

# Setting Us Apart

By [Levon Johnson](#)

*Chamber President/CEO*

This is the fifth of ten consecutive articles that I will be writing covering the most frequent topics I have discussed in the first half of 2019.

Your Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has adopted annual priorities that have very clear goals, with metrics that clearly outline the prescribed outcomes.

While the list of priorities is reviewed and adjusted each year, the one priority that has remained a clear focus is the attraction of new talent to our area. How we do that is a question that, in some form, is asked almost daily. The reality is that the city, the county, the region, the state, and almost every business are all spending a great deal of time and resources to figure out the talent recruitment dilemma. We, here at the Chamber, are engaged with all of those aforementioned partners to develop strategies to meet the needs of our business community.

We are in a major competition. We all know it. It's a simple supply and demand problem. There are more jobs, requiring a higher skill set, than there are people to fill them.

My travels between May and August have taken me to the cities of San Juan, Denver, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Louisville, Grand Rapids, Chicago, and Pittsburgh. I've also been to cities and towns much smaller than Elkhart. They are all singing the same song as us, "We need more people."

Like us, those communities have or are making investments in their downtowns and other economic centers, upgrading housing options, increasing investment in amenities, researching and investing in programs to incentivize people to choose them, and developing plans to further diversify their local economy.

Now you may be asking, "Then what is going to set us apart?" There is an answer to that question and if you are reading this you are part of the solution.

Of course, all of those communities are going after Millennials, arguably the most studied generation of all time. It is important to remember as we are heavily recruiting Millennials, that casting broad generalization about what 80 million people want in life limits our focus on the reality that no matter a person's age, there are some inherent things most of us want out of the work we do and the place we work for.

As a business you decide the priorities you are looking for in potential employees. Each individual that may come to work for you will in turn decide the priorities they are looking for in employment.

As you look at your corporate structure and environment here are a few items that research has shown are important to employees no matter their age or work experience.

1. Meaningful access to leadership
2. Clear and defined paths for career advancement
3. Creative benefits
4. Social responsibility and impact of the corporation
5. Opportunities for leadership development
6. Appreciation for work well done

There are best practices to this work and your Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce is committing resources and time to finding the best of those right here in our area and sharing those with you.

Have a positive and productive week.