



## INTRODUCTION TO ECONOMIC GARDENING FOR CEOS

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### ***What is it – in a simple sentence?***

An economic development program focused on helping Second Stage companies grow.

#### ***What does that name mean?***

Traditional economic development focuses on recruiting companies to come to town (economic hunting). This program focuses on growing local companies (economic gardening).

#### ***What is a Second Stage Company and Why Focus on Them?***

Second Stage companies, sometimes called emerging growth companies, are defined as having \$1 -50 million in sales and 10-99 employees. They have proof of product, proof of market and proof of management skills. They typically have the potential for additional sustained growth but do not have access to the sophisticated tools and concepts of larger companies.

There is substantial research that indicates many of the new jobs come from this small band of companies (3-10% of all companies in most communities).

Accelerating the growth potential of this highly productive group is a very efficient and effective economic development approach.

#### ***What do I get from the program?***

Research to help you make decisions in strategic areas, specifically:

- Market research, industry trends, competitor intelligence, new product releases,
- GIS computer maps of customers/competitors/potential markets/trade areas.
- Search engine optimization, web marketing, social media

- Analysis in five classes of business problems:
  - Core strategy
  - Market Dynamics
  - Innovation
  - Temperament
  - Qualified Sales Leads

### ***What will I not get?***

We don't do implementation. You will have to hire your own consultants for that.

We don't analyze your financials.

We do not do primary research (surveys, telephone calls, focus groups).

We don't do business plans.

### ***How will this work and how long will it take?***

Initially, the team leader will interview you in a Discovery Call and establish a baseline of information. The questions will be about how you got started, what you do for your customers, who are your competitors, what does the market look like, are you working on any innovations and similar types of information. The call typically takes 1 to 1.5 hours.

A Team Clarification Call, whose purpose is simply to clarify areas for the assigned GIS, SEO, and Market Research specialists, will follow this. At the end of that call, research tasks will be assigned to the specialists (after approval by you) and we will go to work for you immediately. We will also set up dates for check in calls and a close out call.

We have a collaboration software site called The Greenhouse and all work will be posted in that secure site. Our team will monitor the site to make sure all work is done and your team will be notified anytime something new is posted in there. The specialists will also call you any time work is posted to go over it. In particular, we need to know if the work is useful or whether we need to adjust the research items.

In about two weeks time, the team leader will check in with a Mid-course Call. If we need to adjust the focus, end some lines of research or drill deeper, this is the time to make those adjustments.

In approximately three-four weeks, the team leader will conduct a Close Out Call. The team leader will review the stated business issues, the task assignments, the

corrections and the final work. You will have the opportunity to provide verbal feedback at that point as well as fill out short survey on your experience.

Following the engagement, the National Strategic Research Team (NSRT) will hand the engagement back to the local economic development agency for assistance with implementation.

### ***How do I work with the NSRT?***

The basic relationship is one of high-powered staff on loan to you for a few weeks. Their question will be “what decisions are you getting ready to make, boss?” and “what information do you need to make those decisions?”

We are not industry consultants that will give you the top five recommendations for growing your company. We are, instead, excellent researchers that can provide you with information, data and conclusions about key issue with which you are dealing.

The national team consists of private sector contractors from all over the country who specialize in a number of areas. The Search Engine Optimization (SEO) companies, for example, do only that type of work all year long. You will have access to this sophisticated kind of technical assistance that you may not have been able to afford in your early growth stages.

You will get the most from the engagement if you provide them your full attention and availability for a short duration. It is not unusual for the CEO to pull in the senior management team (e.g. VP of Marketing) but it is vital that the CEO be involved from beginning to end.

### ***How long will it take?***

Engagements generally run about three-four weeks from initial interview to final survey. Obviously, the demands of business and personal lives may alter this but we try to work at the speed of business (results in hours and days, not weeks and months). That being said, the Team Leader will work with you to discuss what pace is best for you. If you need to slow it down a bit, just let us know.

### ***What kinds of tools do you use?***

Economic Gardening uses the best corporate level tools we can find. This toolbox is constantly changing and updating however the current set of tools includes.

- *Commercial Database Searching.* These services are by subscription only and much more focused than general Internet searches. Typical research includes markets, competitor intelligence, new product releases, potential customers, and regulations.

- *Deep Web.* Internet searches are easy for anyone to do but much of the valuable information is buried in the deep web beyond the first three pages of results. Knowing where these exotic databases and information sources are is critical to high quality work.
- *Geographic Information Systems.* GIS is computerized mapping of data and typically is used to spot densities of customers, potential markets, trade areas and competitors.
- *Search Engine Optimization.* SEO is used to get web sites as high in Google searches as possible. There are a number of known factors that Google considers and our experts will identify any problem areas on your web sites. Further, we will assist you with keyword research to be used in web marketing programs. We also provide social media options for finding watering holes of your targeted market.
- *Listening posts.* We have developed ways to monitor the operating environment that are improvements over simple Google alerts. We filter out noise and focus on high quality sources.
- *Network Mapping.* Maltego is a tool that diagrams the networks on the web, on twitter and Facebook. Understanding networks is important in developing qualified sales leads.

### ***How much of my time will you need?***

Past experience has indicated the CEO devoted 8-12 hours over a four week period from beginning to end.

### ***Where did this program come from?***

Economic Gardening was created in the City of Littleton, Colorado and refined over a twenty-five year period. In 1987, Littleton experienced 7,000 layoffs at the nearby Martin Marietta (Lockheed Martin today) plant due to the end of the Cold War. While Martin had been a very good corporate citizen for Littleton, the 1987 city council was concerned about the major influence that out of state corporations had on the local economy and gave staff the charge to “work with local businesses and create good jobs.” Over the next two decades the program was tested and refined and the story of its success began to spread across the country. Over 800 communities made inquiry about how it worked and other Economic Gardening programs began to spout in other cities.

The program has received three national awards including being a finalist in Harvard’s *Innovation in Government* award program. There are Economic Gardening programs in Canada, Northern Ireland, Australia and Japan.

### ***What Kind of Results Are You Getting?***

The program is running or has run successfully in 34 states, regions and cities including state projects in Florida, Michigan, Missouri, Kansas, Louisiana, Iowa, Colorado and regional projects in Minnesota, Maryland, and Utah.

Results have been significant. Littleton's job base went from 15,000 to 30,000 in twenty years without recruiting a single company. Florida has added over 4,000 jobs. Growth rates in Kansas have averaged over 15%.