Wow.

That's, and so we did.

Ebony: That's a wonderful story. It's always amazing. You know, sometimes you need that kick right. To, to start your own deal. And it worked out.

Bill Maness: Oh yeah, it did. Well, you know, you never know how things are gonna work out. the one thing that attracted me to the industry in the first place, I spent probably 15 years in the radio broadcast industry in sales and. And, in Wichita. And one of the things that, I, I liked about the industry I'm in now was the fact that while it was new to Wichita, it was not new to the country.

Mm-hmm. . So it would be like, if McDonald's existed everywhere else but didn't exist in Wichita. And you were the first McDonald's well, There's great opportunity there. Yeah. There's also a lot of education that goes on about what the heck is a McDonald's and why should we eat at your restaurant? But at the end of the day, it was, it was really an opportunity for me to, To, to take something that had been developed elsewhere.

It was a new wheel, it was something brand new to Wichita, but it wasn't like I was inventing it, right? I was just taking it from somewhere else and bringing it to the marketplace, and that was actually a real blessing in itself.

Ebony: So let's talk about that a little bit. So what, what differentiates you? What do you guys do?

Start there. What is it that you do?

Bill Maness: Well, if you think of, if you think about an employee, if you're an employer, there are certain things that you do that really have nothing to do with your business. In other words, if you make something or you provide services to someone and you have employees, what comes with those employees or what we call the employer mandate, and what that is, is you gotta pay people.

And there are laws you have to abide by to pay people, so you know all the kinds of different things. Well, the government has said if you're gonna pay people, you have to withhold their taxes for us. And oh, by the way, you have to match the FICA and food and all that stuff on behalf of the employees to give to the government.

On behalf of them. So you've got payroll and tax related activities and you've gotta file taxes on a quarterly basis. Yeah. There's all these things that go on, and again, that has nothing to do with the company or what they do to make money. It's just, it comes along with it. If you're a

good employer, you also have benefits.

law requires that you have workers compensation, which is a benefit to the employees, but is paid for by the employer. and over the last 20 years, we've seen an explosion of what we call HR compliance laws that. Passed on a federal and state level that really burden the employer with all these things they have to do that have nothing to do with running their business, but everything to do with being [00:05:00] an employer.

Bill Maness: And what our arrangement does is we take that off our client's plates and say, you go do your thing. We'll do all this other stuff. And we built a business that is basically partnering with our clients to take over the employer mandate for them so they can go do what they do.

That is a great way of saying that cuz there are a lot of things that you don't think about when you're starting your own business and especially when you're a, you know, a solopreneur when it's just you and then you start to grow and then you start seeing, oh my gosh, now I have to do all these things.

What are these things? Right? And so what, what is your sweet spot of how many employees, does a company need to have you? You work with nonprofits,

I, we've had some non-profits in our, you know, we have a couple of non-profits. because I'm a for-profit business, it's really difficult to work with non-profits because at the end of the day, they have a cost of doing business.

But, we try really, really hard to take care of those that mean something to us. But the end of the day, I, I'm a little bit of an anomaly and that my average client size is 68 employees. The average client size in my industry is 21. And it was really, really built for small businesses. What? But, but what I figured out early on was that it cost me the same amount of money.

In internal resources to take care of 20 as it does to take care of 75, but yet I may not get four times the revenue outta the 75 versus the 20, but I certainly get 3.5 times the revenue with the same cost. So in essence, for me, it made more sense to go after larger small businesses than smaller or small business.

But what it really did was allowed me to, to focus my energies on taking care of the clients that had a greater need for. Getting HR off their plate. Yeah. When you have 10 employees you can usually get by it. It's cumbersome, but it's, you can get by because the regulations are much smaller. But when you get to 25, 50, 75 employees, those regulations extrapolate to much greater time demands on your staff and, and much more compliance issues that you have to have.

And you know, you start getting into osha. And all these other things that have to do with, you know, taking care of your employees and, and. When you get larger, it becomes a, a very much a cost center of your business. You have to either hire people or hire a firm like Syndeo to take

care of this because you can no longer do it yourself.

Mm-hmm. , I mean, it's too big of a problem and our business model has been to work with clients that value their employees, that want to take care of their employees, that realize that the amount of resources they have to give. To their employees to take care of this stuff is sometimes bigger than what they're willing to spend on it.

You know, hiring an HR person, I'll give you a great financial example. Hiring an HR person that's really good, that knows what they're doing will cost you between 75 and a hundred thousand dollars a year. And when I say cost you, I don't mean just their salary, I mean their benefits, their vacation, all these things.

So you plug that into the equation. And that person just is themselves. They don't have any other resources other than themselves for that same money. But for a 75 person group, for the same money, I bring a benefits team, a payroll team, a risk management team, a full HR team, and I bring the systems that manage all of that as well.

So in essence, for the same money, you get a whole team of people. Mm-hmm. , a whole department of HR rather than a person. Again, the advantage of outsourcing is we don't ever take time off. We're never on vacation. We always have resources to bring to the client that a single person just can't bring competitively.

What we find in the larger businesses when you get to 3, 4, 500 employees is that. There's two sides of the HR world. There's the real, what I call real hr, which is making the workplace a better place to work, which is dealing with the culture, employee engagement, recruiting, training, all of the things that are really good for the workforce to get better so that they can take care of their clients.

But all the rest of it is what we call ad minutia. It is literally just the little stuff that goes on behind the scenes. One person can't take care of. Well, you get to a 300 person group. They're spending so much time on the adia, they don't have to do time to do real hr. So we partner with those clients because they get all that ad minutia off their plate.

Mm-hmm. . And then they can have their limited resources dedicated to things that are meaningful, which is really the purpose of HR is to have a meaningful place in your business.

Ebony: Yeah, that's great, Don.

Don: Excellent. Sendeo or Sen-day-o

Bill Maness: Syndeо. Well, if you ask Gregg Marshall, he used to pronounce it Sen-day-o, even though I told him , it's Syndeо

Don: okay.

How, what, what does mean? How does that,

Bill Maness: How did that start? is the ancient Greek word for ally friend. Okay. And we really looked at that as, as a good describer of what we are to our clients. You're a friend. Excellent. We're a friendly ally.

Don: Friends and me. No singing. Please. how you spoke about employees, how [00:10:00] many employees do you have?

I have, it changes almost weekly. Right now I think I have 54 employees. Most of them are based in Wichita. We have, we've got some remote workers out there. We've got one in South Carolina, one in a city, one in Kansas City, and a couple others spotted around the Wichita area. Most of our employees are based in Wichita.

Bill Maness: Most of our clients are, all of our clients are Kansas based. Oh, wow. I say that we have, we have like five clients that are either based in northern Oklahoma. We have a little pocket in Poka City where we have some clients, and then I have some clients in the Kansas City metro area. So excellent. But almost over 90% of our clients are in the Wichita metro area.

and then also within Kansas.

Don: Excellent. They wanna be in Kansas. They're inching their way, they're trying to get there. That's right. That's right across the border there. You spoke earlier about culture. What kind of culture do you have at your organization?

Bill Maness: Well, culture is like the most important thing that I'm in charge of in the organization.

Got it. And early on I realized that in order for us to be a service centric business, which, you know, there are different kinds of engines that every business. You're either a product-oriented business or you are a service-oriented business, or you're in a lot of cases, a sales-oriented business. A lot of people would argue that if you're in in business, you're in the sales business, which you are, but it's, it's what you choose to focus on that makes your culture who they are.

And I figured out really early on, I was going to be a s a service. Service engine business. And so I came up some with some rules early on that talked about, who we are. And it's really simple. I tell every new employee on their first week with us, they had a little meeting with me and I tell 'em, we, we only have three rules at Syndeo, and they're very, very clear.

Rule number one is, is that we get paid by our clients to take care of what is a problem for them. So come to work every day, ready to solve problems. And rule number two is if you ever sweep

a problem under the rug, you get one warning. Oh. Refer to rule number one, we get paid to take care of those problems.

And if you sweep 'em under the rug, they not only get big, they get expensive fast if we don't take care of them. And the rule number three actually happened in my office one day, so I added it to the list was if the words, that's not my job, ever escape your lips, you can't work at Syndeo. And part of the reason for that is I, I was walking by a cubicle and a payroll person was talking to a client and she said, well, that's not my job.

And then she hung up. Wow. And I. I stopped. It really stopped me in my tracks and I said, why did you say that? She said, well, they were asking me something about benefits and I told 'em, it's not my job. I said, but then you hung up. She said, well, yeah, it's not my job. I said, oh, what you just told the client was Syndeo is not here to solve their problem in benefits.

Yeah. Not that you can't solve it. You told them Syndeo can't solve that problem. Mm-hmm. . Right? So the what, what that client needs to hear is, that's not my job. They need to hear. Let me get you some help. Because that's what service centric companies do. Not everybody's gonna solve every problem, but we know where to get this problem solved internally, so let's help each other get there.

So we really work really hard in our culture first, believe it or not, we work really hard to take care of each other. Get each other's back. If somebody has a problem and they can't solve it, get some help with somebody else in our company. That's the first thing. The second thing is, is that we're there to take care of our clients.

So if we take care of each other first, it allows us to take care of our clients better. And ultimately, obviously we go to work every day to take care of our families, which is kind of why we go to work in the first place. Mm-hmm. , so we. Spend a lot of time and energy promoting, taking care of each other and working to make sure that we can deliver the services our clients need and demand.

In a way that they are happy with us every day.

Ebony: I really love that second one. Can you repeat it one more time for Don Know what? Take care of your employees. .

Don: See, you know, Bill, you probably dealt with sass before. It's, it is what it is. These younger folks. Seem like there are more and more companies like yours or, I mean, like I, I hear more and more HR companies like yours getting into the space.

I mean, seem like you're getting more and more competition. I mean, just like media companies, they'll, they'll say, Hey, you don't have to have your own. Media person, we can come with a media person, a graphics person, a, this, that and the other, just kind of mimicking what the,

what you folks are doing in hr.

Is that the way of the world now?

Bill Maness: You know? Yeah, I think it is. And and the reason for that is, is that when you really think about it, and you start, I, I remember reading this a while back when, when Boeing sold their, facility in Wichita, a Spirit. , everybody kind of questioned what, why would you do that?

And I think it was because Boeing did their own self realization. You know, there's, I don't know, a hundred thousand parts in an airplane. Does Boeing build all of those parts? No. No. They outsource [00:15:00] almost the entire building of the airplane. Right. And what they said in that, in that was that Boeing has determined that we are a plane assembler.

We are not a plane builder. We take all those parts that are put together and then we assemble them into a final deal. We do the engineering, we do the sales, and then we assemble the final products from all of these different people that support us, and they just dis determined that even building the fuselage was building and that that's not what they did well.

So they outsourced it in essence to Spirit. Mm-hmm. , but that also opened my eyes to the rest of the world. We outsource every day. Yes. All of us outsource every day. You know what, you don't have to go to the grocery. You can grow and kill all the food you're gonna eat, need to eat. And lots of people do that, but it's easier and more convenient.

And life is better sometimes because we go to the grocery store where it's easily attainable and get what we need. but if you look around you, it's almost like we had this entire lifestyle now that is providing services to people for things they either can't. Or don't wanna do or have no way of doing themselves.

Excellent. So that's what outsourcing is. It's getting somebody else to do for you what you can't or don't wanna do. And if you look at it from those lenses, HR is the last, the latest to the table. Mm-hmm. , but law firms, accounting firms, banks, those are all outsourcing providers. Right. So it's a question of how do you view the world, with regards to utilizing outsourced services to take care of what you need. The real emphasis to me on outsourcing is that it's always been around, it's always been more efficient and more effective. I like to say that there are a lot of people in my space in the world. They're not necessarily coming to Wichita, but they exist nationally.

The biggest competition I have in the Wichita Kansas area is status quo. That's it. It's how we've always done it. Why would we change it? Well, The fact is, is that if you're not changing, you're dying. If you're not growing, you're dying, you're not gaining, you're losing. So all these things come to play when, and I get most of my client leads come from either referrals or from clients that are going through a change that they didn't anticipate.

They're losing their HR person, their benefits have changed and they don't like what they're

seeing. they maybe have some risk management issues they don't know how to handle. These are all events that occur that open their eyes up to maybe there's a better. Excellent. And that's when I can step in and say, let me show you our better way and the scale we bring to the table that allow you to continue on with your business and get better without necessarily having to change anything internally.

You don't have to fire a bunch of people, you don't have to recreate the wheel here. Let me just help you get better by doing it differently. Yeah. Excellent.

Ebony: I love that. Bring solutions to the table. Bill. We're gonna take a moment to hear our words from our sponsors, but we'll be back friends so that you can hear more from Syndeo.

Welcome back friends. We're here with Bill and we're talking about Syndeo. And so Bill, we've been talking a lot about the business, how you got started. You've been here for 20 years, putting in work, finding solutions for for clients. But why Wichita? Why did you decide to stay in Wichita?

Bill Maness: Well, I think the opportunity for me in Wichita was that the services that I was going to provide were unique to the marketplace.

And, you know, competitive factors aside, when you go to a market that's completely saturated, you have to really exhibit something unique in order to be successful. But when you go to a market where it doesn't exist, it's a completely different set of challenges. We, we don't have the challenge of having, you know, an HR sourcing firm on every corner.

They do in Florida, but we do have a challenge that nobody knows what we. and so therefore it's a different kind of conversation you have to have. Mm-hmm. , but that's where the opportunity is in that it, I'm not selling people on choosing me over somebody that does exactly what I do somewhere else. I'm, I'm selling and trying to get them to understand why outsourcing will work better for them than doing it themselves.

Mm-hmm. , which is really a different conversation, but that area also lies the opportunity in that once I get clients and exhibit the ability to do that and do it successfully, I don't have as big of a competitive factor of somebody coming in and trying to undercut price or say they can do it better for less or offering something more for less.

I don't face those pressures simply cuz the competition isn't here for that. I, I'm sure eventually it will be, but I. The reason I chose Wichita is [00:20:00] from, you know, I'm from the area. Mm-hmm. . I grew up in Augusta, I've been in Wichita since 1981. and it was home and that's where the opportunity was and where my network of contacts were in the marketplace.

And I just thought, you know, this market needs something like this. And who better than me to try to bring it to them. Nice. Yeah.

Ebony: Yeah. And, and so we know that you're about, you know, networking and creating culture. So let's talk about your, you've been a member of the Chamber for how long?

all 20 years.

Bill Maness: All 20

Ebony: years? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So you've, the, since you started the business, the Chamber has been a part of your, your growth. It has. That's wonderful. So what are the resources and what, you know, the, the things that you use from the.

Bill Maness: Well, you know, the Chamber represents a lot of businesses in which, both large and small, and I think the fact that you, you guys are working to make life better for those businesses.

I, I know that because I deal in a lot of compliance issues for my clients, a lot of times, having a connection to the Chamber to get things done, Topeka. Is really important and, and in fact, the Chamber was very beneficial to my industry in 2014, 2013 and 14 when we sought to have legislation that governs my business.

Now, you, you think to yourself, why would anybody want it? Create legislation to govern yourself. That was gonna be my next question. Yeah. They tried to avoid that, but here's the, here's the issue. Because of the way that our system and our process and our business model works, we become responsible for a lot of things for our clients.

Mm-hmm. that come with very hefty price tags. Mm-hmm. , for instance, I, I'll give you an example. My company this year will do about 8 million in. Which sounds like a lot, but I will run over half a billion dollars through my books on behalf of my clients. Well name me one industry that takes in that much revenue that's unregulated.

They don't exist. Mm-hmm. . And we thought, you know, the best time to get legislation is before there's a problem. Right. Let's get it on the books so that we can have input into it of what's fair and what will be good for the industry as well as good for employers and good for the state and good for everybody.

And so we have sought to do that as a national movement, with our national trade association. And the Chamber was very helpful in us getting that done in Kansas in 2014. And I, that's one instance. There's several that I could point to, but you know, the ability to have a voice magnified through the chamber is really important to every small business and to know that you have access to that.

We, we, we love to use the Chamber as a way to do better things for the community. But I will tell you the Chamber's biggest contribution to life in. In Kansas, specifically in Wichita, is the

work that you do legislatively? Yeah, because without that, we don't have the power as individual businesses to get as much done as we need to.

And sometimes we're on the flip side of that where things are trying to be legislated that are detrimental to us. Right. And having the chamber's ability to be the collective voice for all of us is really, really powerful. And and more importantly, very important for, for those in the small business. So if, if only the chamber existed for legislative.

That would be a reason to be there, but I think there's so much more The Chamber does, obviously from a marketing standpoint, from a a community involvement standpoint. There, there's so many other things that fall under the, the umbrella, but the most important work that to me, that the Chamber does on behalf of business is representing business in Topeka and sometimes even in Washington.

And, and that's, that's not something we can buy on our own. Yeah. As small businesses and having that power is, is really, really beneficial to the market and why I've been a member. All these years.

Ebony: I, I would agree that advocacy piece is, man, it's, you're, you're spot on. Everything you just said. I love it. I wish we could just take that and like, put it on a billboard

Yeah. That's pretty cool. That was pretty cool. You know what, what's, I guess my question to you is, you've been doing it for 20 years. What do you see next? What's, what's happening on the horizon for syndeo?

Bill Maness: Well, I, I, I was sitting down in Odyssey a couple of years ago by my executive team of, of what's life gonna be like at Syndeo after Bill?

And I, you know, I didn't necessarily really have anything more than a one year plan , and they were asking me for a 10 year plan. And, you know, that puts me, way, way into my seventies. And I thought, you know what? I, I need to start thinking like that. Mm-hmm. . So I went on this, odyssey to find out what, what's the next 10 years look like for me and my family as well as for the company.

And what I came to was that if somebody, if I sold my company, And somebody handed me a pile of money to just go away, then what am I gonna do with it? Well, the only reason I would do that would be for liquidity for my estate, for my children. And I happen to have two daughters that are CPAs and one of them is in the private equity business.

And she said, dad, don't sell the company. Right? Don't sell the company because when we are investing in companies, we're looking for people [00:25:00] just like you to buy because we know we can help create more value. So why would we let somebody else create more value? Let's just do that ourselves. I said, oh, okay. She's smart, so you don't want me to be liquid.

And they said, no, no, no. We would rather. In essence, own the company and be a board of directors and keep your management team engaged and keep the the future of Syndeo going rather than just handing it over to somebody else that probably won't have the same desire to take care of their employees as much as we do.

Yeah. As a private owner, and I think it's one of my daughter's dreams to have a company like Syndeo that she can take care of everybody around her and then be financially rewarded for that. But at the same time, that's not the focus, isn't the money. The money's a byproduct. Mm-hmm. If you focus on taking care of your employees and taking care of your clients, the money comes.

But if you start focusing on money, you start making sacrifices in taking care of your clients and taking care of your employees, and then the money's not as meaningful at all. And so they convince me to keep the company. Let's set a 10 year plan of where we're, what we're gonna grow to. So for the next 10 years, our goal is to grow the company, is to to grow the company from where we are.

Which is about a hundred, a little over a hundred clients servicing 6,800 employees. And to grow it to 300 clients servicing north of 20,000 employees. Wow. That's our goal for the next 10 years. That's aggressive and we can do all that in Kansas. We can do it all staying where we are, right in our state, doing it in our backyard.

Part of that odyssey disc, the discovery process was that there were, 7,500 businesses in Kansas, which had between 20 and 500. We have a hundred of them. We don't need to go anywhere else to find business. It's right here. Right? So let's just do a better job of getting more business in Kansas and taking care of more Kansas based clients.

So that's our tenure plan. I don't see that changing any at all. It's really a commitment to us being better at what we do and helping more people and more people, meaning more clients and more employees that can enjoy the benefits of being in an HR outsourcing environment. And, And seeing how well they, that we can help their businesses grow and reach their goals as well.

Don: Let's stick with Wichita a little bit. You've been here for a little few years. What about, is there somebody in Wichita or some folks in Wichita you take inspiration from?

Bill Maness: Oh, they're all around me, frankly. I, I, I, I have been really blessed to be, to know a lot of people in Wichita that have, Sometimes giving me some unsolicited advice.

but it was always meaningful. You can name drop if you want to. That's cool. ? No, you know, I, it's a, I'm a real big believer is that we're all in, in the collective good in Wichita mm-hmm. and it's, there were people that took me under their wing 20 years ago that had no business taken me under their wing, other than they just wanted to help somebody be successful.

Bill Maness: Wow. That was their only motivation. Very cool. They didn't want anything for it. They didn't want, they didn't wanna be paid for it, they just, You know, this is my chance to give back to the guys that helped mentor me 20 years ago when I was starting, and that's what I, the position I find myself in now, is that I've got people that I'm working with in, in, in the Wichita area and frankly, nationally to help mentor them and to, to, to kind of give them some guidance on where they should go and what they should look at as they go down their road of discovery of being successful in their businesses.

And, and, you know, for me, To identify one or two or even three people. I can, I can tell you it's a collective nice group of people in Wichita that have been very, very helpful to me, in showing me things I should do and also things I shouldn't do. Nice. And it's really been, it, it is the community to me of Wichita that makes it so unique and special in that there are, you're, you can turn around and find people that want to help you every day of the week.

Excellent. If only for the motivation that they just want us, they feel good about helping. And as I'm getting into my golden years, I feel like, you know what, that's where the real, that's what what drives me now is helping others. Yeah. I could, I have everything else in life I could ever want. So the ability to have that luxury allows me the, the opportunity now to say I'm gonna give back.

Mm-hmm. , and I'm just gonna do things for other people with nothing as a reward. Nice. Other than simply giving. And I think that's what makes Wichita great, is that we've seen generation upon generation of businesses go through this same cycle. And you find us the old guys out here doing this, and we're willing to help all the young folks and we're willing to tell them, Hey, that's not a good idea.

Mm-hmm. , and here's why. And, and it's not because we really have an interest in good or bad ideas, it's just because we want to tell the truth. And sometimes when you're a young entrepreneur, hearing the truth is really what you need to hear, not necessarily what you want to hear. Correct. And it's, it is our obligation to them to be truthful and to bring our collective wisdom to them.

And it's just, it's a real charge. We always learn as adults. When we see our kids at Christmas, it is so much better than to. Than to receive. It just is. Yeah. And when you get to the place in business where you can do that, On a bigger basis. It's really very rewarding. Nice. Really is nice.

Don: I've been trying to get Ebony to do that, [00:30:00] and that's just been, it's a tough gig, It's a tough gig. So it is what it is.

Ebony: Which one to listen or to give back,

Don: to give back and to listen. Now that you mention that, thanks for adding that. one more question before we move on. What can Wichita, what would you like to see change in Wichita? You've been here quite a. It seems been good to you.

What, but what can be? What can be, yeah.

Bill Maness: You know, it's, it's, it's already changing. Okay. We've seen a resurgence of community pride coming up. I, I, I, I don't have it on now, but I had some shirts made that are the Wichita flag and I, and, and in that little center circle where they have the lines crossing, I put my SYN logo.

Nice. And I gave those to all the employees, and I said, anybody wants one of these, I'll buy one for you. Nice. Because I want, I, I, yes, I love to promote Sy but at the end of the day, I love to promote Wichita and I think the, you know, the downtown arena, the baseball stadium downtown, these revitalizations are all community oriented and it is really important.

That we continue to do those things. you know, we've, we're seeing a reversal in our talent pool being drained by going to other markets, by more entrepreneurs bringing, talent levels back to what you talk. Coke Industries is a great example of the, the retention of talent in our, in our market. But, you know, Cargill, same way.

They, they do a lot. All of our aircraft companies do a lot to retain talent in Wichita, and I think that what we're seeing changed is that, Might not have been there 20 years ago when I started, is this sense of community that we didn't have then. We were always complaining about everything, but we weren't really doing anything about it.

Yeah. Yep. And, now we're starting to see that we take what we need to make better and then we go do something about it. Mm-hmm. nice. And the revitalization of the downtown core, the bringing in of new businesses that. Help us to keep the talent. Those are the things that as ACEC community, that we're doing a lot better now than we were doing 20 years ago.

And I think if we keep doing that, we will just continually evolve. Change is inevitable. It is not something you can avoid. It is going to happen one way or the other. Right. so you just have to get on board with what's gonna be the best solution for us individually as well as a community, and try to come up with ways to, to make things better for our community sounds, and the chamber's obviously at the front of that.

But as a community, we have to embrace that change is just inevitable. And if you're not part of the change, you're part of the problem. Excellent. And it's better to be a part of the solution than it is part of the problem. So get on board and let's figure out what's best for everybody and then go. Let's do it.

Don: No better way to end this segment. You got another question? E? No, Ebony: it's time for

some word association.

Don: You ready? Are you ready? You've dealt with Ebony long enough. You need to be rewarded. So here we go. We're going to do word association. I'll give you one word to give one word back. It's not wrong cuz it's your word.

Are you ready? Okay.

Leader.

Bill Maness: Passion.

Don: Success.

Bill Maness: Relative.

Don: College.

Bill Maness: Needed.

Don: Okay, long as you didn't say, K State we're good. . They're doing great in football though, so I gotta give it up. Failure.

Bill Maness: Learning.

Don: Entrepreneur.

Bill Maness: Visionary.

Don: Nice. Wichita.

Bill Maness: Home.

Don: Vacation.

Bill Maness: Michigan.

Don: Michigan. I had to stop on that. Michigan, can we ask why?

Is that where you're from?

Bill Maness: Sure. I, my wife's granddad built a cabin on the lake in 1949 and we went up there every summer for years and five years ago, three years ago, we built our own place on the lake

That's beautiful in northern Michigan. So we spend a lot of the summer up there. Does. A lot of the summer.

Don: Okay. Okay. So you're not one of them. Oh, that's Minnesota, where you go and drive on the ice and cut a hole in the ice. Okay. And you,

Bill Maness: I could, I could out my back door, but I don't. You don't? I don't go up there in the winter. No.

Don: Excellent. Wichita Chamber.

Bill Maness: Friend.

Don: Family.

Bill Maness: One word, priority.

Don: Nice. Fun.

Bill Maness: Always.

Don: Last but not least, and you gotta tell the truth on this one. Beverage.

Bill Maness: Tea.

Don: He went tea I was getting ready to say it didn't have to p pg 13 up in here. So ,

Bill Maness: no, no, no, no. I mean, I, I, I'm not, I I'm not a teetotaler, by any stretch, but my, my. My taste buds are so wide and varied that it's, I couldn't narrow it down. The one, I couldn't say wine or beer or, I mean, there's all the different ones within there, so.

Don: Excellent. Well, Ebony could, but we'd be here a long time.

Thank you, Bill for hanging out with us today. Yeah, we appreciate.

Bill Maness: You're welcome guys. This has been really, thank you very much for having me. Absolutely. I appreciate it very.

Ebony: Friends, we've come to the end of today's segment. If you would please like us mixing that you make a comment, let us know how we're doing.

Let us know who you'd like to hear from next till [00:35:00] next time, peace.